A Sociological Interrogation of Christians' Perception of Witchcraft in Africa

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Introduction

The concept and fear of witchcraft in Africa is complex, multifaceted and deep. Its fear is not only an alarming phenomenon but also a threat to family life, sound spiritual life and social harmony. One, however, wonders why the belief in witchcraft has such dynamic force on Africans in spite of the influence of Christianity, Western Education, industrialization, and modernization. One is tempted to some questions like: is the belief in witchcraft part of African cultural heritage which has refused to die? Or is it the case that Africans have not been able to eradicate the belief because they do not have the means to do so? Or does the belief have some intrinsic values which have encouraged Africans to cope with it? What implications does the African concept of witchcraft have on the Christian contextualization effort in African context? Some of these questions among others are what this paper tend to answer. Previous research on witchcraft in Africa context have greatly sought to understand the concept from a single dimensional view. This has not helped Christian ministers in Africa to have a total grasp on the concept and to devise an wholistic devise to respond theologically. Therefore, this research adopted a pure primary tool to gather firsthand information from pastors,

Christians, women and men in Africa on the concept of witches in the contemporary society.

Literature Review

Witchcraft is believed in almost all African societies as reflected in the major contextual research on African culture and religion. The belief in witchcraft is the traditional way of explaining the ultimate cause of evil, misfortune or death. Carol McKinney, who studied this phenomenon among the Bajju of Kaduna State of Nigeria, notes that witchcraft is "an inherent capacity to exert supernatural influence over another person. This influence frequently causes harm, and it explains phenomena such as breaches in social relations, anti-social behavior, unexpected occurrences, sickness and death."[508] Belief in witchcraft is a serious philosophical attempt to deal with the thorny question of evil. This belief in witchcraft explains that there is a primary or ultimate cause of evil. Evans-Pritchard captures the logic of witchcraft when he writes,

> It is a system with its own natural logic. This explanatory system provides answers to questions of why particular occurrences happen to specific individuals at the time they do. It does not invalidate their understanding of empirical cause and effect of an occurrence. Rather it deals with its ultimate cause.[509]

Thus, one sees that natural causes and witchcraft are not mutually exclusive but supplementary. The one supplements the other, accounts for what the other does not account. Pritchard explains further by example;

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[508] Carol V. McKinney, *The Bajju of Central Nigeria: A Case Study of Religious and Social Change* (PhD Dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 1985), 59.

[509] Evans Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: University Press, 1976), 71.

> Fire is hot, but it is not hot owing to witchcraft for that is its nature. It is a universal quality. It is the particular variable conditions of an event and not the general universal conditions that witchcraft explains.[510]

One sees that the belief in witchcraft serves a very practical purpose in explaining events and occasions and the causes behind them. Death is thus not a natural phenomenon. The death of young men and women is very unnatural. The witches would always be the cause of such a death. Even old people are sometimes said to be killed by witchcraft. Young people die not from natural causes but always from the powers of witchcraft. In some society's death from dysentery, falling off a tree and any violent death were considered such a serious misfortune that the deceased had to be buried in the backyard. This is not to say that people do not recognize natural causes, for example that the death of a young man in a motor accident was directly caused by a vehicle is not denied. The critical observation of Pritchard just cited indicates that there is a recognition of natural causes, but at the same time there is the acknowledgment of the fact that things do not "just happen". In essence, Africans see witchcraft as the enemy of life.[511]

Brantely and Green assert that witchcraft is one of the most potent and dreaded superstitions in Africa. Could this ideology be real? Most Africans as these scholars argue believe witches can act to influence, intervene and alter the course of human life for good or ill. Africans accept witchcraft as a mode of explanation, of perception and interpretation of their problems, events, nature and reality even when reason and common sense suggest otherwise. They believe witches can

[510] Ibid.

