



Who Do not Practice Witchcraft? Assessing the Relegation of African Indigenous Religious Knowledge Resource by Christian and Islamic Traditions

Onesmo Emmanuel

Institute of Adult Education, Mwanza

Email: onenyamweru@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0361-9446>

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Abstract

The global intellectual, spiritual and socio-cultural landscapes have been dominated by the asymmetric power structures that have relegated, marginalised and erased the potency of African indigenous knowledge, including witchcraft knowledge. This paper shares findings on structural and behavioural inconsistencies, and philosophical contradictions, created by the foreign religious hegemonies which are continuously erasing and suppressing the African indigenous traditions by unfairly and unjustly accusing them of witchcraft. The study utilised a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretivist paradigm in which documents were used as sources of data. The findings revealed that the term “witchcraft” was used by Christianity and Islam intentionally to relegate and suppress the power and confidence of the African societies, and that its imposed notion has greatly impacted the perceptions and power of the post-colonial Africa to date. The findings indicate further that the foreign religious traditions accuse the African religious traditions of witchcraft practices in negative sense just to downgrade them, while they themselves practice the same, but in the holy labels of miracles. The paper recommends for determined and committed efforts by the African societies and governments to urgently strategize for an African cultural awakening and restoration by confronting the existing foreign distortions. The efforts have to go along with establishment of

mechanisms for controlling, and guiding to proper use, of the practice that came to be perceived as witchcraft.

Keywords: African traditional religions, Indigenous knowledge, Religion, Traditional education, Witchcraft

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Introduction

For centuries, the global intellectual, spiritual and socio-cultural landscapes have been dominated by the asymmetric power structures that, according to Lumanze (2023), have been relegating and erasing the potency of African indigenous knowledge resource. This systematic erasure found its most destructive vehicle in the historical and currently existing foreign religions (especially Christianity and Islam) whose architectures, as asserted by Lumanze (2023), Ukpe (2024) and Mogaji & Motadegbe (2025), employed deceitful mechanisms in downgrading and suppressing the social power of the African societies that was embedded in their traditional education systems, languages and religions.

Before the coming of the foreign religions of Islam and Christianity, African communities had their traditional education and religions with their values that were original, relevant to them and of which they were proud. Kanu (2018) and Lumanze (2023) supported this claim by showing that such education and religions of the time were so peaceful and they encouraged solidarity, morality, peace and communalism; and they were co-terminus with the African people. The communities are said to have had their religions which existed without having Holy Scriptures or a clearly outlined body of literature like the other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Islam; yet they were strong and powerful.

Gade (2012), and Mugumbate & Chereni (2020), as cited in Lumanze (2023), claimed that the Africans, through their religions, lived in peace and harmony, and they understood each other's languages; and they saw themselves as one people and being in respect of one another. Their traditional religions and cultures promoted unity, love, brotherhood, morals, and communal living. They are said to have had contained their social power, which is, as argued by Fricker (2007), a practically socially situated capacity to control others' actions.

The coming of Christian and Islam religions was a protracted campaign of epistemiciding and demolishing the long-time established social power of the African communities, rather than the engagement with the existing indigenous systems through a framework of mutual respect or positive dialogue. Those claims are evidenced in works by Yeboah et al. (2024), Ukpe (2024) and Mogaji & Motadegbe (2025), who argued that the partitioning of African continent into pieces in the late 19th century, as the initial steps for colonization of Africa, was accompanied by an equally violent cognitive and socio-cultural partitioning. According to those authors, the colonial administrators quickly recognised that physical subjugation was unsustainable without causing psychological and spiritual pacification among the Africans. In this disruption of the roots and stems of the African cultural strengths and social ties, education and religion could not remain safe. Consequently, as Ukpe (2024) concluded, the colonial state benefited through the Christian missionary enterprise, which operated as a symbiotic duopoly, in addition to the Islamic religion that had existed for years, to cause cognitive and spiritual terror among African societies.

For generations, the foreigners who were spreading their Christian and Islamic religions across the continent constructed what Ukpe (2024) described as the rigid binary oppositions of light versus darkness, civilization versus savagery and true religion versus witchcraft. In that classification, the first of each pair was equated to the said foreign religions and the second to the Africans. On that, Cimpric (2010) added that African traditional medicine, community-based conflict resolution rituals, astronomical observations and ecological preservation taboos were clustered together and tossed into the conceptual dungeon of witchcraft. Thus, witchcraft, which was an important part of African religions and an integral part of the powerful resources that the African societies have had throughout their history (Lumanze, 2023; Kimpinde, 2025), was negatively affected by the distortions.

