



UNMASKED

BOAZ ADHENGU

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1

The Witches of Kambajo

Bondo is a small village, 65 kilometres south of Kisumu in Nyanza. There are no motorable roads to this village. In fact, there are no roads, period. *Kajulu* pathway, an offshoot from the road to *gotmatar*, is all that connects the village to the rest of civilisation. It is a bumpy track, no wider than six feet, maybe just enough for a bullock cart to pass. And if it has to be used in the dark, it is advisable to carry a first-aid kit along, as accidents are inevitable. Preferably, the road is used in broad daylight only. It was precisely for this reason that Mr Ndayi urged his family to move fast, as darkness was setting in.

"*Oof! I just cannot walk on this road,*" cried 10-year-old Otieno, as he tripped and fell for the third time.

"*Why don't you look where you put your big foot?*" suggested his 12-year-old brother, Rawago

"*Yes, he is right,*" confirmed their grandfather empathetically, himself gingerly selecting the spots to place his foot on. "*These are wild areas, and it is a fact that in places like this, a lot of evil practices and black magic goes on. You step on a charmed article, and you are under an evil spell for the rest of your life.*"

"*Stop it, father!*" said Mutuku, irritably. He was more than just irritable right now. He had reached boiling point. There he was this Saturday morning, happily sipping his coffee and reading the newspaper. He had planned a relaxed weekend, after the hectic and frustrating week he had had at his *Otonglo* office. And then his wife spoilt it all by saying, "*I want to visit my mother in Bondo, today.*" He was hoping to go by bus, but the kids and his own father also wanted to tag along. So, by popular demand, the car was brought out. He was basically not a '*driverman*', and used it only when necessary, so having to drive increased his irritation. Finally, on the way, the car conked out, right in the middle of nowhere.

He had tried setting it right. He had stopped other cars to get their drivers to try and have it started. But the car had refused to oblige. He finally got

his mechanic on the mobile phone, but the man said, *"It's already evening, Sir. I'll come in the morning."*

Left with no choice, they had decided to spend the night at any nearby hotel. But there were no hotels in the vicinity. In fact, there wasn't even a house in sight. A passing farmer, cycling an old metal informed them of a nearby village called *Kambajo*. He pointed out the narrow pathway and left them on their own. A short while later, they heard him laughing hysterically. *'Quite unnerving,'* thought Otieno. And so, that was how the family had found themselves on that lonely pathway.

"I told you to sell that car ages ago," complained Mrs Elizabeth. God! Thought Mutuku miserably, why do you make such days? In the first place, he fumed, it was her fault suggesting this last-minute trip, and now she blamed him.

"Watch out everybody!" grandfather warned suddenly. *"That string with lime and chilli is lethal. It is bound to be full of curses. So don't go even an inch near it."*

"Father, I told you to stop it!" Mutuku gave vent to his pent-up emotions. *"Such talk is foolish, especially in this age of space travel. Black magic, curses, spells... Bah! And the children are listening to your nonsense too."*

"It's not nonsense! Remember, I have grown up in a village. I know these things exist."

"I only hope that village exists. I am sick and tired of the misfortunes we have faced today. Hopefully, there may be some kind of a hotel there for us to spend the night."

They had been walking for over 30 minutes on that lonely stretch and not a soul had passed them. Soon the sun dipped over the horizon, leaving them lonelier.

"We have just 15 minutes more to find that elusive village or it will be dark and we will be stranded, with snakes and scorpions crawling all over the place." Mrs Elizabeth always thought of the brightest things to say.

"Any more pleasant thoughts from you two, and I am turning back. You make the kids think we are on our way to hell, instead of a quaint village. What was the name of the village, the farmer on the bicycle had mentioned?"

"Kambajo," replied Rawago, a little apprehensive after hearing her mother and grandfather. "Oh look, a hut. Maybe they'll tell us how far the village is."

They crossed a small patch of arable land and reached the hut. An old man was resting on a low cot, Chewing tobacco feeling proud of his veranda made of mud. He didn't as much as raise an eyebrow upon seeing them. He went on pinching his stash.

"Er... hello!" Mutuku tried hard to sound chirpy. "Which way to Kambajo?"

A hard spit on the ground and a dry choking cough before the old man replied, "This is Kambajo."

They all took a few quick gulps. Thinking they had missed something, they looked around for other huts. But this was the only one.

"But... where are the other houses?"

Two full minutes of chewing and then he studied the family. Finally, he said, "There are two houses behind those trees, and a little further, three more."

"And...?" prompted Mutuku.

"*That's it!*" The old man now looked stern.

"*No hotels?*"

The old man turned aside and continued with his passion. Obviously, the interview was over.

"*Can we stay the night at your house?*" Mutuku asked in spite of his family glaring at him. "*We'll pay you...*"

"*NO!*"

So the family continued to walk towards the trees, now quite worried with darkness minutes away. But there was a full moon to help guide them on the way. They found the two houses and moved cautiously towards it. Mrs Elizabeth was relieved to see three women in front of one of the houses, tending a small fire. Walking ahead of the rest, she approached them.

"*Sisters, can you help us out? We are stranded and we...*"

One of the women looked up at her and Mrs Elizabeth almost fainted. As there was little natural light left, the flickering fire she was tending to highlighted the woman's hideous features. The first feature that drew Mrs Elizabeth's riveted attention was the woman's eyes. They were all white with no pupils... like a blind person's. But it was obvious the woman could see. There was no nose, just the two holes of the nostrils, and a thin stern mouth. Almost half of her ears had been eaten away. She was wearing a *kitenge* fabric that covered half her head. But from the visible half, stark white hair shot out in all directions. Seeing a stranger before her, the woman quickly pulled her *kitenge* down and covered her face completely.

The effect of seeing the eerie face in the flickering flame was something Mrs Elizabeth was sure would be embedded in her memory forever. She

gasped, stumbled a few steps backwards and slumped into the comforting arms of her husband.

"What happened? Are you all right?" asked Mutuku.

