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The Practice of Witchcraft and the Changing Patterns of its Paraphernalia in the Light of Technologically Produced Goods as Presented by Livingstone Museum, 1930s - 1973

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In many African societies, there is an ingrained belief that misfortunes are induced by fellow human beings. Often, some family members are accused of being responsible for inexplicable problems. These may include infertility, impotence, miscarriage, lack of success in business, inability to gain promotion, poor crop harvest, sickness, and many others. In all these problems, witchcraft has been blamed. Its continued existence has thrived on human needs, quest for knowledge, desire for power, and more especially the fear of death; and when executing their operations, practitioners often use objects, and, over time, these have undergone several transformations. This paper explores the extent to which witchcraft objects were transformed from the traditional type, often made of wood, wax, and other such stuff to imitations of western technological goods such as television and aeroplanes and in some cases the use of the actual western produced goods such as mirrors and metal pipes made common by the capitalist colonial economy. The paper demonstrates that western consumer goods were not only used by the general populace to transform their lifestyle from the traditional to western style but also by witchcraft practitioners to enhance their power and authority through the 'modernisation' of their paraphernalia thereby making them more potent. Through examination of the witchcraft collection at the Livingstone Museum and the press coverage on the phenomenon, the paper posits the thesis that witchcraft is a theory of power and authority and practitioners believed that it possessed energies that could protect them against any kind of harm from their perceived enemies, and that it had the power to protect whatever wealth had been accumulated from destruction by supposed enemies who in general were either their kith and kin or close friends.

Introduction

Studies on witchcraft in colonial Africa in general and Zambia in particular have focused on explaining the phenomenon in terms of the primitiveness of the practice and its practitioners.¹ Most probably, this was done in order to justify colonialism in the area. During this era, the western world considered itself duty bound to carry the burden of 'civilizing' Africans through the introduction of western civilization,

¹ E. E. Evans Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937); C. M.N. White, "Witchcraft Divination and Magic Among the Balovale Tribes" *Africa Journal of the International African Institute* 18, 2, April 1948; and J.R. Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967.)

which in essence meant Africans embracing European lifestyles and abandoning their indigenous culture and belief systems, including witchcraft, replacing it with Christianity.² Generally, these studies tackled the subject of witchcraft from the anthropological context, focusing on how it related to the African way of life. These studies paid particular attention to issues such as belief in witchcraft, its nature and variance, reasons for involvement in witchcraft, and divination.³ Basically, these studies argued that witchcraft was imaginary and witchdoctors or diviners who worked against it were mere charlatans and fraudsters whose utterances were unreliable, while witches and sorcerers were considered mentally sick people obsessed with the belief that they had the power to harm others by simply directing their thoughts on their targets.⁴ This was in total disregard of the fact that to people who believed in witchcraft, it was real.

Although witchcraft practitioners used devices or material objects in their practice to invoke their supposed power or energy to cause harm to their targets, these have not been studied in detail but ephemerally. An exception to this, however, is Reynolds' study⁵ on Western Zambia, an area that formed part of what was known as Barotseland Protectorate during the colonial period. This study was consequential to the colonial government officials' investigations made in October 1956 following a rumour that proved correct that two women had been murdered and reported to the District Commissioner, Kalabo. Following this rumour, witchcraft investigations were carried out in all other districts of the Protectorate and some districts outside it. These investigations revealed numerous witchcraft practices, murder, divination, and cannibalism and yielded witchcraft objects, which were donated to the Livingstone Museum. These objects included *Kaliloze* guns originally made of wood or human limb bone and are believed to have been used by the Mawiko people (Mbunda, Luvale, Chokwe and Luchazi) against witches. To operate, they were loaded with powder and some medicine and were fired at the sun. However, the Barotse murderers used a modern type with a metal barrel, which was capable of firing metal pieces and capable of causing fatal wounds.⁶

This paper examines the nature and practice of witchcraft. It also explores the extent to which witchcraft objects were transformed from the traditional type, often made of wood, wax, and other such stuff, to imitations of western technological goods made common by the capitalist colonial economy which developed after the imposition of British colonial rule towards the twilight years of the 19th century.

² For a detailed discussion on this subject see, L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *Burden of Empire* (London: Pall Mall, 1967).

³ See for instance, White, *Witchcraft Divination and Magic Among the Balovale; Elements in Luvale Beliefs and Rituals* The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, 32 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969); Barrie Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

⁴ See, for instance, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937) and Margaree Murray, *The God of Witches* (London: Marston and Company, n.d.).

⁵ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press)

⁶ Anon, "Witchcraft and Cannibalism in N.R. Not Yet Stamped Out: Biggest Investigation in History of Territory", *Livingstone Mail*, 1 June 1957, p. 1.

Examples include television sets, airplanes, military tanks, and in some cases the use of the actual western produced goods such as mirrors and metal pipes. In this paper, I argue that western consumer goods were not only used by the general populace to transform their lifestyle from the traditional to western style in terms of dressing, food and housing, and other changes, but also by individuals operating in the supernatural world in their quest to enhance their supernatural power and authority through the 'modernization' of their paraphernalia for the purpose of increasing their potency. In this paper, I examine the witchcraft collection made over time at the Livingstone Museum, and press coverage of the phenomenon made during the study period. I also use oral sources and both published and unpublished sources. I begin by defining witchcraft and its practice, and argue that contrary to the general belief that the phenomenon was an African peculiarity, it was endemic in Europe before the advent of education and industrialization.

Conceptual Framework

The study of witchcraft has been associated with anthropological studies, particularly those that deal with religion. Consequently, anthropological accounts of witchcraft beliefs and practices of African societies have inclined to locate these beliefs and practices within the framework of traditional religious beliefs.⁷ Generally, anthropological studies that focus on African witchcraft are divided into two main schools of thought. In the first are studies that have followed the conventional ethnographic approach to the study of witchcraft. In this theoretical perspective, focus is on the structure and function of witchcraft beliefs and practices within the social structures of those societies and communities. Their principle argument is that individual beliefs meet a necessity of social existence and make a contribution to a socially desirable end. This approach was pioneered by Evans-Pritchard whose work among the Azande of the Sudan became the foundation upon which successive scholars on witchcraft based their studies.⁸ The conventional structural ethnographic approach dominated African witchcraft studies in colonial Africa.

The second school of thought emerged as a means of understanding the postcolonial context of Africa. In this approach, the theory shifted to the role of African witchcraft in adaptation to political, economic, and social change. The approach emphasised how witchcraft can impact on power relations, whether political or economic and how it can be used and adapted as African communities struggled to cope with the postcolonial demands and stresses of modernity.⁹ The

⁷ See, Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937); Leslie, C. (ed.), *The Anthropology of Folk Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); Middleton, J. and Winter, E., *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*. (London: Routledge and Paul, 1963); Mbiti, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1970); and Pauw, B.A. 1975. *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and Ritual among Xhosa-Speaking Christians* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press.1975).