During the colonial period, Africans were taken to the missionary education centres where they were provided with the education that isolated them from their communities. Those who were not taken to the centres were continuously being converted into Christianity and Islam too in which they were taught to hate their traditions and got led to be detached from them. In describing the strategy used to spread Christianity in West Africa, Mino and Heto (2020) as cited in Ng'umbi (2024) reported that the missionaries provided the converts with formal education (a Western-style education) which was outside the African life setting. They were

also exposed and deepened into foreign cultural and religious dominance for colonial interests and desires. Through those efforts, the cultural and religious practices of the people in the colonies were condemned and considered as inferior and evil (Abraham, 2020). As a result, the entire local communities were led to what Emmanuel (2024) reported as the state of despising their own knowledge systems and perceive theirs as inferior.

A vast body of scholarship (Lumwe, 2017, Lumanze, 2023 and Kimpinde, 2025 included) shows that the primary tool or weapon of the foreign education and religions in their cognitive and cultural warfare was the reductive, pejorative, and undifferentiated categorization of complex African medical, ecological, philosophical, and metaphysical knowledge under the umbrella term of superstition or witchcraft. Since then, the antagonistic relationship between the foreign and the traditional religions has dominated the lives of the African communities. Segregation, stigmatization, subjugation, religious conflicts, wars, hatred, exploitation and so forth has been, according to Lumanze (2023), consequent characterisation of the entire spectrum of African land to date. Machangu (2013) adds some highlights on a horrific pathology resulting from the unresolved clash between foreign legal frameworks and indigenous worldviews across many East African communities where elderly women are systematically targeted, violently attacked, driven from their lands, and even murdered under the accusation of engaging in witchcraft under the direct influence of religious frenzies, where Muslims and Christians label these vulnerable women as witches. These situations are likely to create a profound state of existential and epistemological relegation of the utility, efficacy and foundational reality of African indigenous modalities.

The debate on whether witchcraft exists or not, and on whether it is useful or not, is no longer a hot agenda of discussion. Witchcraft is reported to exist almost everywhere (Lumwe, 2017). Most Africans need no special orientation to believe that witchcraft exists, because it is reported that it cannot be separated from the life of an African (Mbiti, 1991; Lumwe, 2017). Similarly, the resourcefulness of witchcraft is not supposed to be a question of long discussion. Going (2019) and Thulla et al., 2022 show that, in anthropological and sociological literature, African witchcraft is frequently analysed as a dynamic political resource, a form of spiritual power, and a mechanism for negotiating wealth and modernity.

The historical perceptions have caused difficulties in defining witchcraft. The term lacks one concise conceptualization in literature because different definitions in existing literature are influenced by the beliefs of the authors. Dein (2025) argue that Christianity has, to a great extent, affected the meanings of witchcraft. The contemporary beliefs propagated in Africa by the predominantly fundamentalist western missionaries, especially those of Pentecostal backgrounds, view witchcraft as power derived from evil spirits possessing the witch and endowing individuals with the potential to harm (Dein, 2025). They refer witchcraft to a phenomenon associated with supernatural activities that are believed to bring about negative or evil consequences for individuals and families (Akrong, 2007). Colonial religion taught, and still teaches, that witchcraft is still a problem of demonic expression and manifestation (Dein, 2025). Nevertheless, the notion of witchcraft, in its actual sense, covers multiple terms in local languages referring to various phenomena whose interpretation relies heavily on their contexts. In that line, scholars such as Dovlo (2007) argue that, although it has been associated with sorcery, occult or mystical forces, witchcraft is the exercise or employment of esoteric power for a definite purpose, be it good or evil. Nyabwari and Kagema (2014) clarifies that concept by giving examples that, in its positive sense, witchcraft is used for curative, productive, preventive and warfare purposes; and in its negative sense, it can eat away the health and souls of the victims; attack people; cause misfortune; and make life uncomfortable. This paper adopts this neutral conceptualisation of the term by Dovlo and Nyabwari and Kagema. It refers witchcraft to the practice of rituals, spellworks, divination, ancestor veneration, herbalism and/or supernatural work, be it for curative, productive and preventive purposes or for causing harm.