[511] Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion. The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, n.d), 187.

cause poverty, diseases, accidents, business failures, famine, earthquake, infertility and childbirth difficulties.[512]

Mazrui argues that most people in Africa attribute any extraordinary, mysterious or inexplicable event, manifestation or phenomenon to witchery and wizardry.[513] In some African communities there is even a talk about positive and negative witchcraft. The belief is that positive witchcraft is used to do good; cure diseases or solve problems, and negative witchcraft is used to do evil. Mbiti observe that Africans believe witches and wizards are spirits but that they carry out their vicious activities as human beings, animals or insects. The belief is that witches and wizards transform into humans, animals and insects to perpetrate their evil machinations.[514]

Ranger adds that in countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, witches are identified mostly with women or infants. In Nigeria, all nocturnal insects and animals especially birds are suspected to be witches or wizards. In Gambia or Senegal, witches are associated with the bird (owl) and children are advised to kill it wherever they see it. Witches are believed to operate mainly in the night.[515] They allegedly organize nocturnal meetings in the seas, oceans and forests where they feast on human blood, flesh or fetuses. The general belief among African communities is that witches and wizards always convening to plan evil. They gather to plot how to inflict harm or undermine the progress of people especially their family members. As a result of this, Hinger states that throughout Africa witchcraft accusation in families is common. People blame their fathers, mothers, husbands,

[512] M. Green, *Priests, Witches and Power-Popular Christianity after Mission in Southern Tanzania* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 178.

[513] O.C.E. Mazrui, "Jangamizi: Spirit and Sculpture" *Journal of African Languages and Culture* (1993), 23-38.

[514] J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 80.

[515] T. Ranger, "Introduction" *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa* (1980), 40.

wives, children, uncles and aunties, grandfathers and grand mothers for any evil or misfortune that befalls them even the ones they caused for themselves.

Biblical Perceptions on Witchcraft

Another crucial question about the issue of witchcraft concerns the Biblical teaching on witchcraft. A question that must be ask is that, "What does the Bible have to say about witchcraft?". People of God in both the Old and New Testaments have been warned to have nothing to do with demonic activity and anything related with it. Leviticus 19:31 states, "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them" (cf. 20:26; Ex. 22: 18; Deut. 18: 14). Deuteronomy 18:14 makes it very explicit: "Let no one be found among you ..... who engages in witchcraft or cast spells. These are detestable practices." It is very clear that *witchcraft or any demonic activity* in all its ramifications *is detestable* to God. In the New Testament, man is said to be bewitched when he replaces God for another (Gal. 3:1). There is a clear prohibition of involvement in witchcraft, whether in actual involvement in demonic activity or giving verbal support of the activity.

Believers who have dabbled in demonic activities have been hurt and injured. Disobedience to the clear teaching of Scripture concerning witchcraft leads to catastrophic consequences e.g. defeat, injury and death. The story of Saul in I Samuel 9:28 and the sons of Sceva in Acts 19 demonstrate some problems encountered when people dabble in demonic activities of any kind. In fact, witchcraft has nothing good to offer. Witchcraft encourages disrespect against parents, Children, disunity and hatred among families. and murder. Recently, a young man hacked his father to death because he suspected his father of killing his son in witchcraft. It is almost incredible the atrocities that

have been committed because of witch-hunting even among Christian communities.[516]

The testimony of Scripture is that the child of God has complete power over demonic power. In the New Testament, it is the devil that flees. not the child of God. If there is the power of witchcraft, then the power of the child of God overshadows it. “Jesus' power is super power and Satan's power is powerless power” according to a current children's chorus in Nigeria. The theological basis of this assertion is that the cross disarmed demonic control of the believer in Christ when Christ had stripped evil forces of their power. “He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them” (Col. 2:14). According to Fred Dickason,

> Satan and demons are: no match for Christ the God-man. In face of satanic opposition, the cross accomplished God's self-glorification, released the devil's prisoners, publicly routed evil spirits, and sealed their judgment so that men would never have to tear or follow them again.[517]

Psychological Perception on Witchcraft

The foregoing gives us most of the facts about witchcraft and these presuppose that witchcraft is an obvious reality. It is hence necessary to examine some beliefs very critically, in order to try to see how logical and acceptable they are and how some of them can be explained away psychologically. Therefore, cases of different types of people commonly accused of witchcraft in order to discover what motives may be behind the accusations leveled against them.