⁸ Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*.

⁹ Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L. (eds), *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Geschiere, P. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Bond, G. and Ciekawy,

main thrust of this theoretical perspective is exemplified by Peter Geschiere's study on witchcraft in postcolonial Cameroon which lucidly posits that witchcraft covers perceptions of underhand efforts made by the powerful to accumulate resources and wealth, and secret attempts by the weak in society to equalise or eliminate such perceived inequalities in power through occult means.¹⁰ Arising from this perspective, witchcraft provides a lens through which Africans make sense of modernity. Building on this discourse, this paper discusses the practice of witchcraft to illuminate transformations that have transpired in witchcraft objects that have been collected by the Livingstone Museum. The paper shows that modern objects such as mirrors, beads, metal pipes, imitations of aeroplanes, military tanks, and other capitalist western objects have been integrated into witchcraft objects and beliefs on the premise of making the witchcraft practitioners more powerful and wealthy, thereby enhancing their prestige and respect (and fear) among their peers and other members of their community.

Methodology

This paper was written whilst its author was working at Livingstone Museum in Livingstone, Zambia. Data for the paper predominantly came from the study of primary and secondary sources on the subject of witchcraft collected and deposited in the Livingstone Museum Library and Archives. Livingstone Museum houses the first Library in Zambia and its library and archival collections date as far back as the early 1930s. It has a lot of literature collected and generated by the Livingstone Museum research staff, particularly during the colonial period, who worked on the subject of witchcraft. Some of the researchers, for instance, Max Gluckman who served as its Curator when the incumbent (John Desmond Clark) was on active service during the Second World War; and Barrie Reynolds, who was its Keeper of Ethnography from 1956 to 1965 when he became its Director, researched on the subject of witchcraft in western Zambia. However, the Livingstone Library has paucity of contemporary or recent literature on the subject. The author was also unable to access such literature from other libraries and this has been a seriously limiting factor on this study.

Primary sources consulted included written published and unpublished sources such as newspapers, as well as exhibition storylines and reports, and research reports of interviews made by the Livingstone Museum research staff. Secondary published sources such as books on witchcraft, most of which focus on the colonial period, were also consulted. Data was also collected through semi-structured oral interviews and this involved formal interviews and informal discussions with respondents on the subject. However, these were not many owing to time limitation, as this author was not on formal absence of leave from work during the period of

D. (eds). 2001. *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and need to join up here Philosophical Exchanges* (Ohio: Centre for International Studies, 2001); Niehaus, I. "Witchcraft, Power and Politics: An Ethnographic Study of the South African Lowveld". PhD thesis. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand (1997).

¹⁰ Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*.

data collection for this work, and the fact that most of the targeted respondents, who included witch-finders (witch-doctors) and perceived victims of witchcraft practices were unwilling to talk about their experiences on the subject. Most probably, this was because of the negative view of witchcraft in contemporary Zambian society. In fact, this researcher was at times derogatorily called a 'witch' for showing interest in such a bizarre subject. It is the researcher's view that a white researcher on the subject would be more accepted by local respondents than an African, in particular a Zambian researcher in the Zambian context. Thus, this too has been a serious limitation on this paper. Also, whilst the study is on an anthropological topic, the author is a historian who is more conversant with historical methods of research than anthropological methodologies.

To analyse data, the author has used the qualitative approach as it was found appropriate in obtaining detailed descriptions and interpretations of the topic under study. This approach was necessary as it provided a deep understanding of the practice of witchcraft and how its paraphernalia changed during the time frame of this study, 1930s to 1973.

Definition of Witchcraft and Associated Terms

A standard definition of the term witchcraft is elusive and different scholars have defined it differently. In the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* (1992), the term is defined as "use of magic powers, especially evil ones: sorcery". The same dictionary defines sorcery as "art, use or practice of magic, especially with evil spirits; witchcraft". Whilst the dictionary suggests that the two terms mean the same thing, anthropologists make a distinction and have suggested that witchcraft is a psychic act while sorcery aims at inflicting harm to the targeted victim and involves the use of spells, medicines, and rituals.¹¹ J.R. Crawford brings in the concept of wizardry to the issue of witchcraft. According to Crawford, wizardry is a combination of sorcery and witchcraft.¹² It is believed to cause death, illness, or misfortunes on the victim. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1996) defines a witch as "a woman who is believed to have magical powers and who uses them to harm or help other people". However, Reynolds' work on the subject in western Zambia reveals that both women and men were involved in what is defined as witchcraft and sorcery. In fact, Lisa Cliggett's work in the Gwembe Valley, southern Zambia reveals that male witches were more potent and dangerous than female witches.¹³ Thus, in this paper, the term 'witch' refers to both males and females believed to be engaged in the supernatural world to inflict harm on perceived enemies.

¹¹ See Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, pp. 40-41; for details on the definitions and meaning of witchcraft, see Kisilu Kombo, "Witchcraft: A living vice in Africa", pp. 73 - 74. <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/22-1073.pdf> (accessed: July 2, 2014)

¹² Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, p. 1.

¹³ Lisa Cliggett, *Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender and Famine in Rural Africa* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 131.

There are also other terms linked to the subject of witchcraft and these include 'diviner' and 'witch-doctor'¹⁴ or 'witch-finder'. A diviner is a practitioner who is consulted to diagnose the cause of an illness or misfortune that has befallen the victim, while the witch-doctor cures or finds a remedy to the problem diagnosed by the diviner.¹⁵ However, one person usually performed the two functions of diagnosing and treating the sick and as C.M.N. White observed, the two terms are synonymous to the European 'doctor'.¹⁶ 'Black magic' is also associated with witchcraft or sorcery and the three terms have negative connotations, while 'white magic' is associated with divining and treatment, or cure, of ailments and other misfortunes. Generally, white magic is accepted by society and therefore viewed positively, unlike black magic which is considered antisocial.¹⁷

Forms of Witchcraft and its Paraphernalia

Witchcraft is in four main categories: offensive, defensive, communicative, and divination and in all these, special objects are used by witches in the execution of their activities. 'Offensive witchcraft' falls under the category in which practitioners use their art to cause harm to their perceived enemies or their property while in 'defensive witchcraft', practitioners use their charms to protect themselves against harm directed at them.