Literature shows that, before the Christian and Islamic incursions, African societies did not possess a monolithic concept of "witchcraft" that matched the European early and modern imagery of satanic and malicious heretical covens. Edwards et al. (2018) and Lumanze (2023), for example, report that, before colonial rule, the knowledge which is called witchcraft formed an integral part of social structure in most traditional African societies. Lumanze (2023) heads on that African cosmologies were fundamentally relational, holistic, and focused on the balance of vital forces. Implying the usefulness of the knowledge, the two scholars continue that the knowledge that was utilised to enhance life, heal the sick, protect the community and maintain ecological equilibrium was sacred and revered; conversely, was viewed as the knowledge subverted to cause unwarranted harm,

disrupt social cohesion, and diminish life-force was condemned. The colonial administrators and missionary apparatus completely obliterated all this ethical distinction and pooled all that is indigenous into the derogatory equivalence to “witchcraft” of their sense and its associated or accommodated terms like witch-doctors, wizards and sorcerers into a general pool of paganism and satanic.

The systematic destruction and mischaracterization of African indigenous religion and culture as witchcraft, in the foreign sense, have far-reaching effects, which contribute to the underdevelopment of African countries. Scholars, such as Lumwe (2017) and Iwata (2023), investigated how the traditional knowledge of African communities has been deliberately suppressed through the use of the holy books of foreign religions specifically the Bible and the Quran. They went further and showed that the two books have been used as weapons of the foreign religious leaders to strip African knowledge, culture and confidence by demonizing Africa under the shadow of witchcraft. They conclude that this strategy was explicitly designed for the purpose of colonizing the minds of indigenous Africans and to ensure that the local populations abandoned their autonomous and self-sustaining practices in favour of the foreign ones.

With the sense that the ability to master occult forces is an asset and power of Africa, and that it is a socio-cultural phenomenon of great importance, which is deeply-rooted in African lives for generations, this paper presents the outcome of the investigation of what Ukpe (2024) and Mokotso (2021) termed as the structural hypocrisy, behavioural inconsistencies, and philosophical contradictions created by the foreign religious hegemonies which are continuously perpetuating the suppression of the African indigenous education and religion. The paper seeks to add knowledge on how the foreign religions of Christianity and Islam mask themselves in practices which they condemn for the purpose of downgrading the Africans while they do the same. It seeks to explore the records of events which are upheld by the said foreign religions as holy and acceptable, while they are similar to what they accuse Africa for as witchcraft when they are done in the realms of African indigenous religions. By asking the provocative question: "Who do not practice witchcraft?" the study subverts the historical gaze with an ambition of seeking answers which might show that those who seek to weaken the African powerful social assets and resources by deceitfully mischaracterising them as witchcraft (in their own sense and interests) may themselves be found practising the same.

Methodology

This study utilised a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretivist paradigm in its longing to seek understanding of how foreign religions have deceitfully rendered Africa a permanent dependency on Western and Middle Eastern spiritual-industrial complexes after suppressing her social and technological powers and, consequently, making her easily ruled and exploited. The approach was found suitable to uncover the complex social phenomenon under study which seeks answers to "how" and "why" questions. It enabled to probe deeply into the specific context of religious practices.

The study used documents as its source of data as they were believed to be sufficient enough to provide the needed information to answer the study questions. The documents involved were secular and religious. The secular documents used were specifically *The Witchcraft Act*, Cap. 18 [R.E. 2002] of Tanzania, and the religious ones were the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran. The Bible selected was the New International Version Bible (1978, Revised 2011) because it is (according to Edson, 2025) the most popular modern version of the Bible, known for its excellent and broadly accessible balance of accuracy and readability. The Holy Quran used was *The Clear Quran* (M. Khattab, Trans.) of 2015, which was selected due to its clarity, natural idiom and emphasis in contextual meaning in contemporary English. All of the documents were accessed online through Google search.

The Holy Bible and the Holy Quran were greatly used because they are the main guiding references of the two main foreign religions of Africa, which make the scope of this study. The documents were used to find out the practices which are regarded as holy in the foreign religions but are, in the actual sense, similar to those of African religions which are negatively labelled by the foreign religions as witchcraft. The events were identified in the documents through long-time experience of the author in studying the "holy books." The events in those books which depict the targeted practices were identified, re-read through and interpreted in comparison to what are perceived by the author to be witchcraft.

