

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: In a society where paranormal and preternatural activities hold sway, the recurring beliefs in witchcraft, magic and sorcery retains commonplace in the African worldview. However, as these phenomena vacillate from end to end in both semantic and applied understanding, a comparative study becomes revealing in unlocking the problematics, differences and similarities that arises from their practices. Witchcraft in African society not only represents the use of spiritual abilities and powers for evil and destructive purposes, but also stands out as a phenomena that represents an inherent, intangible quality, possessed by an accused which may be known or unknown. Magic on the other hand is seen as the ability to manipulate the forces of nature in a way that exacts pressure on the mental, physical and spiritual faculties. And as magic becomes a phenomena in the African society evident in the use of charms and amulets for protection, wars and attacks, and etcetera, the display of the supernatural, extraordinary and spiritual replete in both practices asks questions on the view that magic is all about tricks and abracadabra alone. And while deficient notions that witchcraft is a backward, and destructive activity peculiar to Africans alone has been laid to rest following scientific and historical evidences of witchcraft as a common phenomenon in early Europe and other parts of the world, the notable reduction in the vestiges of witchcraft and magic in the western world, can be traceable to the meteoric growth in science and technology that has helped them in finding viable answers to many questions of the universe through causal laws of nature. The onus therefore lies on every African society to grow in the knowledge of science and technology and every intellectual activity that embraces scientific experiments, hypotheses and solutions in other to better interpret events from rational, logical and causal angles, so as to dispel complete dependence on black magic, witchcraft and sorcery. This must be done with profound and deep efforts at understanding these extraordinary phenomena in the African world view, in order to make them relevant if possible to contemporary African societies.

Keywords: Magic. Witchcraft. African Societies.

Resumo: Em uma sociedade onde as atividades paranormais e sobrenaturais dominam, as crenças recorrentes em bruxaria, magia e feitiçaria permanecem comuns na cosmovisão africana. No entanto, à medida que esses fenômenos oscilam de ponta a ponta, na compreensão semântica e aplicada, um estudo comparativo torna-se revelador ao desvendar as problemáticas, diferenças e semelhanças que surgem de suas práticas. A bruxaria na sociedade africana não apenas representa o uso de habilidades e poderes espirituais para fins malignos e destrutivos, mas também se destaca como um fenômeno que representa uma qualidade inerente e intangível, possuída por um acusado que pode ser conhecido ou desconhecido. A magia, por outro lado, é vista como a capacidade de manipular as forças da natureza de uma maneira que exige pressão sobre as faculdades mentais, físicas e espirituais.

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E como a magia se torna um fenômeno evidente na sociedade africana no uso de encantos e amuletos para proteção, guerras e ataques etc., a exibição do sobrenatural, extraordinário e espiritual presente em ambas as práticas questiona a visão de que a magia sozinha é tudo sobre truques e abracadabra. E enquanto noções deficientes de que a bruxaria é uma atividade retrógrada e destrutiva peculiar aos africanos foram postas de lado após as evidências científicas e históricas da bruxaria como um fenômeno comum no início da Europa e em outras partes do mundo, a notável redução nos vestígios de bruxaria e magia no mundo ocidental podem ser rastreáveis até o crescimento meteórico da ciência e da tecnologia que os ajudou a encontrar respostas viáveis para muitas questões do universo por meio de leis causais da natureza. Portanto, cabe a toda sociedade africana crescer no conhecimento da ciência e da tecnologia e de toda atividade intelectual que abarca experimentos científicos, hipóteses e soluções dentre outros, para melhor interpretar os eventos a partir dos ângulos racional, lógico e causal, de modo a dissipar a total dependência em relação à magia negra, bruxaria e feitiçaria. Isso deve ser feito com esforços profundos e intensos no entendimento desses fenômenos extraordinários na visão de mundo africana, a fim de torná-los relevantes, se possível, às sociedades africanas contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: Magia; Bruxaria; Sociedades Africanas.

Introduction

The philosophical crucible that still encloses African thought system today, is one that has grown accustomed to various strategic hurdles. This is replete in the problematic that control African Philosophy, her thought pattern and beliefs, as well as her responses to these challenges, threatening the very foundations of the African way of life. African metaphysics along with other ontological appurtenances are at the receiving end of major criticism in the African thought system. This inevitably so as the African person possesses intrinsically, the inclination to a deeper ontological and Spiritual being.