In 'communicative witchcraft' practitioners, who may be witch-doctors or wizards, employ a wide range of objects to help them communicate in their mysterious supernatural world of witches. Generally, witch-doctors use objects that include miniature drums to summon the spirits of the dead, while witches use similar objects and command spirits of those they wish to harm. 'Familiars', such as owls, hyenas, nightjars, jackals, and many others are used to convey information on matters of interest to their owners. Essentially, familiars are agents or animated weapons witches employ to seek the victim or indeed to execute the mission assigned by the owner. In an interview, Boniface Liwanga noted that witches operate at night, naked, and that they are capable of inflicting harm on the victim by simply projecting at will from their minds as they have power to harm others by simply wishing them harm.

On the other hand, sorcerers use black magic to inflict harm on their perceived enemies through the use of materials such as medicines, or charms, and familiars. They are believed to use spiritual or magical devices, or charms that cause harm to

¹⁴ It should be noted that modern scholars who have written on the subject of traditional medicine, including witchcraft in southern and central Africa have replaced the term witchdoctor with traditional healers (categorised into three, diviners, herbalists and faith healers), as they considered it a colonial legacy which did not take into account the healing properties of traditional healers. See for instance, George L. Chavunduka and Murray Last, "Conclusions: African Medical Profession Today." In *The Professionalisation of African Medicine*, ed. Murray Last and G.L. Chavunduka, 259-70. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). However, in this paper, I use the colonial term witch-doctor as the time frame for the study focuses more on the colonial period – 1930s to 1973.

¹⁵ White, "Witchcraft Divination and Magic Among the Balovale Tribes", p. 92.

¹⁶ For details, see, White, "Witchcraft Divination and Magic Among the Balovale Tribes", p. 92.

¹⁷ *ibid.* pp. 98-103.

their targets and operate during both day and night.¹⁸ Crawford, as already noted, combines witchcraft and sorcery which he terms wizardry, arguing that “anyone who deliberately causes harm to others in a way which is not socially approved of is a witch or a sorcerer, even if his act is not a psychic act” and that “in addition to being antisocial, for an act to be wizardry, there must be something mysterious about the way in which the victim is harmed”.¹⁹ The misfortunes witches and sorcerers are believed to cause include: illness, death, disability, accidents, theft, barrenness in women, impotence in men, lack of promotion at the work place, general lack of success, crop failure, and ruin. There are various motives for inflicting harm on other people and these include vengeance, fear, jealousy, envy, hatred, and greed.

Divination is the category of witchcraft in which the practitioner detects causes of a misfortune and predicts its effects. In this phenomenon, the practitioner obtained knowledge of secret nature or future events by mechanical means, psychological, spiritual, or manipulative techniques. To execute their work, diviners used objects such as baskets, bones and frictional devices. The belief in witchcraft and sorcery instilled fear in those who believed in it. This is the case even in today’s Zambian society. It was common during precolonial and colonial times and even among many people in contemporary Zambia, particularly in rural areas, that when one suffered a misfortune there was a hunt to seek an explanation for it. The person who suffered this misfortune wanted to know why it happened and started thinking of all those who might have a grudge. Generally, the victim might already have had suspects in mind and simply wanted the diviner to help positively identify or diagnose the problem.

It should be emphasized that the fear of injury and indeed any other misfortune by some means other than material was a serious issue in an individual’s life during precolonial times to about the 1970s. It is this fear that led to the rise and prominence of diviners and witch-doctors. In his *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, Reynolds observed that the *mulauli* (diviner) overshadowed the witch or *muloi* (sorcerer) and the *ng’aka* (witch-doctor) because without his intervention the witch would remain undiscovered while the witch-doctor would be impotent. He also noted that in the absence of the diviner, the belief in witchcraft would lose prominence as it is he who confirmed and demonstrated its importance in the daily affairs of the people and in this way diviners perpetrated

¹⁸ Interview with Boniface Liwanga (aged 78), a witch-doctor from Western Zambia but currently residing inimba, in the Southern Province of Zambia, Livingstone, 30 August 2013. Liwanga hails from Senanga, western Zambia. He came to Livingstone practising divination and healing in the early 1970s. Occasionally, he has also been doing his business of divination and healing in Namibia. In late 1990s, he moved to imimba, a small town along the Great North Road situated less than 100km from Livingstone where he has settled. Liwanga claims to be registered with the Traditional Health Practitioners Association of Zambia (THPAZ), an umbrella body to which all witchdoctors are supposed to belong. This Association does not use the term witch-doctor but rather traditional healers which it categorises into three groups: diviners, herbalists and faith healers. This is because the term witch-doctor is considered colonial as it does not take into consideration the healing role of traditional healers. However, this paper uses the term witch-doctor as the timeframe for the study (1930s – 1973) is largely located in the colonial period.

¹⁹ Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, pp. 106-107.

people's fear of witchcraft.²⁰ For this reason, the diviner was often considered by people who believed in witchcraft as the "chief" witch and this explains why many people always sought for medicines and charms from the diviner for self-protection. During precolonial, colonial and the early decades of the independence period, most adults and children wore charms around their neck, arms, or waist for protection. Others protected their granaries, cattle kraals and their crops against the devious scheming of witches. This author witnessed a lot of this when he was growing up in Siandombwe village in Chief Mukuni's area, southern Zambia, during the mid-1960s to early 1970s.

The general sequence of events was that the victim of witchcraft consulted a diviner, at a fee, to find the person who caused the victim's misfortune or simply to confirm the victim's suspicion. The diviner then responded by dressing in special regalia to mystify his act and to affect and perpetuate his grip on the people's minds so that they believed that he operated in a spiritual realm. This phenomenon is generally referred to as a 'séance'.²¹

Depending on the specialisation, various options of divining were open to the diviner. He could divine solely by means of spirits which possessed him which was some form of psychic divination, or use a psychological divination method where the divinatory technique involved the extraction of information which the diviner required for his client. In this case, the client was required to agree to whatever the diviner stated as this helped the diviner to ascertain where the points of friction lay and to ascertain who the suspect was. The diviner could also use some form of casual divination, which in essence was based on chance; or indeed use all the three methods. However, whichever method or methods were used, the verdict needed to be popular for it to be accepted.

Following the identification of the cause of the victim's problems, the witch-doctor appeared on the scene. Often the diviner combined the two roles of diviner and witchdoctor. Usually, the witch or sorcerer was made to confess and recant his or her activities before the witch-doctor took any curative action to stop the witch from inflicting further harm..