Results

The findings of this study are organised in three sub-themes reflected to answer the study question. The sub themes are: Perceptions of witchcraft in legal perspectives

and the foreign holy books; Witchcraft practices in the Christian religion (Holy Bible); and Witchcraft practices in the Islamic religion (Holy Quran).

Perceptions of Witchcraft in Legal Perspectives and Christian and Islamic Holy Books

The two religious books (the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran) recognize existence of witchcraft and they strongly condemn it. The Bible, in Leviticus 20:27, prescribes a death penalty to a person who is found engaging in witchcraft. It reads: “A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.” (New International Version, Leviticus 20:27). Moreover, an incidence in 1 Chronicles 10:13 shows what was executed to King Saul who was said to have consulted a witch for guidance.

Ahmad (2023) states that “the Holy Qur’an does not permit witchcraft and, in fact, does not recognise it,” (no page numbers). He continues showing that, in reality, the Holy Qur’an mentions a kind of witchcraft called magic. In that view, the Holy Quran prohibits witchcraft and practicing it is one of the greatest and deadly sins. Surah Ta Ha 20:70 prescribes that a magician should not be left to thrive. Magic in all its forms is sin in Islam.

While existence of witchcraft may not hold much debate, its definition in foreign religion context may be very contentious as literature poses different views of the term. Cimpric (2010) defines witchcraft as an attempt to control, manipulate, or engage with the spirit world through various practices such as spells, incantations, and rituals. The Pan African Parliament (2021) views witchcraft as an umbrella term encompassing a complex configuration of beliefs and associated practices varying between countries, ethnic and religious groups, and individuals, but generally agreed, contextually, across the continent of Africa as involving the belief that a person, through utilizing a spirit medium is able to cause harm to, or change the fortunes of, others. Cimpric (2010) reports that, in the Christian world, witchcraft is viewed as delving into the demonic realm and therefore is something to be avoided.

From this analysis, the issue of defining witchcraft seems to depend on who defines it and for which interests. The “holy books” do not clearly define witchcraft. However, the critical view of the term in the books signifies that witchcraft is any

spiritual miraculous act which is done outside the realms of the respective religion. In the Biblical perspective, Bush (2024) views witchcraft as the practice of magical skills, spells, and abilities, specifically, invoking supernatural powers that are not from God, but instead from some other source. What this concept entails is that when those practices and powers are from God then they are not perceived to be witchcraft! The report about the man, Simon, in the Holy Bible (Acts 8:9-11), indicates that he was doing what the Christian followers would call miracles would they be sure that they came from God.

That witchcraft is useful is also indicated in the “holy books.” The Holy Bible shows that the witches were useful and they were as asset because the kings used them as one of the special advisory groups in palaces (Pharaoh in Exodus 7:11 and the Babylon kings in Daniel 2:2; 4:7; 5:11 are examples). They were consulted for divination and, in some cases, they were used as a weapon in warfare. Thus, throughout history, the foreign regions have had a view that ‘my supernatural power is a miracle while yours is witchcraft’ prevailed.

The enactment of laws on witchcraft in many African countries is one of the secular indicators that witchcraft is recognized to exist. Most of these statutory legislations were designed by colonial administrators to suppress traditional spiritual practices and they were inherited by the independent African states. Many African countries have been found maintaining the Witchcraft Acts or equivalent penal code provisions that regulate or criminalize the practice. Cameroon, Central African Republic, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Algeria and Libya have legislations which directly prohibit the practice, utilization, or intent to use witchcraft or supernatural magic against another person. Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini and Namibia criminalize the pretence of practicing magic, posing as a witch-doctor, or accusing someone else of being a witch. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) only prohibits naming/accusing someone as a witch.

The Witchcraft Act of 2002 in Tanzania, which was studied as example, prohibits sorcery, enchantment, bewitching, the use of instrument of witchcraft, the purported exercise of any occult power and the purported possession of any occult knowledge (that is also reported by UNICEF, 2021). Section 3 of the Act stipulates that:

A person who: (a) by his statements or actions represents himself to have the power of witchcraft; (b) makes, uses, has in his possession or represents himself to possess any instruments of witchcraft; (c) supplies to any other person any as to the instrument of witchcraft; (d) advises any other person upon the use of witchcraft or any instrument of witchcraft; or (e) threatens to use or resorts to the use of witchcraft or any instrument of witchcraft upon or against any person or property, commits an offence under this Act. (*The Witchcraft Act*, 2002, s. 3).