Owing to this, Witchcraft and magic becomes a recurring Phenomenon in the Africa consciousness and belief system, while some schools of thought blames this on the poverty of practical means of controlling the universe, owing to the backwardness that characterizes the Dark Continent, others can include the different religious practices before the advent of Christianity as the cesspit of witchcraft and sorcery.

This work aims at a comparative study of the concept of witchcraft and magic in African Philosophy. This paper would go on to analyze the truth value of these beliefs based on some selected cases with a view to showing what the impacts of these beliefs are on the contemporary African reality. This work does not boast of an omniscient exposition of these concepts within the African context. Perhaps the consoling goal is the fact that no work can

claim to be fully exhaustive on any subject matter. We only aim at a comparison of both concepts towards a better understanding, synthesis and conclusion drawn from the analysis.

Our approach in writing this paper shall be in the following order: We shall first all attempt an expose of the concept of magic as a phenomena in Africa. This will be followed by a clarification of the concept of witchcraft in traditional African societies with particular emphasis on the activities of witches and wizards in some African societies and thereafter there will be a comparative analysis of both concepts of witchcraft and magic with a view to identify areas of similarities and differences within the African milieu. Our conclusion shall be based on our exposition of both concepts, analysis and comparative study that will lead us to a better understanding, synthesis and more enlightenment on the activities of those involved in these phenomena.

Clarification of terms

To enhance our understanding of the subject matter, it would be important to clarify basic terms.

The Unabridged Dictionary defines Magic as the art of producing desired effect or result through the use of incantation or various other techniques that presumably assure human control of supernatural agencies or forces of nature. Franzy Bardon, in explaining the nature of magic defines magic thus: Magic is the highest science existing on our planet, for it teaches the metaphysical as well as the metaphysical laws valid in all the planes “¹ The word “Magic” stems from the Greek “*Wayla*” Which means “Wictcraft.”²” Allen Spitzer, in an article entitled “Magic,” described it as “the practices or the art of inducing good or evil by means of attempting to exercise supernatural powers”.³ The term magic, though cannot be defined in isolation because of its broad parameters, important role in many societies, and interactions with related phenomena. Magic is a generic label used by outsiders (theoretically, Objective observers) to describe specific practices in societies in which this word or its conceptual equivalent may not even exist.⁴ As a result, diverse phenomena are lumped together on the assumption that they operate in the same way. This artificial construct of magic also exists only in relation to what it is not-primarily, religion and science as alternate modes of rationality.

However, magic may also be understood broadly as an actualization of transcendence which is drawn into causal – empirical existence. F.S Brightman sees it as a kind of mechanical compulsion of power. In Africa, the idea of magic stems from the belief that life

can be controlled by the help of medicine, manipulations, incantations, prayer like practices, amulets and rites or through special knowledge.⁵ Magic is also seen to have existed in cultures and among all peoples, although in different ways. Magic as practice can be broadly divided into “Black Magic,” and “white Magic”. This is because magic is protective as well as offensive. There is the magic practiced by the great magicians of today and there is black magic, witchcraft, or sorcery. If a magician uses his power for good purpose, he may be regarded as a “white magician”, while if he uses his facilities for bad purposes, may be regarded as a “Black magician” which is often mistaken for witchcraft.

The Zulu distinguish between the black medicines which are very strong or purge away the blackness of evil, and white medicines which soothe and purify. The Torah law from Biblical perspective, forbids both types, yet the punishments for them are different for magic, the punishment is 39 Lashes, while for practicing witchcraft, it is strong.⁶ Members of the Sanhedrin were required to know the difference between both. The black magician, sorcerer or wizard is feared and hated. He works in darkness because his deeds are evil. Magicians today however will readily admit that they are only practicing the art of deceit and deception. Even the world’s greatest magician such as David Copperfield or David Blain, who can make the statue of liberty disappear before your very eyes or cut a person in half and put him back again, will readily admit that they are just fooling you and the stunt is based on some clever deception. However, black magic claim that they can actually change or defy the law of nature and make the supernatural happen. They claim to have psychic powers to read people’s mind and know their past and predict their future.