"Er... yes... must be exhausted," Mrs Elizabeth quickly tried regaining her composure. The other two women had not looked up as yet, keeping their faces hidden in the folds of their *kitenges*... all black. *"Is there a place here for us to sleep?"* asked Mutuku, ignoring Mrs Elizabeth's urgent nudges.

No answer.

"L... Let us try the... other place... the old man told us about," said Mrs Elizabeth, pulling her husband by his sleeve.

"But it's already dark. How will we find the place? We are not even carrying a torch."

"I can see some light over there," said Rawago, pointing further away. *"Maybe it's from the other houses."*

In total bewilderment, they left the three women. Luo women are known for their hospitality, but the people of this village seemed to be unaware of it.

After five minutes of walking in semi-darkness, thanks to the full moon in the east, they reached the last section of the village. Here the reception they received was equally baffling. The minute the householders saw them approaching, they all went indoors and banged the doors shut.

The Mutuku family stood outside, aghast, and now, a little afraid. There seemed to be little warmth in this village, except for the solitary lantern burning on one of the verandas of the three houses that faced them.

"Let's go home, Daddy. I am frightened," said Rawago in a low voice.

"Don't worry, dear. There is nothing to fear," his father comforted him. This time he went forward alone, and knocked on the door of the house with the lantern.

No reply. He knocked again. Still no reply. He knocked harder and called out angrily, "*We only need a place to sleep in! We'll leave in the morning.*"

A small wooden window opened and a man looked out. He studied the five of them suspiciously and finally asked, "*Who are you?*"

Mutuku related their predicament, this time with an air of impatience. The man came out slowly, as though with the first "*boo*" he would charge back into the safety of the house. He made sure the people before him were genuine before he gave the 'all clear' shout, and the rest of the residents of the three houses started trickling out. The Elizabeth family instinctively moved towards each other.

"*We thought you came from there!*" the first man said, pointing towards the house of the three women.

"*We did,*" confirmed Mutuku. "*What's wrong with that?*"

Quick and frightened glances were exchanged amongst the residents. Then a young man came forward and asked, "*You don't know them?*"

The blank looks from the five people before him made him whisper, "*They are the witches of Kambajo!*"

Otieno instantly buried himself in his mother's *kitenge*. Rawago decided it was time to hold his grandfather's hand, and the three senior members of the family thought it safer to draw even closer to each other.

"*Wh... what do you... mean?*" Mutuku tried to look composed. "*Th... there is no such thing as... witches.*"

"You city folks have no idea what goes on in remote villages. But enough of that. Where should we put you up?"

The residents discussed amongst themselves and agreed to take Mrs Elizabeth and little Otieno into one of their houses. But Mutuku, his father and teenage Rawago would have to sleep on the veranda. Feeling somewhat relieved, Mutuku thanked the villagers.

Soon it was dinnertime and food was served. Otieno took one look at it and declared, *"I am not hungry."* Rawago was hungry and took a large helping. One mouthful of it and he set it aside. *"I forgot, I had an acute tummy ache,"* he excused himself. Mutuku and his wife managed to finish half of what was served. But Manu's father relished it. After eating his portion, he finished Otieno's too.

Later, the menfolk relaxed in the large compound the three houses shared.

"What makes you think those three are witches?" Mutuku's father opened the topic.

The men exchanged glances, fear apparent in their eyes.

"Ever since they came to these parts, strange things have been happening," the young man explained. *"In fact, they've bewitched the area around their house to such an extent that we don't go anywhere near them anymore."*

"I told you such things exist." Mutuku's father sounded happy to have been proved right. He turned to the villagers and continued, *"I've been telling them all along to be careful of cursed items on the road. But he just wouldn't believe me. Tells me such things don't happen. Now here's proof for him."*

"Do these things happen all the time?" asked Mutuku.

"Most of the time... particularly on full moon nights, like tonight." Rishi looked up at the sky automatically for confirmation, and a lump swelled up in his throat, as he saw the full moon. Boy, they really selected a fine day for travelling.

"Frankly, I still don't believe such things exist," Mutuku stuck stubbornly to his own beliefs.

"Of course, such things exist, Sir," a middle-aged but totally weather-beaten man intervened. His dark skin, bony structure and premature white hair told the story of man who had spent his entire life working his field all day long and was always careful what to touch, where to walk and how the women he cared about kept their hair.

"Else what happens?" asked Mutuku.

"Else a curse befalls us. A curse that lasts for years or even kills us. Look at Odhiambo, if you don't believe us. Ask him what happened to him that night."

"Who's Odhiambo?"

"You must have passed his house on the way here. His house is the first one."

"The old man?"

"That's right. Ever since he made that mistake three years ago, he's been bedridden."

Mutuku remembered seeing the old man in bed all through their short discussion. *"And what was his mistake?"*

"He tried entering the witches' house in the night, when they first made their appearance three years ago. The witches screamed their lungs out

and chanted some mantras. Poor Odhiambo ran all the way back to his own house, and collapsed, never to stand on his own feet again."

There was respectful silence as all the men recollected that night.

"Whose house is it, anyway?" asked Rawago, finally.

"It was an abandoned house. The three witches came in uninvited and nobody had the guts to throw them out. Forget throwing them out, we don't even go near their house."

"Then how do you reach the main road?"

"We use another route, much longer, but safer. That's why we were all taken aback when we saw you coming from that direction. Are you sure they haven't harmed you?"

Mutuku shrugged his shoulders to show they were all fine. But what he had heard that night was really beginning to bother him. First thing tomorrow morning, he promised himself, he would take his family away from here.