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[516] Ibid.

[517] C. Fred Dickason. *A11Kels. Elect a11d Evil* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 215.

Women generally are accused of witchcraft as a result, mainly, of what Parrinder calls 'a deep-rooted sexual antagonism.'[518] Witch-hunters are usually men, in most cases celebrates, which makes it logical that accusations of witchcraft are the direct results of this antagonism. Furthermore, women are generally regarded as inferior to men, and that for their part, they try to remove this social stigma by identifying themselves with witchcraft associations, and so the witch hunt is an attempt to bring them back to their natural position.

Close Relatives: the first point to note here is that witches are regarded as our enemies the enemies of society as a whole. They bring misfortune and cause serious diseases. When a man suffers from any of these, he nurses the belief that some witches have caused it. His mind goes immediately to people who have some grievance against him and naturally such people are those with whom he has close social contact, his own relatives for that matter.[519]

Mothers and Daughters-in-law: A woman whose child dies usually accuses her mother-in-law of being responsible. one can recognize from the logical point of view the envy that naturally exists between the wife and her mother-in-law. The wife is regarded by her husband's mother as a usurper who has robbed her of the affection of her son, while on the other hand, the wife harbours the feeling that her mother-in-law is making it difficult for her to enjoy the unalloyed love and sympathy of her husband. This is quite understandable in the Yoruba system.[520]

Co-wives: In a polygamous house, co-wives are frequently accused of witchcraft. This again has its root in jealousy. Whatever the pleasures that may exist in a polygamous home, there is always the continuous absence of peace. The various

[518] E.A. Ade Adegbola (ed.), *Traditional Religion in West Africa* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1983), 325.

[519] Ibid, 325.

[520] Ibid, 326.

wives are always vying for the exclusive love of their husband. Accusations of witchcraft by one wife against another are therefore very common.[521]

Old Women: Old women are accused of witchcraft because of their age. People wonder why they live so long. There is a belief in Yorubaland, for example, that old people rejuvenate themselves with the souls of young children. Young mothers always make sure that the old women in the household do not touch their young children, lest, it is believed, they cause them to die.

Queer Ugly People: those people are socially handicapped. Generally, people believe that they come to that position as a divine punishment for wickedness. They are therefore liable to accusations of witchcraft and are usually held responsible for any outbreak of serious and deadly disease or any misfortune.

From the above, it is lucid that accusations are based mainly on mere suspicion arising from jealousy, while anything unusual in the behavior of accused people is readily taken as proof of guilt.[522]

Significance/Impact of Witchcraft in Africa

Witchcraft victimizes black Africans, including Christians and has a negative influence on their lives. According to Maimela, witchcraft is classified among Sawyer's four types of sins that call for salvation. Maimela explains the victimization as follows:

> The traditional African is a victim of anxieties that are born out of evil spirits and malicious persons, especially witches and sorcerers. Accordingly, most Africans express an intense revulsion against all forms of diabolical evil

[521] Ibid.

[522] Ibid.