The act further defines ‘instruments of witchcraft’ as “anything which is used or intended to be used or is commonly used, or which is represented or generally believed to possess the power, to prevent or delay any person from doing any act which he may lawfully do, or to compel any person to do any act which he may lawfully refrain from doing, or to discover the person guilty of any alleged crime or other act of which complainant is made, or to cause death, injury or disease to any person or damage to any property, or to put any person in fear, or by supernatural means to produce any natural phenomenon and includes charms and medicines commonly used for any of the purposes aforesaid.” UNICEF (2021).

Although some African countries inherited the Witchcraft Acts from colonial powers, most of the acts do not prohibit witchcraft bluntly. The aforesaid act of Tanzania, for example, do strictly prohibit witchcraft in its totality (Section 3 quoted above) and Section 5 (quoted below):

(1) A person who commits an offence under this Act with intent to cause death, disease, injury, or misfortune to any community, class of persons, person, or animal, or to cause injury to any property on conviction shall be liable to imprisonment of not less than seven years. (2) A person who commits an offence under this Act without any intent such as is described in subsection (1) shall on conviction be liable to a fine of not less than one hundred thousand shillings or imprisonment of not less than five years. (*The Witchcraft Act*, 2002, s. 5).

The sense that “witchcraft” is strongly shunned and avoided seems to have been directly influenced by the foreign religions and outsider’s view on African witchcraft. It is the foreigner’s view that is likely to perceive everything called witchcraft as useless. The enactments of the legislations and perpetuation of the inherited ones in African countries may be continuously influenced by the current legislators almost all of which are followers of the foreign religions.

Witchcraft Practices in the Holy Bible

This study examined practices recorded in the Bible which are the same as those of African traditional religions which are blamed to be witchcraft. The findings show that there are several events recorded in the Bible which would be regarded as witchcraft if they were done within the realm of African cultures. Generally, it is to be evident that, what are called miracles in the foreign religions are what they call witchcraft in African traditional religions.

The sacrifice of Abraham

In Genesis 22:1-10, the Holy Bible provides a story about Abraham, who is said to be instructed by God to offer sacrifice of his son, Isaac. The text reads:

Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place, God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (New International Version, Genesis 22:1–10).

This story possesses some characteristics of witchcraft through the sacrifices. Abraham took his son, firewood and a knife and went to kill his son for sacrifice. He tied up his son, took a knife to slay the son and ready to let fire consume him before he was shown a ram to be offered as sacrifice instead of his son. The Christians may not be ready to recognize Abraham as one who practised bad superstition and witchcraft which would be interpreted as crime today. If the same

is practised by grandfathers in our current communities, then they would be termed as the witches.

Miracles of Moses and Aaron in Egypt

The Bible provides records of several actions which were done by Moses and Aaron in Egypt and later after leaving Egypt. In Exodus 7:10-12, Moses and Aaron threw down their staffs and they turned into serpents. The Egyptian magicians (sorcerers) replicated the same actions and their staff became serpents.

“Moses and Aaron approach Pharaoh, and Aaron throws down his staff, turning it into a snake. Pharaoh calls his magicians who duplicate the miracle using secret arts, but Aaron’s staff miraculously swallows theirs.” (New International Version, Exodus 7:10-12).

This event brings us a discussion. Was the action of Moses and Aaron not magic? Didn’t they do the same action as those Egyptians? To establish a criterion to use to identify the Egyptians as sorcerers and Moses and his colleague as holy people while they did exactly the same actions and for same results is very difficult.

The other magic actions, which qualifies to be perceived as bad witchcraft, can be identified with Moses and Aaron in what is famously called the ten plagues. The plagues are recorded in Exodus 7-12. Those ten plagues, which made by Moses and Aaron in Egypt, targeting the Egyptians, include the turning of the water of River Nile to blood, causing of frogs, lice and locusts, flies, animal diseases, skin sores, hail, three consecutive days darkness and the final death of all the firstborn.

This phenomenon is supposed to be recognized as witchcraft and, indeed, bad witchcraft! It is supposed to be punishable! In contrary, the followers of the Bible praise the action with a lot of Amens and Hallelujahs!