The witch, or sorcerer, was - and still is - the most dreaded and hated member of the society in which they lived. It was unusual for witches to confess their antisocial activities except when they were accused and made to do so. Before the advent of colonialism in Africa, just like in medieval Europe, once the witch confessed his or her deeds, he or she was severely punished. Punishment included violent death (by burning, spearing or poisoning), torture, banishment and fines. Because diviners and witch-doctors worked for the public good, they were often held in honour by society as their role concerned ridding society of the ills inflicted on it by witches and sorcerers. It was largely for this reason that during the 1956-57 witchcraft

²⁰ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 95.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of séance, see Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African*, pp. 186-187; Crawford, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia*, pp. 214-220; and V.W. Turner, *Ndembu Divination: Its symbolism and Techniques*, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1961; White, "Witchcraft Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes", pp. 92-95 and *Elements in Luvale Beliefs and Rituals*, The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, 32 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), pp. 60-68.

investigations, most of the African people refused to bear witness against diviners who were arrested for their divining works. As a result most of them could not be imprisoned for lack of evidence.²² The people considered their arrest unfair as they considered them their defenders and protectors from the evil deeds of witches and sorcerers.

In an interview, Boniface Liwanga noted that during their divining sessions, diviners searched for evidence of witchcraft and sorcery, the devices which gave witches and sorcerers immense energy, or supernatural powers that enabled them perform their practices. Such devices included charms, herbs, and objects such as human bones, and night guns such as *Kaliloze*. Some used familiars such as owls, and nightjars, and animals such as jackals and hyenas, while others used creatures such as Ilomba as mediums through which they performed their witchcraft activities.²³ According to White, the Ilomba was a spirit in the form of a snake with a human head in the likeness of the owner and was found in various versions. During its early stages, it was harmless and fed on eggs. However, as it grew, it became more demanding, killing people that its owner targeted, feeding on their blood. As it grew fatter and sleeker, its owner also flourished and this continued for as long as the snake existed.²⁴ Thus, some people became witches or sorcerers for the purpose of prosperity or in order to become rich.

A classic example of an Ilomba object, how and why it was acquired, and its function is provided by an Ilomba/Kambuma that was confiscated from a witch by the Livingstone High Court Magistrate, Austin Nkoloma, on 14 October 1988. Upon pleading guilty the accused was sentenced to a fine of Ten Kwacha (K10.00), which he paid, or in default, two months imprisonment. The Magistrate ordered the destruction of the charm, but through the order of the high court judge, Judge Mainga, it was donated to the Livingstone Museum for preservation and study.²⁵

According to the story, the witch secured the Ilomba in Durban, South Africa where he had gone to work as a migrant labourer in the 1960s. On retirement, his colleagues advised him to obtain medicine to defend himself against witchcraft because Zambia was believed to be a haven of witches. He followed this advice and consulted a medicine man. The medicine man made incisions on different parts of the body of the Zambian where he rubbed and carefully siphoned some blood which he mixed with medicines and placed in a container for him to carry home. On his arrival in Zambia, the stuff in the container began to grow into a living creature which demanded eggs for its food. As it grew, the owner claimed that apart from protecting him from other witches, it performed numerous tasks such as killing people he wished dead, stealing mealie-meal and money from neighbours.²⁶

²² Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 58.

²³ Interview with Boniface Liwanga, Livingstone, 30 August 2013.

²⁴ White, "Witchcraft Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes", p. 100.

²⁵ LMA, Francis Musonda, "Special Witchcraft Exhibit, Lilomba", Livingstone Museum, n.d. but c. 1988, pp. 3-5.

²⁶ LMA, Musonda, "Special Witchcraft Exhibit, Lilomba", pp. 3-4.

Use of Western goods in Witchcraft Practices

In his work on the Sharma Brothers' trading store in Mukuni village, Friday Mufuzi demonstrated that the mass-produced western consumer goods sold by the store in the 1950s and 1960s acted as a medium for social change in the area, creating new tastes among the local people which influenced society. Western goods led to the demise of locally produced handicrafts and utensils. This desire for consumer goods propelled labour migration and questioned established age, gender and power hierarchies.²⁷ In fact, this demise of locally produced goods was observed by colonial government officers as early as mid-1920s. To mitigate the situation, in 1934, they established a museum, the David Livingstone Memorial Museum, later renamed the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum and Livingstone Museum following independence "to make a collection of the material culture of the various ethnic groups in the territory for study and preservation, as it was fast dying out due to colonial mass-factory produced goods"²⁸ The first handbook to collections in the Museum, compiled in 1936 by R.S. Hudson, who later became Secretary for Native Affairs, provides us with information on the collections then under the custody of the Museum.²⁹ In 1937, W. V. Brelsford, an administrative officer in the colonial government of Northern Rhodesia, revised the handbook and meticulously documented the exhibits, both on display and in storerooms.³⁰ Among the collections reflected in the handbook are witchcraft objects, some of which were made from mass-produced European manufactured material objects such as mirrors, wires, nails, beads, and needles, or their imitations.³¹

Thus, western produced goods were not only consumed in ordinary life situations but also by witches in the supernatural world. Following the introduction of European mass-produced goods into the area by traders, witches took advantage by incorporating them into their paraphernalia. This is because Africans in general and witches in particular believed that western material objects were imbued with special powers. As Felix Kaputu observed:

The African people were awed at the way they were conquered and subjugated to colonialism with its attendant religion, Christianity. They were in particular astonished at how small numbers of white people were able to defeat them. Consequently, material objects that Europeans

²⁷ Friday Mufuzi, "Indian Traders as Agents of Western Technological Consumption and Social Change in Mukuni: Memories of the Sharma Brothers' Trading Store, 1950s to 1964" in Robert Ross, Marja Hinefelhaar and Iva Pesa (eds), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: The History of Social Change, 1940-1980* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 189-214.

²⁸ National Archives of Zambia (hereafter NAZ), Northern Rhodesia Government, Legislative Council Debates, Second Session of the Third Council, 7 March to 1 April 1930, cols. 166-167; NAZ, District Notebook Series (hereafter KDB) 1/5/6: Secretary for Native Affairs to Chief Secretary, Livingstone, 2 December 1931; NAZ, KDB 1/5/6: SNA, Livingstone, to Provincial Commissioner, Mazabuka, 10 May 1933; and *National Museums of Northern Rhodesia, the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, 1934-1951* (Government Printer, Lusaka, 1951), p 4.

²⁹ R.S. Hudson, *Livingstone Memorial Museum Handbook* (Livingstone: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1936).

³⁰ W.V. Brelsford, *Handbook of the David Livingstone Memorial Museum* (Livingstone: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1937).

³¹ See Brelsford, *Handbook of the David Livingstone Memorial Museum*, pp. 96-97.