Later that night, as Mutuku, his father and Rawago lay on the wooden benches of the veranda, none of the three could sleep. And it was not due to the uncomfortable benches. Things were constantly going on in their minds, and they were subconsciously alert to the slightest sound. Usually night sounds in the villages are aplenty. After the umpteenth time when the three had sprung up at the sound of a particularly loud cricket, Manu finally suggested, *"We must try and relax, or no sleep will come. Try counting the stars."*

"You count stars. I am counting the seconds left for daylight," grumbled his father, eyes still wide open. *"It's only 11.30 p.m. Still six and a half hours to go."*

Ten minutes later, Rawago heard the steady breathing of his father, which said he was asleep. A few minutes later his grandfather followed suit. Rawago himself tried turning and changing positions, but sleep was a thousand miles away. He couldn't see the moon from where he slept so he stepped outside and looked up. It was almost directly overhead and looked huge. But more than the moon, it was the stars that took his breath away - millions, literally millions of them, all shining ever so brightly. Their silvery light flooded the common courtyard of the three houses, and the surrounding trees. Rawago enjoyed the dance between the silver light on the ground and the dark shadows of the tree leaves, as they rustled in the cool breeze. It was just past midnight.

Suddenly his gaze froze. There was one shadow that did not move. With the gaze, his heart froze too as he saw the still shadow of a person, standing by a tree. And with the gaze and his heart, his mind froze next, as he recognised the shadow.

It was one of the witches, standing still in one spot just 50 yards away and steadily looking at him.

He thought of running back to the veranda, but his feet wouldn't move. Had she already put a spell on him too, like old Odhiambo? He checked his hands and feet. They moved normally. Then why wasn't he beating a hasty retreat? It was then that he realised he didn't want to! He actually preferred standing there, watching the witch staring at him.

Slowly the witch detached herself from the shadows and stepped out into the soft light of the moon and the stars. Now they stood just 30 yards apart, and he could see her more clearly. She was still in her black *kitenge*, and her head was half covered. Once more she stood still, just staring at Rawago. What was she up to? Was she in the process of casting a spell on him?

But he still didn't move. His knees had gone wobbly and he was half expecting some hideous creature to suddenly zoom in on him and devour him. But he still wouldn't break eye contact.

She wasn't as old as the woman they had seen earlier. In fact, the moonlight showed her to be much younger. But the face was more or less the same... ugly and loathsome, in spite of it being half covered. Then her hand moved. Rawago immediately stiffened, expecting an attack of some kind. Her hand too was gnawed and knotted, and a finger or two were missing. Were all witches this grotesque, he wondered.

And then, she beckoned him. Curling her long index finger towards herself, she motioned him to come to her. Now his mind went into turmoil. He had flirted enough with danger already. Should he run back to the veranda and safety, or should he step towards her?

He was never known for his bravery, but tonight he did step forward. As he walked towards her, every nerve and sinew in his body turned ice cold inside him. He wondered, "*God! What am I doing? Has she hypnotised me? Has she already taken control over my body?*" He went and stood five feet away from her. Where are the other two witches, he asked himself as he suddenly remembered them. Were they waiting in the dark to pounce upon him? Had he walked into a trap? As he furtively looked around him, he saw her smile. It was the saddest, saddest smile he had ever seen.

Totally taken aback, he found himself asking, "*Who are you?*"

He could see she was making an attempt to answer, but no sound came out. In frustration, instead, she decided to simply reveal herself. She let the fold of the *kitenge* covering her head, fall. And Rawago went half mad with raw terror and fear.

Her right eye was the same white as the first witch. And her left eye? There was no left eye. Instead, there was a gaping hole. But for the two large openings in the centre of her face, her nose too didn't exist. Even more ugly was the missing skin and flesh around her mouth, where the teeth came out straight from the skull. A major portion of both her ears had disappeared, leaving the ugly openings on the sides of her head in full view.

A face straight from the bowels of hell...

But Rawago still stood before her, transfixed. In fact, his fear and terror had ebbed away, and what remained was pity and sadness. He was about to reach out and touch her when someone raised the alarm.

"THE WITCHES! THE WITCHES! THETREHERE!"

Mutuku, his father and two of the men came running out of the veranda. They saw Rawago and a short thin woman facing each other, and pure pandemonium broke loose.

"THEY'VE GOT THE BOY!"

It happened as quickly as that. One moment there was nothing. Then, in the blink of an eye, another figure was there, fully formed. Huge and menacing, black against the mist, a shadow of a giant woman in ancient broom stick, with a massive mummied fabric on its head. It must have been twelve meters high, Rawago thought as he stood, rooted to the spot in horror. The head fabric was a full-face design, but where the eyeholes pierced it, there was empty space. Rawago's heart hammered inside his ribs, and his mouth was dry with fear. This was no mortal figure, he knew. This was something from the other side, from the dark world of sorcery and spells. Instinctively, he knew that none of his weapons could harm it.

The figure towered, unmoving apart from the slight quivering of the mist. The empty eyeholes seemed to seek him out. Then he heard the voice.

It was deep and seemed to echo around the black lake, as if he were hearing it in some vast cavern rather than the open woods.

"Beware, mortal!" it boomed. *"Do not awaken the shade of the Kambajo witches. Leave this place now while you are still able!"*

2

The Ontology of Magic

Many people are drawn, these days, to the idea of witchcraft. Some seek religious freedom, some wish for magical powers, some wish to reawaken the ancient links with our *Mother Earth*, or seek healing of both body and spirit. Some wish to be part of covens, to share ceremonies and regular meetings with like-minded folk in the comfort of their own homes. Others, however, have heard wilder music, playing to an older beat, and wish to reunite with nature, alone, out of doors, under the light of the stars and changing moonlight, in a simpler way.

What traditional witchcraft is really about on its practical side is the hidden powers of the human mind. These can be aided by traditional knowledge of techniques which will bring them out and develop them, but basically the powers of witchcraft, shamanism, magic or whatever one likes to call it are latent in everyone.

As we approach the end of the century, many people are looking for new directions in life, in philosophy and in religion. Some have set out on strange paths, beckoned on by the ideas and practices of foreign cults. Others have looked for a more homely, familiar tradition to follow, but this latter path is overgrown and lost in the modern world. Yet the longing remains. Somewhere there is a form of religious expression which appeals to the heart, is without dogma, brings the seeker close to God, from which spiritual comfort, healing and guidance may be received at first hand.