Parting of the Sea

The Holy Bible presents another event in Exodus 14:16-28, in which Moses uses a staff to part water of the Red Sea. The verses read:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ... Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were

divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.... Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward[c] it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. (New International Version, Exodus 14:16–28).

That action of parting of the sea allowed the Israelites to pass and the Egyptians to get drown in water. Another event recorded in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 is about Moses causing flow of water from the rock for the thirsting Israelites in the desert.

The two events represent what would be called witchcraft if they were done today by the Africans. Indeed, they represent what would be regarded as bad witchcraft because the parting of water allowed the Israelites to unlawfully escape from Egyptian government and caused the Egyptian people to perish in water.

Causing drought and bringing fire

Here are other two Bible magical events which are recorded 1 Kings 17 and 18. A person who was known as Elijah the Prophet used magic power to stop rain and make fire come down from heaven. The event is followed by the opponents of him to be disempowered and he killed them.

This action shares characteristics with practices classified as witchcraft, which is associated with crime. Stopping rainfall is the same thing as what is called witchcraft. Bringing fire from heaven is of the same view. Even the action of causing the female deer to appear and maul forty-two of the group of youths who mocked him (2 Kings 2:23-24) is the practice of the same characteristic.

Elijah's whirlwind

In the book of 2 Kings 2, the Holy Bible tells the story of ascension of Elijah. Although the story goes by showing God causing Elijah to ascend, Elijah seems to know about it and he made some preparations for it. It is purely magic and witchcraft.

Jesus' Miracles

The actions that were done by Jesus as recorded in the Bible are what we are mistakenly calling witchcraft in our community lives. The turning of water into wine, as recoded in the second chapter of the Book of John is magic. The miraculous action of calming the storm which is recorded in Mark 4 and Luke 8 are also magic practice. The event of multiplying the bread and fish John Chapter 6, the walking on water recorded in Matthew 14 and the incidences of raising the dead as recorded in Mark 5:21-43, Luke 7:11-17 and John 11:1-44 represent the practice of magic.

Use of miracles to escape from punishment

A story in Daniel Chapter 3 is about three men who were sentenced to death as penalty for disrespecting the law of the king. The text reads:

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So, these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." 26Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening

of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. (New International Version, Daniel 3:13–27).

Another similar event, but in different context, is recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles Chapter 16, where it is written:

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God - he and his whole family. When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace. (New International Version, Acts 16:22–36).

The praying of these "God's people" for miraculous release from the then lawful sentence given to them was the practice of witchcraft as they consulted the supernatural power, which, eventually, caused the authority to be moved to act in contrary to the lawful decisions. The Witchcraft Act of Tanzania defines those actions as witchcraft, which is punishable by law. But how does Christianity perceive those events? They perceive them as holy miracles which deserve praises! The events are considered as the holy witnesses that deserve great Amen! The Christians wish to have such events in great quantities today! They pray to have more of them today!

There other many stories which are not brought into consideration, but which are of the same nature. The stories include the death of Ananias and Sapphira, recorded in Acts 5:1-10, for whom the “servants of God” cursed to death. All these events constitute the sense of witchcraft in them, according to this paper’s neutral view of the term. Could they have been performed by the Africans of today, they would have been included in the list of witchcraft practices.

Witchcraft in the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran does not offer many examples of actions and practices that could qualify to be regarded as witchcraft. However, it has some. Five of them are identified and presented, the first one being those which were done by Moses and already presented from the Bible.

The Miracles by Moses

The Clear Quran (2015, 20:20-22; 26:32-33) presents the actions of Moses (and Aaron) of turning staff into a serpent while the Holy Quran (26:63-66) tells about the action of Moses’ parting of the Red Sea. The events are already discussed.

Creating a bird from clay, healing the blind/lepers, and raising the dead [Isa]

The Holy Quran (3:49) tells about miracles which Issa did. The verse reads:

I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make for you a bird from clay, breathe into it, and it will become a real bird by Allah's Will. I will heal the blind and the leper and raise the dead to life by Allah's Will. And I will prophesize what you eat and store in your houses. Surely in this is a sign for you if you truly believe. (*The Clear Quran*, 3:49).

These practices are perceived to be miracles; but in the actual sense of the author, they are indeed magic or witchcraft.

Surviving the fire

The Holy Quran (21:69, 70) talks about the miraculous protection of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) when he was thrown into the fire and rescued. It reads: “We ordered, “O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!” They had sought to harm him, but We made them the worst losers.” (*The Clear Quran*, 3:49).