*used such as guns and Christian symbols they carried and used during mass such as crucifixes and other objects were seen to be more powerful than the local people's witchcraft objects and those they used during their traditional religious activities.*³²

Among the witchcraft objects collected by the Livingstone Museum were rattles, nut shells, gourds, carved piece of wooden mortar, bees wax, lucky beans, and red and white ochre which was daubed on the victim according to his guilt or innocence. According to Mungoni Sitali, red symbolized guilt while white stood for innocence.³³ Others included horns of various species of animals filled with special medicinal concoctions, carved figures, and the familiars they symbolized. Generally, these were used by both sorcerers and witchdoctors. Magic mirrors, which in fact were not mirrors in the ordinary sense but oil gourds, bottles, skulls, and similar containers filled with medicine were also collected. Nevertheless, they were used in the same way as actual reflecting mirrors. Before the onset of colonial rule, water was used as a reflective material, especially by diviners. According to Reynolds, the principle behind the use of water was similar to that behind crystal gazing in which the diviner peered into his or her crystal ball to see the future, the wizard (sorcerer) or the diagnosis. The water was usually put in a bowl-shaped gourd, or wooden dish, or a meal-mortar.³⁴

Others that were used as transport devices were traditional reed baskets, winnowing trays, and mats. In an interview, Kaputu, noted that one of the main issues in witchcraft is the ability to move from one place to the other. To substantiate his assertion, Kaputu narrated what he witnessed as a young boy in North-Western

³² Interview with Felix U. Kaputu, Lusaka, 20 August 2013. Kaputu is a Congolese (his mother is from north-western Zambia and his father is from the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC) and is a Professor lecturing at Ghent University, Belgium. He is highly knowledgeable on issues of witchcraft and is an expert in African Studies, African politics, literature, mythology, gender, religion, diaspora and art. Apart from Lubumbashi, DRC, he lectured in several universities in USA, Europe and Japan. This author first met him in the Netherlands, Leiden at Africa Study Centre where both were Visiting Fellows in 2013 and were accommodated in the same house. Upon learning Kaputu's expertise and experiences on issues of witchcraft, this author had several conversations with him on the subject. This was followed by an interview in Lusaka when Kaputu came to Zambia for his field work on a paper he was working on.

³³ White ochre symbolized purity and good deeds and during pre-colonial times it was smeared on the face or head of people who contributed immensely to the betterment of their communities or those who perfumed heroic deeds such as serving their people in tribal wars and other threats such as hunger. It was also doused on the bodies of young women in a ceremony in which the young women were presented to the public following their initiation into adulthood after reaching puberty to symbolize their entering adulthood in innocence and purity. Diviners used white ochre as a symbol of innocence of people facing witchcraft accusations brought to them. Red ochre symbolized fertility in women. It also symbolized the pain they went through during menstruation and parturition. Ethnic groups in Zambia such as the Luvale, Chokwe, Luchazi and Mbunda smeared it on the bodies of their boys after the Mukanda camp in which they were initiated into adulthood to symbolize the pain they went through when they were circumcised. Wizards used red ochre on their witchcraft objects to symbolize the pain they inflicted on their victims. Black ochre symbolized sadness and was predominantly used by witches and sorcerers on their witchcraft or sorcery object to darken or dampen the future and hopes of their victims. They also symbolized the sadness they caused people associated with the victims they killed such as their parents, children, relatives and friends. Interview with Mungoni Sitali, former Senior Keeper of Ethnography and Art at Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, 3 September 2013.

³⁴ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 116-117.

Zambia in the early 1960s. He noted that one day, a middle aged man by the name Moke came to their village, Kipopo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the big village of Chief Ina Kiluba. Moke was coming from a Kaonde village called Kambova in the DRC, 120 km away. When he was asked where he came from and the purpose of his visit, he stated that he came from afar and used a basket as his mode of transport, but ran out of fuel and that he was there seeking shelter and food. Moke then showed them a simple basket, but they could not tell or understand where the fuel was put and took his story as nonsensical. After two days, he bade farewell to his hosts. As he was leaving, Kaputu and other family members scornfully laughed at what he told them. However, his father told them that their guest was actually a wizard and that what he said was not silly but real. He also assured them that as soon as he was out of the village, he would definitely fly out using the basket he came with. He also told them that the fuel Moke talked about was some kind of human energy which was invisible to ordinary people and was derived from human blood. Furthermore, Kaputu's father noted that during the time he was recuperating, Moke must have communicated with his people at the village he came from who could have provided the necessary invisible fuel for his flight using the same basket.³⁵

Kaputu's observations were echoed by Liwanga who added that wizards and witch-doctors used some form of gadgets to communicate with their colleagues. Usually objects used for this purpose included strings tied to a stick. Also some traditionally medicated things such as animal horns stuffed with concoctions such as bees wax and red lucky bean seed were involved.³⁶

In some cases, genital organs, or their familiars such as wooden carvings shaped in the form of sexual organs were used. According to Liwanga, the principle underlying their use as witchcraft devices lay in the belief that human beings received power to procreate from the heavens or super being through their sexual organs. In that light, sexual organs were believed to possess extraordinary power and energy. They brought human beings closer to the creator for them to procreate themselves. Sexual organs were therefore a symbol of power and abundant energy and were generally used for protection. Some witches or sorcerers used them, especially male organs, to direct them to their targets, while female organs were used to terminate life as they believed that the same energy the female organ had in bringing forth life on earth could also be used to terminate it.³⁷

Beads, which ordinarily were used as adornments by women, were also used in witchcraft objects. During the early precolonial period beads used in Zambia were made from plant seeds. With the advent of long distance and intercontinental trade, plant beads were replaced by glass beads. In an interview, Kaputu noted that during times of wars and other social disasters, women were believed to be holders of witchcraft whilst their men folk were fighting. Women would be possessing objects which contained energy that enabled men to fight. Although men were strong

³⁵ Interview with Felix Kaputu, Lusaka National Museum, Lusaka, 20 August 2013.

³⁶ Interview with Liwanga.

³⁷ Interview with Liwanga.

and engaged in a fight, the energy they used was believed to come from women.³⁸ Most likely, this was the reason why during precolonial times, when war broke out between the Leya and another tribe, all Leya soldiers were gathered in a sacred hut before they went to battle with the enemy. The Priestess Be-Dyango then appeared at this hut and stood on the doorway with her legs wide apart whilst giving orders to the soldiers:

*Come out of the hut,
Go and meet the enemy,
Defeat him!
He was born out of a woman such as me,
Do not turn back,
Or you will die like a woman!*³⁹

Each of the soldiers then came out of the hut crawling between Be-Dyango's legs marching in frenzy to the battleground ready to fight.⁴⁰ The soldiers' crawling from the hut, marching to the war front symbolized their rebirth, change of behaviour and bravery obtained from the Be-Dyango's body, the source of energy that renewed them as brave and powerful soldiers. This ritual is therefore in line with Kaputu's observation, which saw women as the owners of energy, or witchcraft that men used in war.