On the contrary, since the 1950s, something similar to such a faith has been re-emerging under the title of '*Witchcraft*'. Witchcraft is not just a pagan religion, however, for it has at least two other interesting components. One is magic and the other encompasses a wide array of traditional crafts, from using herbs in healing to making talismans and charms.

Witchcraft, as a religious impulse, has never gone out to recruit or convert those of other faiths, nor does being a witch prevent you following an orthodox belief as well. Today there are Catholic witches,

Quaker and Church of England witches, as well as Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist witches.

The paganism of modern witchcraft is an expansive philosophy which holds all aspects of life as sacred. Its mythology includes many forms of gods and goddesses, both Classical pagan, like the pantheons of ancient Egypt, Greece or the Celtic and Norse lands of the North, as well as the magically born, annually dying and sacrificed hero gods, which can include *Attis or Jesus*. It is necessary to study all scriptures and holy books, and mythologies too, to reassess their teachings and values for the current world.

It is often thought that witchcraft involves the worship of a character which the Christians call '*Satan*', but this is not true. The Satanists are not pagan witches but derive from Christianity, perverting the usual understanding of Good and Evil of that religion. Witches, on the whole, do not have any kind of evil deity.

The concept of a witch is hard to pin down, and this is reflected in the complex inter-relationships of the words that were used for it. In English, for instance, the word "*witch*" comes from the early medieval Old English words "*wicca*" (masculine) and "*wicce*" (feminine), pronounced "*witch-a*" and "*witch-eh*".

Both meant a witch, and derived from the verb "*wiccian*", to practise harmful magic or divination. (The idea that "*wicca*" meant "*wise one*" is erroneous.) In English we also have the terms "*conjurer*", "*diviner*", "*enchanter/enchantress*", "*magician*", "*necromancer*", "*sorcerer/sorceress*", "*warlock and wizard*", not to mention the less familiar "*hag*", "*sibyl*" and "*pythoness*".

People felt threatened by witchcraft because they believed in magic. The witches' powers were essentially magical. So what do we mean by magic? Yet also, people felt threatened by witchcraft because they believed in religion. It was Christian religion that told people about the

devil, and it was the Bible that said “*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*” (Exodus 22:18). So what do we mean by religion?

Magic is the art of causing changes in consciousness, for it is in an altered state of consciousness that the seeds of magic are sown, that the visions of past, future or distant events are seen, and when the true communions with the ancestors in their many forms may take place. To be able to control the state of your own conscious awareness is a very valuable skill for the magician. It requires lots of regular and consistent practice for the magician to bring most fractious part of humanity under his control; and yet without it, all magical acts, rituals or divinations are pale shadows of what they could be, if the will is there to direct the inner perceptions accurately towards the goal of the moment.

Magic was a set of traditional beliefs and ritual practices that helped people to understand the unusual forces in the world, and to achieve practical ends by seeking to manipulate those forces. Magic was thus overwhelmingly practical. People cast spells or carried amulets for material reasons. Magic relied primarily on tradition rather than on what we would call science; people believed that it worked, not because its operations could be demonstrated empirically, but because people whom they respected had said that it worked. It was ancient wisdom. In societies where most knowledge is handed down and where ancestors are respected, this is the most powerful way in which any knowledge is validated.

Religion was a system of belief in God, and of organised public rituals, run by a professional staff, designed to propitiate God. This operated for the spiritual and material benefit of believers, and provided believers with an altruistic code of conduct by which they should behave towards other humans.

The differences between early modern magic and religion were thus numerous and complex. Religion offered a universal interpretation of the world. Priests could discuss and explain any natural phenomenon, or any human behaviour, in religious terms. Magic was limited to individual

cases, and did not seek to explain the human condition as a whole. Religion was organised, with churches, staff, property, and formal powers over people's lives. Magic, by contrast, was essentially private. It is impossible to imagine a church of magic. Magical practitioners were not organised, and, if they sought to persuade people to believe in magic, this was a matter of attracting business to themselves rather than of attracting converts to the cause. Here we see magic as seeking immediate, practical benefits.

Herbal medicine is an inevitable part of magic and its functions. Without medicinal plants magician cannot do his activities properly. These medicines include herbs, animal parts, gemstones, sacred objects, or props used in performance and are thought to be potent in them or empowered by incantations or rituals. In some cases, medicines that are intended to heal are physiologically effective; the rites and condition of the performer based on his performance. Foremost among the many roles, magic played a role in its instrumental and expressive functions. Based in the attempt to influence or capture nature or human behaviour, magic's instrumental function is measured by its efficacy in achieving the desired goal. Magic's expressive function results from the symbolic and social meanings attached to its practices, though its performers by medicinal plants necessarily are aware of this function.

Scientifically, the existence of magical powers and witchcraft played a prominent role in human culture. Magic might be called the science of exploring man's hidden powers and his abilities. It is based upon a strong intuition of human mind. Magic was not completely the science of the past it was the science of the future. During the 19th century was the growth of psychology as a serious branch of medicine. Important development in the diagnosis and classification of mental illness come to influence the medical and legal discourse concerning the popular belief in black magic. Magic deals with the inner character and behavioural pattern of the believers. The people who born overwhelmed with infirmities and misfortunes, and fully convinced that they were the punishment of his signs, imagined that he would appease and propitiate the gods by offering the noblest and most perfect activities. Sometimes it leads to human

sacrifice, sometimes animal sacrifices it is indisputable that human sacrifices have been offered, both in ancient and modern times and even continues in the remote areas of our society today. Evil is easier than good, creativity is harder than destructiveness, evil is a disease, but it can be atrocious liberation, like the cap flying of a piano. Evil is always seeing in negative sides. The evil is born out of earth, spreading out; it reaches up to the sky, certainly it reverts from there, may it turn back and full on the every maker of it.

People believe that the power of magic is a creative and destructive dynamic force or power in everything visible and invisible in animate and inanimate things. These powers include everything assuming a separate entity in individual things in which it becomes a transmissible personality. It believes that magic is a power which acts both for good and for evil and also believes that it is a dangerous element like a sword and cannot be lightly treated. But from one point of view the whole of man's endeavours in magic and in religious practices are concentrated on getting control of this supernatural power by using it for one's own selfishness and accumulating a fund of it as a potential source of all forms of desires. Magical practices arise from the emotional experience which assails man in the impasses of his daily life.