> embodied in witchcraft, because not only does it prostitutes the laws of nature by a deliberate manipulation of the vital forces for destructive purposes, but also poisons all human relationships, thereby threatening the corporate nature of society.[523]

Witchcraft raises intense fear and revulsion because it destroys human life, human community and shatters dreams and visions of individuals and societies. People need salvation from this evil. Maimela emphasizes both the malevolent nature of witchcraft and humanity's dire need for salvation when he says: "Evil spirits and witchcraft are therefore the greatest injustice imaginable towards a community – a sin against which traditional Africans spend their greatest energies, trying to procure relief or salvation from ...."[524] According to the African world view, salvation does not in particular refer to the eschatological life of glory but to a life of happiness, good health and prosperity, here and now.[525] Ramashapa declares: "For them salvation is to "*[go] gata tala e bola*" – total peace, good health and prosperity. Salvation for them is good life."[526]

In view of the aforesaid, witchcraft has a very negative impact on members of various black communities, including Christians. This phenomenon is regarded, especially by the Northern Basotho people as an existing permanent life-threatening reality and practice.[527] It is a life-threatening evil, not only to those who fear for their lives because of bewitchment, but also those who are said to practice it. Haule cites Father Albert's statement on the negative impact the

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[523] S.S. Maimela, "Salvation in African Traditional Religions" *Missionalia,* 13(2), (1985), 68.

[524] Ibid.

[525] Tunde Aremu and E.O. Malomo, *Christian Theology in African Perspective* (Ilorin: Amazing Grace Print Media, 2016), 163.

[526] J.M. Ramashapa, "Northern Basotho Worldview: A Theological Reflection" *NGTT* 37(2), (1996), 358.

[527] Ibid.

belief in witchcraft has on people: "It depresses the soul with its eternal fear, and destroys all too often the body; it leads to suspicion and hatred, nay, to mutilation and murder."[528] The terrible acts of witch hunts and witch murders in many rural parts of South Africa, especially in the Limpopo Province are known to many people.[529] Shorter describes the situation especially as it relates to individuals suspected of witchcraft practices, quite aptly: "To accuse people of witchcraft practices is to destroy their social personality, if not to condemn them to a more merciful (sic) death."[530] Such suspicions are indeed condemnatory and inflict irreversible damage, both physically and socially on the one who is suspected of witchcraft activities. Suspicions of witchcraft can stigmatize the entire family and its offspring for generations.

Beliefs in witchcraft have serious negative economic implications as well. Those who are afraid of being bewitched are forced to spend a fortune to acquire the strongest protective muti (medicine). For this medicine to retain its effectiveness, it has to be renewed each year. People are charged many head of cattle in exchange for these services. Ejizu makes the following statement with regard to the measures people take to protect themselves against the actions of witches and wizards: "People protect themselves against their nefarious activities through different kinds of ritual practices including offering ritual sacrifice, making and wearing of charms and amulets."[531]

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[528] C. Haule, *Bantu "Witchcraft" and Christian Morality: The Encounter of Bantu Uchawi with Christian Morality: An Anthropological and Theological Study,* Immenzee, (Neue Zeitschrift für Missionwissenschaft, Supplementa XVI), (1969), 146.

[529] S.T. Kgatla, *Moloi ga a na mmala (A Witch has no Colour)*: *A Socio-Religious Study of Witchcraft Accusations in the Northern Province of South Africa* (DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, 2000), 6.

[530] A. Shorter, *Jesus and the Witch Doctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness*, (London: Oribis Books, 1985), 97.

[531] Ejizu, C I 2002. *African Traditional Religions and the Promotion of Community: Dynamics of Interreligious Encounter*: A reader, 59-72.

So dangerous for human life and survival are witches that people who find themselves in the grip of bewitchment have to seek help, not only from humans but also from divine and spiritual powers. Should they forget to renew the protective measures, they open their homestead to onslaughts of witches. In traditional Africa an unprotected homestead is referred to as the playing ground for witches and its occupants are in danger of becoming easy targets of witches.

The impact witchcraft has on the way in which the church fulfils the *missio Dei* is devastating. The growth of the church is greatly impeded. Members leave in their thousands those churches that do not take seriously and address the threat posed by witchcraft. Ramashapa's assessment of the situation is rather accurate: "The movement of church members from churches that do not clearly practise faith healing to those which practise it is a sign of fear of *boloi* and other destructive powers."[532] Of course, the exodus of members from many mainline churches to the African Initiated Churches and charismatic movements is not only well known, but is also cause for grave concern for mainline churches wherever they operate.