Further, arising from Kaputu's observation, beads were used as witchcraft objects because they were used by women as adornments around their waists, neck or any part of their bodies to charm men. In this respect, they were associated with power to entice and control men and it is this power witches needed for control, thereby doing good or harm to others as they willed.

Following the advent of colonialism, western factory-produced goods and/or their imitations found themselves being used in witchcraft practices. For instance, water as a reflective device was replaced with glass mirrors, which were adorned or suitably decorated with bees wax, lucky beans, or beads that suited the taste of the diviner or sorcerer. An example of this is provided in the type of witchcraft charm called *Sikuyeti* in Silozi in which a mirror was used wherein the diviner saw the spirit or reflection of the *muloi* (wizard). The mirror captured sun rays and therefore energy which could be used in either harming, or doing good to someone.

In 1991 Vincent Katanekwa, former Director, Livingstone Museum, collected a number of witchcraft objects donated to Livingstone Museum by Senanga Police station. The objects were confiscated by Senanga court authorities after convicting four elderly men to six months imprisonment for witchcraft practices.⁴¹ In an interview I had with him on the issue of witchcraft objects, he told me that he had a rare opportunity to interview the four witches in Senanga Prison. Katanekwa noted that two of the incarcerated wizards got their witchcraft paraphernalia in South

³⁸ Interview with Kaputu.

³⁹ Maud Muntamba, "The Political and Ritual Sovereignty among the Leya of Zambia", *Zambia Museums Journal*, 1 1975, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁰ Muntamba, "The Political and Ritual Sovereignty among the Leya of Zambia", p. 33.

⁴¹ Interview with Vincent K. Katanekwa, former Director, Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, 3 September 2013.

Africa in 1961 where they had gone as migrant labourers. He also said that of the two, one paid £200 to acquire the witchcraft power while the other paid £120 and that they both acquired witchcraft powers to protect themselves from witches back home and to sort out any person who exhibited signs of jealousy or coveted their achievements. The remaining two also got their witchcraft power in the 1960s. One of the two got the witchcraft power in western Zambia and paid four head of cattle for it. The other did not know how he became a witch but believed that it was a gift from God. Katanekwa further noted that although all four convicted wizards indicated that they understood the power of witchcraft they did not know how it happened and that sometimes it worked according to their instructions but at times, it did not.⁴²

On the question of the use of mirrors as witchcraft objects, Katanekwa as confided to him by the convicted witches observed thus:

Both wizards and diviners used mirrors; the difference was in the end use. They were a potent reflective object used by both witches and diviners. They galvanized energy from the sun which they used as some form of a satellite or scanner linking objects after bringing them into focus. As the sun shone, it collected images and connected everybody on earth, including the targeted person who if his or her image came into view in the mirror was likely to die. Death was achieved by piercing the image of the victim using a traditionally medicated needle. If the intention was not to kill but make the life of the victim miserable either through sickness or lack of prosperity, appropriate spells were cast on the image through invocations to operationalise the witch's desire.⁴³

Arising from Katanekwa's observations, people got into witchcraft practices through different means and for different reasons, the main one being security or self-preservation or protection from perceived enemies. While others sought and wilfully acquired the power of witchcraft, others did not know how they got it. It is suggested here that much of the sophisticated and more potent witchcraft objects came to Zambia through migrant labourers who did not only return home with western material objects such as clothes, metal and enamel plates, three-legged pots, metal trunks, radios, gramophones, and other goods but also with witchcraft devices which were more potent than the type their contemporaries had in the villages. They acquired these devices in order to protect themselves and their newly acquired wealth and social status from their colleagues back in their homesteads who they believed might be jealous of their success.

This point comes out clearly in Michael Barrett's study on Lozi Migrants in Barotseland.⁴⁴ According to Barrett, returning Barotseland migrant workers from

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Michael Barrett, "'Walking Home Majestically': Consumption and the Enactment of Social Status among Labour Migrants from Barotseland, 1935-1965", in Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa (eds), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: The History of Consumption and Social Change 1840-1980* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 68-92.

Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the South African gold and diamond mines reached home with an enhanced prestige and social standing among their peers owing to the wealth they acquired in the form of luxury goods and money. They also looked smart. Some of them used their money to buy their first cattle. Because they looked smart in their new European clothes, had money and other goods, they were valued highly as spouses compared with those who remained behind, most of whom depended on clothes and blankets made from bark and animal skins.⁴⁵ The migrants had to fortify and protect their newly gained social status, wealth and luxury goods they brought to their homesteads. They feared their peers in the homesteads whom they believed would be jealous and envious of their achievements and might harm them through witchcraft. In fact, two reports written by a research staff member of Livingstone Museum in more recent years (2003 and 2004) on witchcraft objects donated by witch-doctor, 'Dr' Kanjolo to the Museum show that the owners got their witchcraft objects during their stints as migrant labourers in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa during the 1960s. The owners acquired their witchcraft powers for the purpose of self-defence back home but went wild, as they demanded food, which in this case meant human blood.⁴⁶

Other western material objects that came to be employed in witchcraft included nails, needles, and wires. Generally, nails were included in witchcraft objects to enforce suffering or death to the victim. This was done through what Frazer as quoted by Theodore S. Petrus calls 'homeopathic magic'.⁴⁷ According to Petrus, in this type of witchcraft, the practitioner applied his or her evil powers against a doll or object representing the intended victim and this action produced the desired result in the victim.⁴⁸ Petrus' observation is echoed by Liwanga, who in an interview on the subject noted that:

*As the nail was hammered more and more into an object that represented the targeted person, so was the intensity of the pain/suffering or an illness being inflicted on the victim until that person died if no remedial action was taken through a witch-doctor. Needles performed a similar role to that of nails. They were used for piercing the object that represented the person the witch wanted to harm. The object was akin to the person the witch targeted to cause harm. Once that was done, wherever that person would be, he or she would be affected.*⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Barrett, "'Walking Home Majestically': Consumption and the Enactment of Social Status among Labour Migrants from Barotseland," pp. 95-96, 107-108 and 110.

⁴⁶ LMA, Mwala Inambao, "Interview with Dr Kanjolo on capture of a Lilomba at Matengu Village, Chief Musokotwane", 23 November, 2003; and "Donation of Witchcraft Object from Mwiinga Village, Chief Musokotwane", 5 February 2004. Also interview with Mwala Inambao, formerly Conservator, Livingstone Museum but now at Lusaka National Museum, 12 September, 2013, Lusaka.