The practice of witchcraft and sorcery both aim to do harm to others but *“while the witch move through an obscure compulsion or spirit possession, the sorcerer is moved by a simple ill will”*. That's the principle magic. To expect miracles, happiness, success, redemption from failures, etc., from external and superior entities that feed from the humiliation of those who voluntarily make sacrifices to them and who reduce unbelievers to subjection, from spirits that rejoice from one's destruction of oneself and other people, from gods that demand one's contempt for oneself and other people, from supernatural beings with unlimited powers and arbitrary desires that are not bound by any law knowable by reason but are meant to be influenced by a show of feelings from their humiliated followers.

No religion ordains or justifies black magic, superstition, human sacrifice, or occult practices. Any opposition to superstition or magic should not be construed as anti-religion or against the freedom to practice religion. One can be faithful to one's religion of choice without being superstitious. Superstition refers to the dogmas and blind faith without giving any consideration to reason, logic. All superstitious belief has originated in human society on the basis of ignorance and fear of the unknown or incomprehensible.

The primitive ancestors believed in one god, and that they gradually degenerated through the evil influence of tribal magicians or witches in to worshippers of many gods. Certainly primitive man's interest in bears is still one of the great unsolved mysteries of Anthropology. The primitive man had immense power of his wishes at the animistic stage he ascribed omnipotence to them. *"Magic was the Stone Age science, and he was the most intelligent creature to yet appear on earth"*.

The more man expanded his activities, the more gods he needed. His every new enterprise needed a new god. Man was out to gain control of his environment and his chief means of achieving this control was still magic.

On one hand, both the sun and the moon were seen as being either gods and goddesses actually flying through the heavens, or, more frequently, as symbols of such luminous deities. For example, the tribe of the *Druids* had a concept of the Son behind the Sun, a great power hidden by the sheer brilliance of sunlight. They did not worship the actual star, which we now know forms the central axle of our solar system, but the energy, the force that great light represented.

This is the most important aspect of all magical arts. What every spell, ritual or practical working is doing is manipulating the power which is so often referred to as the Light. Today we understand that light itself is energy, transformed from fuel by heat, as in a candle flame, or by making a thin filament incandescent as in an electric bulb, but there is an inner meaning to the concept of light.

The same analogy turns up in many religions; for example, Jesus is called *'The Light of the World'* and angels are described as *'The Shining Ones'*. But there is more to it than a philosophical argument about the meaning of words. Light is a symbol of growth, it is eternal, for the light of the first spark is still travelling outwards through the universe, at the speed of light. It is a symbol of illumination, of 'seeing the light' or receiving a *'flash of inspiration'*. We seek 'enlightenment' which means more than simply driving out darkness from our rooms after nightfall.

Suspicion of modern medicine due to beliefs about illness being due to witchcraft also continues in many countries to this day. It was increasingly believed that Christianity was engaged in an apocalyptic battle against the devil and his secret army of witches, who had entered into a diabolical pact. In total, tens or hundreds of thousands of people were executed, and others were imprisoned, tortured, banished, and had lands and possessions confiscated. The majority of those accused were women, though in some regions the majority were men.

Modern culture shows that we remain both haunted and fascinated by ideas about witchcraft and the supernatural that we have inherited from previous centuries. To the superficial glance it might seem that he who would urge a revival of witchcraft is confronted by a task more Herculean than that of making dry bones live - in that the bones he seeks to revivify have never existed. The educated class - which, be it remembered, includes those who have studied in the elementary schools of whatever thought - is united in declaring that such a person as a witch never did, never could, and never will exist. It is true that there are still those - a waning band - who, preserving implicit faith in the literal exactitude of revealed religion, maintain that witchcraft - along with Gardens of Eden, giants, and Jewish leaders capable of influencing the movements of sun and moon flourished under the old dispensation, even though it has become incredible under the new. Yet, speaking generally, the witch is as extinct in civilised men's minds as is the dodo; so that they who accept as a gospel the vaticinations of racecourse tipsters or swallow patent medicines with implicit faith, yet moralise upon the illimitability of human superstition when they read that witch-doctors still command a

following in *West Africa*, or that *Sicilian* peasants are not yet tired of opening their purses to sham sorcerers.

Witchcraft beliefs that are widely held throughout Sub-Saharan Africa have served a variety of social purposes, and is showing no tendency to lose salience during the post-colonial period. In northern Ghana, hundreds of women accused of witchcraft by relatives or members of their community are living in '*witch camps*' after fleeing or being banished from their homes.

The camps, which are home to around 800 women and 500 children, offer poor living conditions and little hope of a normal life. The women have fled discrimination, threats or even mob justice after being accused of witchcraft and blamed for '*crimes*' such as causing sickness, droughts or fires, cursing a neighbour or even just appearing in someone's dream.

Those who reach the witch camps are the lucky ones. Women have been murdered after accusations of witchcraft. Recently a mother of three was beaten and set on fire after being blamed for making a child sick through witchcraft. In 2010, the case of a 72-year-old woman who was set on fire and killed made headlines around the world.

Some elderly women have lived in the camps for as long as 40 years - abandoned by their families and trapped in the camps until they die. Their only companions are young girls, often granddaughters or family members, who were sent with the women as '*attendants*'. Most of these girls have never gone to school, or have dropped out, and even when they reach the age when they could leave the camps, they usually cannot because they are tainted by the word 'witch'.

There is a widespread belief in witchcraft in Ghana, as in many other African countries. Though both men and women can be accused of witchcraft, the vast majority are women, especially the elderly. Women who do not fulfil expected gender stereotypes, for example if they are widows, unmarried or cannot have children, are vulnerable to being branded as witches.