It is obvious that the Christian church has to do something about this state of affairs. The question is how the church can counteract witchcraft in order to facilitate appropriation of the Christian faith and the promise of abundant life. Unfortunately some people do not seem to realise the need for the church to find appropriate ways of reclaiming the situation. Many ministers are assumed to maintain the position that the church should continue to preach the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. The importance and need for the church to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in as pure a way as possible, cannot be refuted and is indeed the church's

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Compiled by M M Karecki (University of South Africa, Pretoria, 2002), 12.

[532] J.M. Ramashapa, "Northern Basotho Worldview: A Theological Reflection" *NGTT* 37(2), 358.

central task and responsibility. The question, however, does not only concern the "what?" of preaching but also the "how" of proclaiming the gospel. Does the way in which we serve African Christians in the context of their existential problems, which among others include witchcraft, really suit their conceptual framework? The way in which the gospel is proclaimed should be both transformative and liberative and the church in Africa should find ways of providing a transformative and liberative service to its members.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Demographical Data

Table 1.1: Age Range of the Respondents

Range	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
20-30	26	52
31-40	8	16
41-50	10	12
51 and above	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

From the table above, it is glaring that majority of the respondents are between the age of 20 and 30 as 52% are within that age-range while 16% are within the age of 31-40 and 20% are within the range of 41-50 while 12% falls within the range of 51 above which implies that any response given by these respondents can be reliable.

Table 1.2: Status of the Respondents

Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Teacher	9	18
Clergy	11	22
Civil Servant	4	8
Student	20	40
Self Employed	2	4
Others	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

This table shows that 18% of the respondents are teacher while 22% are clergy and 8% are Civil Servant as 40% are students and 4% are self employed and lastly 8% of the respondents could not identify themselves with the listed works. By implication, the research is not restricted to a mono context. This means that the information gathered are from reliable and learned sources.

Table 1.3: Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	20	40
Married	30	60
Divorced	0	0
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

This table reveals that 40% of the respondents are single, while 60% are married. This will allow the researcher to sample the opinion of elderly ones and the youth or like about the importance of witchcraft in Africa. From the table above, the opinion and contribution of the elders take the large percentage which will aptly test for the veracity of analysis.

Table 1.4: Position of the Respondents in the Family

Position in the family	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Father	16	32
Mother	14	28
Son	10	20
Daughter	10	20
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

The table above shows the position of the respondents in the family. 32% of the respondents are father while 28% are mother and those who take the position of sonship amounts 20% and only 20% are daughters. This is to ensure that the information gathered from these set people represents a wider area of discipline.

Table 2: African Belief in Witchcraft

S/N	**Statement**	**True**		**False**		**Undecided**	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
1	Africans' believe in the existence of witches	50	100	-	-	-	-
2	Africans' belief in witchcrafts is a mere superstition	12	24	38	76	-	-
3	Women constitute a larger percentage of the witchcraft	42	84	4	8	4	8
4	Witches have their bodies at home while their spirit fly away to attend meetings	45	90		1	2	4
5	In spite of modernity, Africans still believe in witchcraft	48	96	-	-	2	4

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

The table above shows the responses of the respondents to African belief in witchcraft in Africa. The African belief in the existence of witches, 50 respondents that constitute 100%

agreed on the existence, 12 respondents, constituting 24% lower to the 38 which constitutes 76% of African proving that witchcrafts in Africa is a mere superstition.

According to Awolalu, in a book titled "Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrifical Rites", Yoruba believe that "witches are the major causes of misfortune, illness, poverty and death, inability to gain promotions in office, failure in examinations and barrenness in women, impotence in men, failure of crops and a thousand other evils are attributed to witchcraft."[533] Here, one can deduce that virtually every vices in the African society are regarded as the handy work of witches not excluding natural disasters.