These verses are reporting what would, in the contemporary perceptions, be perceived as witchcraft. If any person applies such supernatural power today, one would be interpreted and treated as a witch.

The Splitting of the Moon

The Holy Quran (54:1-2) presents another magic. It talks about the splitting of the moon. It reads: "The Hour has drawn near and the moon was split in two." "Yet, whenever they see a sign, they turn away, saying, 'Same old magic!'"

The presented incident is viewed as mere magic. But it is indeed the manipulation of nature through supernatural or astral forces which affect other people's emotions. It was done when the unbelievers challenged the Prophet to perform what they call a miracle. He pointed towards the moon and it split into two and, after some time of staying split, it eventually converged back to its original state.

The Night Journey

The Holy Quran (17:1) is about the miraculous journey from the Sacred Mosque (Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (Jerusalem) and the subsequent ascension to heaven. This miracle refers to the night journey Muhammad made with the angel Gabriel. He went from Mecca to Jerusalem. From there he ascended up to the heavens to hold a communion with Allah. By the time he returned to Mecca it was still night time. It was also magic of its nature-miracle.

Discussion

All the presented findings indicate in general that witchcraft is real, and it is the existing phenomenon in communities, although its definition is highly contentious. It has been also obvious that its most used definitions, which are associated with harm and evil, are heavily influenced by Eurocentric, colonial, and foreign religious views. The findings seem to agree that the Eurocentric influences led to demolishing of the knowledge of healing, protections and forecasting that belonged to Africans. The findings support the claims by Cimpric (2010), Lumwe (2017), Lumanze (2023), Ukpe (2024) and Kimpinde (2025), just to mention a few, that in many African cultures, witchcraft is a useful resource and power source, in which

practitioners are seen as healers and protectors who use their knowledge and abilities to help others in times of need.

The findings have shown that the Christian and Islam's holy books praise witchcraft in the name 'miracles.' Their hostile relationship with cultural religion caused these traditions to associate witchcraft with any supernatural power which is not within its line of acceptance or understanding and they defined it as bad, devilish and satanic. The current widely used definitions of witchcraft are influenced by European view, regarding it as bad and something to be abandoned in all its forms. The definition seems to constitute some distortions. The distortion led to viewing witchcraft as ability of certain people to intentionally cause harm via supernatural means (Gershman, (2022); or harm brought upon others through the use of supernatural or occult powers (Doyle, 2026). This analysis agrees with Dein (2025) who argue that Christianity has significantly affected the meaning of African witchcraft. When connected to the views that it is part of the powerful African tool throughout history, witchcraft seems to be something unwanted when defined in the foreign religion or Eurocentric view, while, in African view, it is something useful. Based on that, Badela (2015) shows that witchcraft is a fabricated social problem, a real fallacy, localized purely within human consciousness, and which results from a hybrid synthesis of ancient traditional folklore and external foreign beliefs. Furthermore, the study finds to argue that, while foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) condemn witchcraft as sin or demonic, this perspective is used to devalue African socio-technological know-how, as many "miracles" in foreign scriptures mirror actions which are labelled as witchcraft in African contexts. This view concurs with Kimpinde (2025) who see that the failure of the sciences to comprehend witchcraft is caused by the fact that they want to study and verify this religious and spiritual power using the scientific lenses.

It has been evident in the findings that foreign religions have been using witchcraft just as a weapon to conquer and diminish African power, though not perfectly succeeded. The argument of unsuccessfulness in the mission is in line with what was previously presented from Cimpric (2010) that although the African beliefs and cultural practices were perceived that they would finally disappear over time, the situation seems to be in the contrary. Far from fading away, these social and cultural representations have been maintained and transformed through harsh and oppressive oppositions made by the foreign religions under support of colonial and neo-colonial government. The trends of urbanization, modernization, education and

dominance and spread of Christianity or Islam were expected to finally help kill and suppress African traditional cultural practices, but, as Cimpric (2010) asserts, far from fading away, they have been maintained, transformed and adapted. The fact of not disappearing, along all the opposition forces, evidences on their relevance and powerfulness.