Across Africa - in Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and the Central African Republic - women and children are targeted as witches and suffer horrific abuse. Witches and wizards are believed to possess inherent, supernatural powers that are used to create evil or misfortune. Sicknesses, the inability to have children, accidents, the loss or destruction of property, droughts, floods and fires are among such events blamed on witches. Yet, when the belief system leads to people being persecuted and abused it becomes problematic. Even an accusation, whether or not it is followed by violence or banishment, can be seen as psychological abuse.

Witchcraft accusations are thought of as mostly to do with traditional and '*backwards*' beliefs, but they are an integral part of belief in religion. Most religions believe in good and evil. The main issue is how people respond to this belief in witchcraft. It is to do with the way that society copes when misfortune hits - whether it is ill health, an accident, loss of jobs or property. When people do not have a rational explanation for this they tend to use the supernatural to show that someone somewhere is responsible for this misfortune and to find a way of removing this person so they are no longer able to harm them.

Another misunderstanding through witchcraft is that the magician has the ability to deprive others influence and income, destroying someone's career, causing to separate others, controlling someone's mind, making them sick, depriving the victim of sleep, causing depression, blocking women's monthly periods, blocking women's ability to conceive, raping women in their dreams by the spirits, where the orgasm is real; causing accidents, making people sick, making the victim commit suicide, and so on. Paranormal activity is experienced by the victims of black magic. All these activities are done to terrorize weak minded humans; thus in believing these things, people approach witches instead of counsellors, because their faith rest in the hands of these magicians.

3

Ancient Agwara Palace

The long grass shivered once more. It was only a faint movement but there was no wind to cause it - as the hanging clouds of steam from the donkeys' breath clearly showed. Otieno shrugged his shoulders slightly, ensuring that his quiver was clear. His massive longbow lay across his knees, ready strung. Kamba hunters didn't travel with their bows slung across their shoulders. They carried them ready for instant use. Always.

His heart was beating slightly faster than normal. The movement in the grass was barely thirty meters away by now. He recalled Rawago's teaching: Don't concentrate on the obvious. They may want you to miss something else.

He realized that his total attention had become focused on the long grass beside the road. Quickly, his eyes scanned left and right again, reaching out to the tree line some forty meters back from the road on either side. Perhaps there were men hiding in the shadows, ready to charge out while his attention was distracted by whatever it was that was lying in the grass at the road's edge. Robbers, outlaws, mercenaries, who knew?

It took another half hour to reach the castle. The road wound upward toward the centre of the island, through well-spaced, wind-swept trees. There was plenty of light, unlike in the thick forests around *Adhengo Palace*, or the dark pine forests of *Agwara* that Otieno remembered all too well.

The leaves had turned, but so far most of them remained on the branches. All in all, it was pleasant country. As he rode the donkey, Otieno saw plenty of evidence of game - rabbits, of course, and wild turkey. Once he caught a quick flash of white when a deer showed him its hindquarters as it bounded away. Poaching would probably be rife here, he thought. Otieno had a basic sympathy for the villagers who sought occasionally to augment their diet with venison or game birds. Fortunately, poaching was a matter of local law and would be policed by the Bondo's gamekeepers. As a matter of policy, though, Otieno would need to discover the identities of the local professionals. Poachers could be a prime source of

information about goings-on. And information was a hunter's stock-in-trade.

The trees eventually thinned and he rode out into the sunlight again. The winding uphill road had brought him to a natural plateau, a wide plain perhaps a kilometer across. In the centre of the plain stood Palace *Lakecliff* and its dependent village - a huddle of thatched cottages set close to the palace walls.

The palace itself, to one used to the impressive mass of *Jaramogi Palace* or the soaring beauty of the *Raila Riat Palace*, was something of a disappointment. It was little more than a fort, Otieno realized, with the surrounding walls barely topping five meters in height. As he looked more closely, he could see that at least one section of the wall was constructed from timber - large tree trunks set vertically into the ground and bound together with iron brackets. It was an effective enough barrier, he thought, but it lacked the dramatic impact of *Jaramogi's* massive ironstone walls. Yet there were solidly buttressed towers at each corner and a central keep, which would provide a haven of last resort in the event of an attack. Over the keep, he could see the stag's head banner of Bondo County as it stirred on the light afternoon lake breeze.

There were a few workers in the fields and they stopped to stare at the cloaked figure as he rode toward the palace. He nodded to one or two of those who were closest to him and they nodded back, cautiously, raising their hands in salute. Simple farm people didn't understand hunters and as a result, they didn't wholly trust them either. Of course, Otieno knew, in times of war or danger, they would look to the hunters for help and protection and leadership. But now, with no threatening danger, they would keep their distance from him.

Otieno was eager to know the details of his mission but he knew that there was no sense in hurrying things. Ochieng and Rawago would tell him in their own time, and nothing he did or said would make them do so any sooner than they planned to. A few years earlier, he would have been in a fever of anticipation, fidgeting and unable to relax. But, along with

the other skills of a hunter, he had learned patience. As he sat and waited for his superiors to broach the subject, he felt Halt's approving eye on him from time to time as his former teacher assessed this newfound quality. Otieno looked up once, caught Rawago's eyes on him and allowed a grin to touch his features. He was pleased that he was able to demonstrate his forbearance.

Something was missing, he thought. Then he realized: there was none of the usual buzz of conversation, no sudden bursts of laughter or raised voices as people greeted companions, sharing a joke or a story. The people of *Agwara* were quiet, moving with their eyes cast down, seemingly disinterested in what was going on around them. It was an unfamiliar experience for him. As a hunter, he was accustomed to drawing attention - albeit guarded - whenever he arrived in a new place. And in the past weeks as a *jaduar*, he had experienced the same surge of interest - although for a different reason.

It was fear, he realized. People in *Agwara* were living close to a dangerous border. Their lord had been struck down by a mysterious ailment and there was a distinct belief among them that it was the work of a sorcerer. Small wonder that they would not show interest in or greet a stranger arriving in their midst. He hesitated, uncertain whether or not he should dismount. Then the question was answered for him as a rotund man, with a seneschal's chain and keys and a look of perpetual worry, emerged from the keep. The seneschal - basically the person who managed the day-to-day domestic affairs of the palace for its chief - saw him and moved toward him.