⁴⁷ Theodore S. Petrus, "An Anthropological Study of Witchcraft Related Crimes in Eastern Cape and its Implications for Law Enforcement Policy and Practice", PhD Thesis, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, (2009), p.77. <http://dspace.nmma.ac.za8080/xmlui/bitstream/hanc>. (accessed: 2 August 2014).

⁴⁸ Petrus, "An Anthropological Study of Witchcraft Related Crimes in Eastern Cape and its Implications for Law Enforcement Policy and Practice", p.77.

⁴⁹ Interview with Liwanga.

In this case therefore, the witchcraft artefact or object became the double of the man or woman the witch wanted to harm.

Wires were used particularly for communication and represented telephones in the western sense. During precolonial times, horns of animals and differently-shaped gourds and pots were used for this purpose. They were also used as lethal weapons and represented bullets. As far as most of the African people were concerned, they believed that wires, like other western material objects, represented some kind of power or energy the whites had and used. Witches and diviners coveted this perceived European power which they believed was also present in their cultural material objects. Whites were associated with power and the conquering of enemies. Africans could not believe how in most cases a handful of white men were able to conquer and defeat a huge number of Africans and subject their territories to colonial hegemony, turning their kings into vassals and in some cases removing them from power, putting their own choice as tribal kings or chiefs.⁵⁰ Consequently, whatever the whites used was associated with power and represented power or some kind of energy the whites used. The power witches used can therefore be explained by one branch of psychology – psychoanalysis – in which the subject's memory and mind is given to produce things he is able to see through concentration to capture power and project it to someone for good or bad.

Lethal witchcraft objects and prestige enhancement

As noted earlier, the Livingstone Museum had a collection of witchcraft objects in its custody from as far back as the 1930s when it was established. Their number increased tremendously in 1958 when the Museum received a donation of 267 objects confiscated from Kalabo, Senanga and Sesheke and later from Mongu, Mankoya (now Kaoma) and Lukulu. These objects were confiscated during the 1956-57 witchcraft investigations in Barotseland and consisted of a wide variety of divining apparatus and witchcraft dolls, rain-making equipment, night-guns and similar weapons for killing witches or other undesirables, and of items of dress used in witchcraft and divining processes.⁵¹ Some of the witchcraft devices were entirely made from traditional material objects while others were a mixture of traditional and western material objects..

Among the western objects was the *Kaliloze* gun. According to Reynolds, the traditional gun has its origin in the precolonial times and the use of gun powder was borrowed from European traders and explorers, probably the Portuguese of Angola, as its distribution was mainly restricted to the Lunda-Luvale peoples and those tribes they came into contact with. The modern *kaliloze* dates back to the early 1920s; however, 1942, though unconfirmed, is said to be the year in which it was introduced to Barotseland, originating probably along the line of rail or through mining centres where the manufacturers of these weapons could easily obtain a

⁵⁰ Interview with Kaputu.

⁵¹ Livingstone Museum Archives (LMA), *Rhodes-Livingstone Museum Annual Report for the Period 1st January to 31st December, 1957* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1958), pp.28 and 32.

supply of discarded metal tubing, a major component of these guns.⁵² Thus, most probably, the lethal modern *kaliloze* guns, just like most western cultural goods, were introduced to Barotseland through migrant workers, as the area was deeply involved in labour migration.⁵³

Writing about the *Kaliloze* gun, Reynolds observed that the name *Kaliloze* comes from the Luvale verb, *kuloza* which means 'to kill or 'to bewitch'. He also noted another form of *Kaliloze* called *wuta wa mufuko* which he said, in its literal translation means 'a gun made from an arm bone'. According to Reynolds, the traditional form of the gun was a human bone from which the epiphyses were removed while the exposed stem was hollowed out and the remaining epiphysis acted as a butt. Reynolds further noted that sometimes, the bone was mounted on a wooden stock, and that at times the whole gun was carved from a hard piece of wood. The material for the stock of the gun and most likely for the latter case for the whole gun was usually taken from poles of a stretcher that had once been used to carry a corpse to the grave. Where the barrel and stock were separate, they were fastened together with bark strip.⁵⁴ This type of gun is believed to have been originally used by the Mawiko people, (Mbunda, Luvale, Chokwe and Luchazi) against people they targeted. To operate, they were loaded with powder and some medicine and then fired at the sun. However, the Lozi used an advanced modern type whose main feature was a metal barrel, often a piece of gas or similar piping and occasionally, a heavy rifle bullet case. A touch hole was cut in and the butt end of the barrel stopped. The whole piece was tied with a string or wire to a wooden butt which was often carved to resemble a rifle stock. The wood for this stock also came from a funeral bier. Often, the gun was coated with bees wax mixed with charcoal powder while bright red and black lucky beans (*Abrus precatorius*) called *mupitipiti* in the Silozi language were set in the wax.⁵⁵

According to Sitali, lucky bean seeds were always associated with dangerous black magic and, whenever an object decorated with them is found, care should be taken as most likely it will have been used in sorcery, witchcraft, or other such practice as diviners did not normally use lucky beans in their practicing devices.⁵⁶ To use the gun, it was charged with gunpowder and medicated shot, which normally consisted of finger bones, pieces of roots and other charmed objects. Some *kaliloze* practitioners used millet or sorghum seeds as bullets. However, modern *kaliloze* guns, some of them double-barrelled, in imitation of double-barrelled pistols, or other western guns and used missiles such as wire, or fragments of copper, or any other metal. Generally, traditional *kaliloze* weapons did not produce wounds, whereas the modern guns did. The *Kaliloze* guns were used by witch-doctors, diviners and witches or sorcerers.⁵⁷ Witch-doctors used them for killing wizards, while wizards or sorcerers used them to kill people they targeted.

⁵² Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 85 and 88.

⁵³ For details, see Barrett, "Walking Home Majestically": Consumption and the Enactment of Social Status among Labour Migrants from Barotseland, 1935-1965." pp. 93-114.

⁵⁴ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 79.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* pp. 79-80. Also see, Anon, "Witchcraft and Cannibalism in N.R. Not Yet Stamped Out: Biggest Investigation in History of Territory", *Livingstone Mail*, 1 June 1957, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Interview with Mungoni Sitali.

⁵⁷ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, p.81.