In respect to the data analysis, their bodies are left at home and then legs hung on the wall can be likened to an evidence of the reality of their existence. 45 respondents that constitutes 90% of the African belief in their bodies been found while their spirit fly to the spirit world. According to Adegbola, "Africans believe that witches do hold meeting in the night and this their spiritual meeting, attended by the souls of witches which take leave of their bodies."[534]

In the record of the data, 48 responses constituting 96% agreed that in spite of modernity, Africans still believe in witchcraft and that which is back-up by the statement of Adegbola when he asserts that "on the one hand we have evidence to show that the belief is on the work as forces like education, hospitals, western civilization and Christianity are gradually undermined. The need for protection and the ever increasing rate of unemployment are accompanied by the naturalistic desire to preserve African culture."[535]

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[533] J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Belief and Sacrificial Rites* (London: Longman, 1979), 81.

[534] E.A. Adegbola, *Traditional Religion in West Africa,* 319.

[535] Ibid.

Table 3: Positive Effects of Witchcraft in Africans' understandings

S/N	Statement	True		False		Undecided	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Women joined the group to protect their children	28	56	14	28	8	16
2	Witchcraft is used to raise dead	7	14	34	68	9	18
3	Witchcraft have positive roles they play in African society, some Christians even use it	18	36	27	54	5	10
4	Witchcraft help to solve conflicts in African society	14	28	28	58	8	16
5	Witches help the community leaders like monarchs and Chiefs to govern the people	32	64	13	26	5	10

Source: Field Survey September 2018

The above table shows the varied responses of the respondents to the positive effect of witchcrafts in Africa. Women constitute a larger percentage of the witchcraft and it is believed that women joined the group to protect their children. 28 respondents that constitute 56% agreed that women joined this group to protect their children. 14 respondents that constitute 28% disagreed and 8 respondents that constitute 16% did not decide. From these responses, one can vividly see that women protect their children, relation and husband when they join witchcraft. They bring prosperity and success to their family members. Dopamu explains: "Witches are mostly women, but men can also be found. Witches usually inherit their nefarious art from their mothers. In his word, African witches are predominantly women."[536]

It is also glaring that 14% of the respondents agreed that witchcraft is used to raise dead while 68% disagreed and 18%

[536] Abiola T. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* (London: Shedlon, 1974), 124.

could not decide. Also, whether witchcraft have positive roles they play in African society or not, 36% agreed while 54% disagreed and 10% could not decide. Moreover, a larger percentage of the respondents deny the fact that witchcraft helps to solve conflicts in African society as 58% disagreed and 28% agreed and 16% could not decide. Finally, 64% of the respondents agreed with the fact that witches help the community leaders like monarchs and chiefs to govern the people while 26 disagreed and 10 could not decide. From all of this, it is clear that the act of witchcraft in Africa to an extent, have positive effects in Africa.

Table 4: Negative Effects of Witchcraft in African understanding

S/N	Statement	True		False		Undecided	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Witches offer human beings as sacrifice	42	84	5	10	3	6
2	Witchcraft can change man into animal	37	74	6	12	7	14
3	Beliefs in witchcraft create fear in the mind of Christians in Africa	48	96	2	4	-	-
4	Witches offer sacrifice in naked	15	30	14	28	21	42
5	Christian Families with witches have the destiny in jeopardy	30	60	10	20	10	20

Source: Field Survey September, 2018

The table above shows the responses of the respondent to negative effects of witchcraft in Africa. Witches offer human being as sacrifice, this is evident as 42 respondents constituting 84% agreed while 5 respondents which constitutes 10% disagreed and 3 of the respondents constituting 6% did not decide. According to Adegbola, "witches are said to practice spiritual cannibalism by feeding on human meat. It is believed that they have their own festival and organized a plan for the provision of victims for their

celebration. When a victim has been obtained, he/she is fastened to a tree with a rope round his or her neck. At this stage, it is believed that he could be ransomed. Then the victim is hared out among the members according to ranks and the victim dies when the heart is shared."[537]