People who engage in this art are known as magicians. A magician is any practitioner of magic, the term magician derives from the “Magus,” and ascent person priest, and the cognate man, a Chaldean term meaning wisdom and Philosophy.⁸ Magicians are usually differentiated in different cultures, based on their abilities, their sources of power, and on moral considerations. They are grouped into categories like sorcerer, wizard, witch, leader and other initiations are perhaps the most commonly used ceremonies to establish and to differentiate magicians from common people. In these cities, the magicians relationship to the supernatural and their entry into a closed professional class is established, often through rituals that simulate death and rebirth into new Life.⁹ Ancient Myth and legends say that to bring forth Magic, a person must first say the magic words.¹⁰ Lay people will likely have some simple magical rituals for everyday living, but in situations of particular importance, especially when health or major life events are concerned, a specialist magician would often

be consulted. However, U.S Haderson was of the opinion that it is not necessary to become a mystic, even a philosopher, certainly not a melancholy metaphysician in order to come to grips with the spiritual side of existence, to establish a mental causation in your life that will give you control of circumstance.¹¹ The Magician uses the magical circles, triangle, censer, mirror, lamp, wand, sword crown, garment, belt partake, and the book of spells. The book of spells sometimes called the book of spirits, is the genuine magical diary of the magician.

Magic as a phenomenon in africa

The practice of magic in Africa is not devoid of its own peculiarities. The African believes that there are vital forces or Spiritual powers that he can tap.¹² He sometimes merges this practice with medicine because both magic and medicine are spoken of at times in almost the same way.¹³ Before the magician reaches for his instruments, he must undergo a mental cleansing process by prayers or suitable meditation. He must never touch a magical instrument unless he is in the necessary composure for the ceremony.¹⁴ There is also contagious magic which is based on the notion that things once joined, must remain so and can affect one another. Harmful charms can be made of a man's waste hair, nails, clothing, bath water or anything that is waste. So African chiefs walk about with a servant carrying a Spittoon, lest the Chiefs spittle be left on the ground and used by an evil magician. Likewise the placenta and navel cord of babies are carefully buried, so that they may not be used for harmful purposes.¹⁵ In modern day Africa, people wear ear rings and finger rings for protection against charms, snakes and scorpions. Many also put these quickly in their pockets and in their hairs. One sees a bundle of feathers, bunches of leaves, packets wrapped in cotton thread, or great parches hanging from the ceiling of rooms, to protect their occupants.¹⁶ Shops also have packages or magic brooms nailed above the door to repel burglars or attract trade.

Many West African villages are entered through a protecting arch, which is supposed to remove all evil from those who pass under it. Disease is held to be excluded by the same means and it is assumed that evil spirits will come along the paths and not through the bush. These men have a confidence in their ability to outwit spiritual beings. In South Africa, "Thongs" doctors make magical faces round villages with the help of some sea ingredients and smoke which prevent the "baloy" (sorcerers) from coming closer for the fear of being revealed. When men go to live in town and seaports of Africa, they still use many magical charms. Indeed, while the ancient gods may decline, the practices of magic seem to remain as

strong as ever. Even up till today many European and Asian chantatais do a great export of magical objects to Africa in trade form. In the Kenyan Tukana cosmology, Wundt saw sacrifice as a magical act which was capable of compelling the gods to grant the sacrifice his request.¹⁷ In the Bunyoro Kingdom of Uganda, magical rites at least make the performer feel that he is dealing effectively with the situation and so relieves his anxiety.¹⁸ The “Nyoro” as it is called in “Bunyoro”, meaning sorcery, means to injure another person by the secret use of harmful medicines or techniques.¹⁹

An expose on the concept of witchcraft.

The word “Witchcraft” is derived from old English noun “Wicca” for men and “Wicce” for women. In some cases, a Wizard is also referred to as a sorcerer and Witch as sorceress. The belief in Witchcraft is almost universal in non-literate societies. According to H.S Hornby, Witchcraft is the use of magical powers especially evil ones.²⁰ It involves the use of forces by human beings to carry out certain actions. It is the exercise of alleged supernatural powers for anti-social, evil purposes. Witches, Wizards and Warlocks are often seen as the same as earlier mentioned. The term witches refers to “Wiccans” and “wicca” throughout the world. This is a modern religion that is based on symbols, beliefs, deities and festival of the ancient Celtic society. This meaning has occasional use in Africa as well. Idowu defined it as “an attempt on the part of man to tap and control supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit.”²¹ Ekunife defines it as an African occult service. He went further to classify Witchcraft into two; Witch for the female and wizard for the male. In terms of function, he classified Witchcraft into three categories namely; White Witchcraft for protection of homes, towns and places, black witchcraft used for creating fear in people in order to earn respect, and red witchcraft which is used for total destruction. There are vampire Witches and Wizards.²² Meanwhile, one can become a witch, it is said, through inheritance, or through buying or acquiring it. Inheritance takes place while the child is still in the womb or immediately after birth or through food. Witchcraft is mostly hereditary for the female Children when they have crossed puberty. There is no child witch. Witches and wizards are believed to possess diabolic or metaphysical powers which could be internal or inbuilt. One of the Characteristics of Witches and Wizards is their seductive beauty or repulsive ugliness.