The findings from the “Holy Books” show that witchcraft is a resource as it is useful. It can be used for good and for bad. When misused, it is likened to warrior who misuse the gun or bomb. They also view the practice of witchcraft as a source of comfort and support for individuals facing illness, misfortune, or other challenges, providing a sense of hope and empowerment in difficult circumstances. The way the “holy books” perceive witchcraft negatively may be perceived in the notion of cultural warfare against cultures. Yet the findings seem to agree that the Eurocentric influences led to demolishing of the knowledge of healing, protections and forecasting that belonged to Africans. The findings support the claims by Cimpric (2010), Lumwe (2017), Lumanze (2023), Ukpe (2024) and Kimpinde (2025), just to mention a few, that in many African cultures, witchcraft is a useful resource and power source, in which practitioners are seen as healers and protectors who use their knowledge and abilities to help others in times of need. They also view the practice of witchcraft as a source of comfort and support for individuals facing illness, misfortune, or other challenges, providing a sense of hope and empowerment in difficult circumstances.

Moreover, the findings indicate the sense of good use or bad as something that depends on other established or accepted factors. The two reported events of escaping from the punishment of burning furnace and from the prison evidence to the reader that the goodness and badness of one thing may be different to different people. What was initially bad to the king was good to the three men who were thrown in fire, and later became good to the king too. What was bad to the magistrates and the jailer was good to Paul and Silas, and it later became good to the jailer too. Witchcraft can be perceived bad to one due to the belief and knowledge of it one has.

One can easily concur with Kimpinde, (2025) in the claim that the foreign religions generally marginalized African culture by labelling it as heathen or evil because of their interests. Africa came to be perceived as the wicked and dark continent because of the same practices that the accusers are doing but in different names.

The argument by Cimpric (2010) adds on it that the practices of healing and spiritual wellness which had, for centuries, stood as central pillars of African education, religion and culture in general and of African community's resilience and harmony were regarded as witchcraft unjustly.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that witchcraft is a resource and part of traditional lives of the Africans. The Eurocentric conceptualization of the term has loaded it with so much bias, distortion, and missionary vitriol just to obscure its actual value. The study concludes that the phenomenon of unfairly and unjustly denouncing of the African indigenous spiritual and technological resources as demonic, backward and devilish, and the strategic branding of Africa as a black continent with black religions dominated by witchcraft in their sense, was not an innocent theological error born out of cultural misunderstanding, but a deliberate, deceitful mechanism and warfare tool. It was designed to strip African societies of their cognitive sovereignty, medical independence, and self-sustaining ecological wisdom. From knowing that the strong communities are strengthened by their culture, one can easily find the reason why competitors or opponents would easily opt to disrupt community's culture by associating it with witchcraft in the negative sense in order to conquer it. Through that design, the outsiders managed to make attempts of isolating the African societies from their God-given powerful resources of religion. Consequently, even if when the contemporary Africans praise themselves that they have maintained their cultures, the reality is that they no longer have their culture; they are captured in the foreign educational systems, foreign religions and, generally, foreign cultures.

Being a long-time integral part of social structure of most traditional African societies (as argued by Edwards, et al, 2018) witchcraft is part of lives and resources of the African communities. Suppressing it means grabbing of their knowledge resource and erasing their culture. Since both African indigenous traditional contexts and the foreign Christian and Islamic traditional contexts practise witchcraft, there is a need to make critical analysis of its actual concept according to its actual use, alongside the miracles performed in the Christian and Islamic contexts. Redefining witchcraft is viable and it would go hand in hand with the establishment of instruments and relevant authorities or boards that can manage

proper use of this important resource so that it is used to solve problems and not for causing harm or destruction.

Scholars, such as Maillu (2023), highlighted the urgent necessity for an African spiritual awakening that directly confronts the existing colonial distortion. That stand point is supported by this paper as one of the leading recommendations of this study. In addition to that, the paper recommends for a need to have intrapersonal and interpersonal discussion on the whereabouts of African traditional religions in African streets. There is a need to seek the answer to why African are still joining hands with the foreigners in lumping their vital traditional knowledge in a pool of witchcraft of the coloniser's view and participate in setting harsh penalties for those who practise the knowledge. Greatly, Africans need to ask themselves why their traditional religions are not found in their government's registries of religions, which have only long lists of foreign-based religions! Recognizing the vitality of their religious culture and knowledge, and having it in appropriate conception, is the most significant recommendation of this paper, which calls for optimal and controlled use and development of this important resource called witchcraft.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in regard to the publication of this paper.

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