That is when Otieno decided to visit the isolate mansion by the lake. After twenty paces, Otieno looked behind him and could no longer see the way out of the wood. The path twisted so much and the undergrowth and creepers and trees twined together so closely that his world had become confined to a space of a few meters. He continued on, with his hand holding firmly a Nilotic knife hilt. Years of hunter training meant that he moved with virtually no sound and now he began instinctively to use the shadow patterns as cover for his movement.

There was no further sign of lights among the trees. Perhaps, he thought, the light bearers had been scared off when he entered the wood. The thought made him a little more relaxed. Maybe he wasn't the only one in this wood feeling nervous. He smiled at the thought and moved on.

Then the whispering started.

It was right at the limit of hearing, so that at first he wasn't totally sure he could actually hear anything. Then, he thought that perhaps it was the wind through the leaves - except there was no wind. It was an almost imperceptible susurrant that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere. Otieno looked at the dog, Arctic was its name. The dog stopped, one forepaw raised, head cocked to one side, listening. So the sound was there. But it was impossible to determine where it came from, and that made it impossible to make out whether it was voices or just a sound. It ebbed and flowed at the very edge of his senses, sometimes drowned by the accelerated sound of his own heartbeat, sometimes becoming almost clear, almost comprehensible. And then, in the middle of the indeterminate muttering, he began to make out individual words.

Unpleasantly evocative words. Once, he thought he clearly heard a voice say: *pain*. And then the muttering died until he heard, or thought he heard, the word *death*. And *suffering*, *darkness* and *terror*. Then more meaningless, wordless whispering.

4

Magic and The Bible

What does the Bible say about witchcraft? Are instances of magic charming with incantations recorded in the Scriptures? How does God view this practice? Is it a harmless pastime or a dangerous engagement with demonic forces? An understanding of what the Bible teaches on this subject will better enable one to analyse and counteract the present-day growth of witchcraft.

Supranatural powers possessed by the "*magicians*" of Egypt and of Babylon were not unlike the powers and the chanting of some witches today.

The morning after the Pharaoh (*of Joseph's day*) dreamed about seven fat cows devoured by seven thin ones and seven full ears of corn consumed by seven thin ones, he called in his magicians to interpret the dream (*Genesis* 41:1-8). The word translated "*magicians*" in the Authorized Version occurs twice in this chapter (41:8, 24). They were "men of the priestly caste, who occupied themselves with the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic writings, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of events, magic, and conjuring, and who were regarded as the possessors of secret arts."

In Moses' and Aaron's contest with Pharaoh the Egyptian magicians duplicated three of the miracles: rods were turned to snakes (*Exodus* 7:11), water was turned to blood (7:22), and frogs appeared (8:7). However, the magicians could not produce lice, as Aaron did (8:18). The three demonstrations of their magical powers were accompanied by "enchantments" or "incantations," a word meaning "*to wrap tightly or to envelop*" and thus suggesting secret, mysterious ways. Jehovah's supremacy over these magicians is demonstrated in a threefold way: (1) their snakes were devoured by Aaron's (7:12), (2) Aaron's miracles did not require incantations, and (3) they were unable to duplicate the plague of lice.

The same word for "magicians" is listed along with names for other occultists in the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar called in magicians, sorcerers, Chaldeans (*Daniel* 2:2) and wise men (2:27) to interpret his

image dream, but they were unable to do so. Also these occultists were unable to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a large tree (4:7).

God's attitude toward witchcraft is bluntly stated in Exodus 22:18, "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*" "*There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, anyone practicing divination or soothsaying, observing omens, applying sorcery, a charmer, a medium, a wizard, or a necromancer. For all who do these things are offensive to the Lord*" (Deuteronomy 18:10 - 12). God gave these stringent orders in order to preserve the Israelites from spiritual contamination with the degraded occultism practice of Canaan.

Jezebel, the wicked queen of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was deeply involved in witchcraft ("*her sorceries were many,*" 2 Kings 9:22). Therefore Joram asked how there could be any peace in Israel so long as Jezebel's magical practices prevailed. This "*cursed woman*" (9:34) died a violent death (9:33-35), which is typical of the fate of so many who are involved in this kind of evil practice.

King Manasseh of Judah practiced numerous kinds of occultism, including Spiritism and magical sorcery (2 Chronicles 33:6). God called these deeds "abominations" and stated that Manasseh had "*done wickedly*" (2 Kings 21:11). Therefore Manasseh and his kingdom suffered greatly (21:10-16). The term 'abomination' has the clear connotation of outrageously affronting God by contaminating His holy worship with the adoration of finite, polluted, false deities. It is certainly shameful that the chief monarch of God's people fell to such low depths of sin.

In the New Testament there are several striking examples of the clash of Christianity with demonic magic.

The New Testament speaks of four magicians. Simon (Acts 8:19- 24) practiced magic in Samaria and amazed all who saw him. Along with wrongly using his natural abilities to try to convince the populace that he had great supernatural powers, he was also rebuked by Peter for

supposing that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit could be purchased with money.

BarJesus or *Elymas* (Acts 13:4-12) was a false prophet and magician who resisted Paul and Barnabus. Paul's condemnation of Elymas was not because of his natural ability to perform, but rather because of his wrong use of the ability and his opposition to the faith.

Jannes and *Jambres* (II Timothy 3:8) are two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. They were advisors to Pharaoh and are always considered while studying ancient Hebrew words.

Now after the passion of Christ, our Lord, and his ascension into heaven, there arose a certain Simon, the magician, a Samaritan by birth, from a village called *Gittha*, who having the leisure necessary for the arts of magic deceived many, saying that he was some *Power of God*, above all powers. Whom the Samaritans worship as the Father, and wickedly extol as the founder of their heresy, and strive to exalt him with many praises. Who having been baptized by the blessed apostles, went back from their faith, and disseminated a wicked and pernicious heresy, saying that he was transformed supposedly, that is to say like a shadow, and thus he had suffered, although, he says, he did not suffer.