In response to whether witchcraft can change man into animal, 74% of the respondents agreed while 12% disagreed and 14% did not decide. Witchcraft creates fear in the mind of people in Africa, 48 respondents which amount to 96% agreed on this fact while 2% disagreed leaving none of the respondents who did not decide. Also, regarding witches offering sacrifices in naked is proved undecided on the table as 21 of the respondents to 42% ratio, while 15 amounting to 30% agreed and 14 amounting to 28% disagreed putting the issue to unsettle, since the number of respondents that did not decide is larger than the other responses and since there is no one to stand and show peculiarities in the mood of sacrificing a member. In the column of the table on the families with witches having their destiny in jeopardy, 30 respondents that constitute 60% agreed in support of jeopardization of the family with witchcraft while 10 resulting to 20% disagreed and 10 also resulting to 20% did not decide.

Conclusion

Any contextualisation effort in African Christian theology must properly take note of the complexity involved in African understanding of witchcraft. From the early theories of scholars concerned with the function of witchcraft, to the recent conceptions of witchcraft by contemporary scholars and East Africans, the phenomena of witchcraft and sorcery have proven to be cultural factors that have attracted the attention of various generations. Over time conceptions of witchcraft, its practitioners, and the East African population have adapted to explain social situations faced by the East African people.

[537] E.A. Adegbola, *Traditional Religion in West Africa,* 320.

The belief in witchcraft has helped to establish cultural norms within African societies, it has arisen as a "collateral" consideration in legal cases; it has intrigued many scholars, and has affected conceptions of racism and international business. For this reason one may be tempted to agree with Todd Sandars when he said; the phenomena of witchcraft and sorcery are about both modernity and tradition, both the present and the past.

Moreover, conceptions of witchcraft and sorcery are also about the future because the topic of race will continue to be an issue in spite of science stance that there is no biological factuality to the concept Also with the increasing international business interest in African countries, corporations will need to understand local beliefs and norms in order to sell their goods and services.

Modernity has not abandoned the issues of witchcraft and sorcery in Africa, it has embraced them. As modernity progresses it creates new possibilities that beg explanation, and the belief in witchcraft and sorcery will continue to adapt to explain and interact with these possibilities just as science and religion have also done. The act of ignoring any cultural aspect is detrimental to understanding any society, and every cultural factor affects the others in some way or another. Thus, simply to ignore the conceptions of witchcraft within a modern East African context would hinder an understanding of East African culture as well as other East African cultural factors. It is imperative that we continue to study the phenomena of witchcraft and sorcery if we intend to understand the social, political, business and legal positions of East African nations, because regardless of whether we consider conceptions of witchcraft and sorcery to be fanciful, there are individuals within East African societies who take these conceptions quite seriously and are going to continue to operate on that premise.

As modernity progresses, witchcraft, sorcery and other religious phenomena will continue to persist within societies throughout the world. Religious phenomena help humanity to explain phenomena which science cannot explain at present. It is wise to take religious phenomena just as seriously as science whether we personally choose to believe in either. Ultimately both science and religion are two aspects of epistemology; they are simply two ways of explaining our reality and the world. Neither is "better" than the other, each is necessary in its own way. Both persist because they are not identical concepts; neither do they perform the same functions for humanity in the same way that witchcraft and sorcery exist simultaneously in many societies without causing cultural redundancy.

It is mirage of thought to assume that the belief in the reality of witchcraft is superstitions or fictitious and many (women mostly) still have affiliation with it today. The researchers wish to round off with the Yoruba worse saying that "Olaju koni ka gbagbe ile wa" which means "Civilization should push us to forget our cultural heritage." The belief in witchcraft is not fossil in African context.

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