The most fascinating object of witchcraft this author saw is the imitation of a western military tank, donated by 'Dr' Vongo, Chairperson for Traditional Health Practitioners Association of Zambia (THPAZ) to Lusaka National Museum in August 2013 and currently on permanent display in the Ethnography Gallery. This object is in the shape of a military tank and has six mirrors: one on each of its sides, one in front and the other on the back, while the fifth is located on its upper part, and the sixth inside. It also has three porcupine quills, two in front and one at the rear, all of which Vongo said acted as barrels through which magical missiles were shot to the target. This object was extremely lethal. Missiles from it were intercontinental and could maim or kill the targeted person regardless of wherever he or she was located – whether in Europe or America and indeed anywhere. The mirrors performed the role of scanners and/or radar whose function was to search and pick the targeted person wherever he or she was located and bring that person into focus on the mirror inside which acted as a screen from which targets could be seen or observed. As soon as the image of the targeted person came into view and was shot, the real person would immediately fall sick and die if quick remedial action through a witch-doctor was not taken. Vongo refused to reveal the identity of the wizard from whom he confiscated this witchcraft device but noted that its owner acquired it outside Zambia during his migrant labour escapades in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa in the 1950s to the late 1960s.⁵⁸ Undoubtedly, from the above, witches went to great lengths in their imitations of western goods and technology as they believed that they possessed a lot of power and by using them or their imitations, their devices became more potent.

Witch-doctors (*balauli*) also adopted western cultural objects and/or their ideas to protect their clients from harm caused by wizards or sorcerers (*baloi*), particularly through magical charms called *siposo* in the Silozi Language, which Reynolds defines as “the projection of magic in the form of invisible missile”⁵⁹ to cause harm to their targets. The most common protective method used was needle implantation in which needles ranging from one to three or even more were implanted in the body of the person who wanted protection, particularly from the fatal effect of the *kaliloze* gun. Needles implanted included halves of sewing needles and ordinary gramophone needles and sometimes pieces of iron nails, wires, and even small horns. The needles were often inserted beneath the skin of the chest, arms, or shoulder of their subjects for defensive or offensive purposes. The insertion of needles in the body appears to have been copied from the European concept of homoeopathy principle in which medicine was injected in the body of the patient to cure the disease the patient was suffering from. This European practice of curing an illness may have given witch-doctors “the idea of inserting needle charms.”⁶⁰

Writing about the use of human familiars, employed by both sorcerers and witch-doctors, the most common ones being *likishi*, *nameya*, *kanenga*, Reynolds noted that, when employed by sorcerers, they usually made direct attacks on the agent or on the person of the former. He also noted a Mbunda familiar that was

⁵⁸ Communication with Charity Salasini, Keeper of Ethnography, Lusaka National Museum, Lusaka, 20 August 2013. Salasini was the collector of the object from 'Dr' Vongo. She also interviewed him over it.

⁵⁹ Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 39 and 59.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* pp. 12 and 76.

reputed to remove evil spirits troubling a patient and a Kwangwa *kanenga* which was able to identify and destroy a witch or sorcerer and that “the owner boasted that every death caused by these attacks or by bewitching others raised his own prestige among his colleagues”.⁶¹

It is important to note that following the advent of colonial rule; the colonial government saw witchcraft practices as repugnant to natural justice, while Christianity saw it as heathen. The two forces worked hard to suppress it. The government considered the provision of protection to members of the society from what was seen as groundless accusations and to deliver them from the fear of witchcraft as its duty. Consequently, in 1914, the Witchcraft Ordinance was passed. The Ordinance defined witchcraft as “the throwing of bones, the use of charms and any other means, process or device adopted in the practice of witchcraft or sorcery”. This Ordinance went through several amendments. It is now cited as Witchcraft Act, Chapter 90 of the Laws of Zambia. Through this Act, it is an offence to practice witchcraft or sorcery and to name or threaten to accuse any person as being a witch or any person to profess ability to inflict physical or mental injury to another by unnatural means. However, despite this Act, witchcraft practices are still common as is evidenced by press coverage as noted earlier.⁶²

Conclusion

The practice and belief in witchcraft has been an integral part of the way of life of the African people in general, including Zambians, and studies of anthropologists have discussed it in the context of traditional or precolonial African religious beliefs. Since ancient times, the witchcraft phenomenon has performed a variety of social functions, the most important of which, undoubtedly, was as a response to social needs. Witchcraft could for certain be said to be a theory of power and authority. As shown in this paper, practitioners sought it with the view to enhancing their power, authority, and social standing. Practitioners believed that witchcraft possessed energies that could fortify them against any kind of harm from their perceived enemies, and that it had the power to protect whatever wealth they had accumulated, from destruction by their supposed enemies who in general were either their family members or close friends.

This paper therefore subscribes to the colonial school of thought whose main thrust was on the structural functionalism theory, which saw witchcraft beliefs and practices within the social structures of those societies and communities and as fundamental to individual beliefs.⁶³ It also subscribes to the postcolonial framework

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 72.

⁶² See for instance, Anonymous (hereafter, Anon), “Witchcraft visits lead people to divorce”, *Sunday Mail*, 8, October 1995; Anon, “Suspected witch Crash-lands in Ndola”, *Times of Zambia*, 7 March 2006; Anon, “Court fines Kapiri Witch- finder K15, 000 for naming names”, Anon, “*Sunday Mail*, 23 July, 1995; “We are Witches and eat exhumed corpses”, *Zambia Daily Mail*, 16 February, 1996; Anon, “Court Knows no witchcraft”, *The Sun*, April 18-24, 1985; Anon, “Angry villagers raid ‘hyenas’ man’s home”, *Zambia Daily Mail*, 28, March 1996; and Anon, “Dog case dismissed”, *The Sun*, 30 January - 5 February, 1995.

⁶³ Scholars who have followed this approach include Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*.

in which the theoretical perspective's thrust is on the role of African witchcraft in adaptation to political, economic, and social change.⁶⁴ The two frameworks put together give us an understanding of the continuation of witchcraft practices and beliefs from precolonial to postcolonial times, despite punitive legislation enacted in both the colonial and postcolonial times to curb it.

Other than disappearing, the phenomenon of witchcraft survived the onslaught of colonialism and western objects were incorporated by witches, sorcerers, and witch-doctors or diviners in their paraphernalia, as these were believed to have the capacity to enhance their practice thereby boosting their prestige and social standing amongst their colleagues. It is therefore here argued that witchcraft beliefs and practices among the broad spectrum of the Zambian people, will for a long time continue to be experienced, particularly as more and more people face the attendant socio-economic and political challenges associated with the modern world. The paper therefore challenges researchers, particularly historians, to attach more energy to the study of the witchcraft phenomenon and its transformation over time, particularly regards its practice and legislation on it, rather than dismissing witchcraft as a mere belief that should be left to the anthropologist.

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⁶⁴ This approach has been followed mainly by scholars who wrote during the postcolonial period. Examples include Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L. (eds), *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*; Geschiere, P. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*; Bond, G. and Ciekawy, D. (eds), *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*; Niehaus, I. "Witchcraft, Power and Politics: An Ethnographic Study of the South African Lowveld". PhD thesis.

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