Simon was the son of Antonius and Rachael, a Samaritan of *Gittha*, a village six *schoeni* from the city of Caesarea called a village of the *Gettones*. It was at Alexandria that Simon perfected his studies in magic, being an adherent of John, a *hemero-baptist*, through whom he came to deal with religious doctrines.

John was the forerunner of Jesus, according to the method of combination or coupling. Whereas Jesus had twelve disciples, as the Sun, John, the Moon, had thirty, the number of days in a lunation, or more correctly twenty-nine and a half, one of his disciples being a woman called *Helen*,

and a woman being reckoned as half a man in the perfect number of the *Triacontad*, or *Pleroma* of the Aeons.

Of all John's disciples, Simon was the favourite, but on the death of his master, he was absent in *Alexandria*, and so *Dositheus*, a co-disciple, was chosen head of the school.

Simon, on his return, acquiesced in the choice, but his superior knowledge could not long remain under a bushel. One day *Dositheus*, becoming enraged, struck at Simon with his staff; but the staff passed through Simon's body like smoke, and *Dositheus*, struck with amazement, yielded the leadership to Simon and became his disciple, and shortly afterwards died.

Aquila and *Nicetas* tell how Simon had confessed to them privately his love for Luna, and narrate the magic achievements possessed by Simon, of which they have had proof with their own eyes. Simon can dig through mountains, pass through rocks as if they were merely clay, cast himself from a lofty mountain and be borne gently to earth, can break his chains when in prison, and cause the doors to open of their own accord, animate statues and make the eye-witness think them men, make trees grow suddenly, pass through fire unhurt, change his face or become double-faced, or turn into a sheep or goat or serpent, make a beard grow upon a boy's chin, fly in the air, become gold, make and unmake kings, have divine worship and honours paid him, order a sickle to go and reap of itself and it reaps ten times as much as an ordinary sickle.

To this list of wonders the *Homilies* add making stones into loaves, melting iron, the production of images of all kinds at a banquet; in his own house dishes are brought of themselves to him. He makes spectres appear in the market place; when he walks out statues move, and shadows go before him which were presumed to be souls of the dead

But afterwards seeing the apostles accomplishing wonder-workings that were really true and divine, and bestowing on those who came to them the grace of the Spirit, thinking himself also worthy to receive equal

power from them, when great Peter detected his villainous intention, and bade him heal the incurable wounds of his mind with the drugs of repentance, he immediately returned to his former evil-doing, and leaving Samaria, since it had received the seeds of salvation, ran off to those who had not yet been tilled by the apostles, in order that, having deceived with his magic arts those who were easy to capture, and having enslaved them in the bonds of their own legendary lore, he might make the teachings of the apostles difficult to be believed.

Nevertheless in the public controversy which follows, this secret is made public property, in order to meet Simon's declaration: "*I say that there are many gods, but one God of all these gods, incomprehensible and unknown to all*"; and again: "*My belief is that there is a Power of immeasurable and ineffable Light, whose greatness is held to be incomprehensible, a power which the maker of the world even does not know, nor does Moses the lawgiver, nor your master Jesus*" (Acts 8).

But the divine grace armed great Peter against the fellow's madness. For following after him, he dispelled his abominable teaching like mist and darkness, and showed forth the rays of the light of truth. But for all that the thrice wretched fellow, in spite of his public exposure, did not cease from his working against the truth, until he came to Rome, in the reign of Claudius Caesar. And he so astonished the Romans with his sorceries that he was honoured with a brazen pillar. But on the arrival of the divine Peter, he stripped him naked of his wings of deception, and finally, having challenged him to a contest in wonder-working, and having shown the difference between the divine grace and sorcery, in the presence of the assembled Romans, caused him to fall headlong from a great height by his prayers and captured the eye-witnesses of the wonder for salvation.

Simon, of Samaria, had gained a great following through his practicing of witchcraft. People on all levels of society ("*from the least to the greatest*") followed him for some time (Acts 8:10, 12). They were amazed because of his magical arts (8:12) and his claim that he was "some great one" (8:9). Overwhelmed and deceived were they by his power that they claimed, "This man is the great power of God" (8:10).

However, on hearing the Gospel from Philip, Simon believed and was baptized. Interestingly, Simon himself was amazed as he saw that the miracles Philip performed were far greater than his own (8:13). This points to the superiority of God's power over that of sorcery.

The success of the early church in fulfilling the Great Commission was dependent upon the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit. Without His conviction and power the lost world would have never been convinced that the apostles were sent messengers of God. There were miracles, signs, healings, and wonders done by the apostles, convincing both Jew and Gentiles the gospel message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection was real.

Early in our Lord's ministry, He told the twelve disciples "*...Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 10:5-6). From that point until now in the history of the church, the Christians were all Jewish people. In fact, the Jewish people thought, as Christians, only Jewish people could become Christians. Suddenly the walls are starting to break down as Philip carries the gospel to Samaria.

Jesus ministered in Samaria to the woman at the well (John 4). He also sent His disciples to be "*witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). So Philip is obeying the command of the Lord Jesus as he goes "*...down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them*" (Acts 8:5). As he preaches Christ, he encounters people who need the Lord and he ministers to them through the power of the Holy Spirit. The miracles and healings which resulted through Philip's ministry authenticated him as a true messenger of God.

The Samaritans were a mixed race people. When Israel was conquered in 722 B.C., by Sargon of Syria, he carried away most of the inhabitants of Samaria. He left the poorest people behind then he brought foreign people in to intermarry with these Samaritans. As a result, the Samaritans became half

Jewish and half mixed nationalities. To the pure Jews in Judea and Jerusalem, these Samaritan were not really Jews. The primary task of the early church was not to feed the poor or heal the sick. It was to preach Jesus Christ. Although miracles and healings were a part of the ministry of the first apostles, the apostles did not go everywhere healing the sick or working miracles. They did go “*everywhere preaching the word*” (Acts 8:4). Preaching the word was their primary task and that could only be possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.



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