Witchcraft as a phenomenon in africa

Having unraveled various ideologies and views of Witchcraft as it concerns its art and practice, it is safe to say that the idea of Witchcraft in African Philosophy is deeply rooted in their way of life. This is evident in diverse cultures and tribe crisis-crossing the continent of Africa.

The Agbor people of Nigeria in Delta State, sees Witchcraft as Ogboma. They believe that this aspect of Witchcraft is used in causing havoc in the coming and also for spiritual blood sucking. Witches do havoc in a purely Spiritual manner without making use of physical objects. Their victims will end up suffering mysterious sickness which doctors cannot diagnose or treat. Without the intervention of a qualified physician or priest the victim dies immediately. Meanwhile in Nupe and Gwari societies of Northern Nigeria, there is a high rate of similarities between magic and Witchcraft. These two societies are neighbors that live in identical environments and speak related Languages and have social structures based on patrilineal succession, patrilocal residence and logical extended families.²³ People in both societies believe in Witchcraft. Among the Nupe, witches are always women and the witches are said to be headed by a woman who in real life scenario is the head of market women association of the trades in the market. Men are never accused of Witchcraft, and also, it is usually an older female witch who attacks a younger male victim. In contrast, Gwari beliefs about witches do not involve sexual antagonism. Witches and their victims are either male or females.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Azande people have a common belief of a small blackish substance which can be found in every witch.

In South Africa, incantations, rituals and various substances are used to carry out physical attacks against other people. The letter was believed to direct destructive black magic in the direction of their victims. These individuals are called “unthakathi” among the Zulu and “molor” among the Sotho.²⁵ Evil sorcerer or evil sorcerers would be a preferred term to use. Unfortunately, they are often referred to simply as “witches.”

The Esan people believe in the existence of witches (Azen) and Wizards (O so) which are the female and male respectively. Michael Erohubie, in talking of witchcraft in Esan culture, “a Witch however, is a member of a band of people possessed by a witch spirit who gather in a coven (adala) to plan and from there execute their schemes. It is generally believed among the Esan people that Azen and Oso are inherited, the sons of a wizard father are likely to be wizards some goes to the daughters of a witch mother. It is also common in Esan Land, that when a man or woman is accused of witchcraft those around him or her are also

suspected. The Esan people have the notion that an unborn child can possess this Azen or one even possess it without him or her knowing it. It is believed among the Esan people that Azen are popularly transmitted through food especially palm oil soup or a material such as beads or other jewelries. It is also a notion in Esan Land that invitation to witchcraft is mostly done through dreams. For instance, eating in dreams is seen as a means through which children are generally initiated. Food like bean cake (ekala) and meat (elaman) are used. It is also believed that the aged initiate younger ones just to assure that the name of their families are not wiped out of “the register” of witches and wizards. It is also believed that they are desperate to catch victims because it facilitates their promotion in “adala” (coven).

Witches and Wizard in Esan can be classified into three. They are:

1. Neighborhood Witches: This class is the commonest among the Esan people. Their activities arise from vices like jealousy, resentment, quarrel, conflict, and etcetera. When anyone develops any of these vices, he or she seen as a witch or wizard.
2. Magical Witches and Wizards: This class consult other powerful or higher powers, In search of fame, (onalerled), wealth (efe) power (aha) and other intentions.
3. Supernatural Witches and Wizards: This class is the highest and the power house of other classes. They can take any form like half and animal and half man in carrying out their mission; they are commonly referred to as demons.

Activities of witches and wizards

Although the understanding of witchcraft remains logically allusive the phenomenon is felt worldwide depending on the values of the community. In African traditional Religion, the term “witch and wizard are used to refer to persons who are believed to have the potentials to harm others through psychic means.²⁷ The Esan people tend to associate any bad action to “Azen,” to the extent that anybody with a bad character is called “Azen.” It is also believed that satanic spirits could possess on individuals and make him or her a witch (Azen) and wizard (Oso). This possession could cause different psycho-somatic illnesses like madness, epilepsy and other forms of economic havoc and misfortune like Loss of one’s property and wealth, loss of one’s job and prestigious position in the community.²⁸Witches (Azen) and Wizards (Oso) are naturally associated with evil but tend to some “good” because they do not kill or destroy, but convert people’s fortunes like children, money, goods, crops and etcetera to self, relatives and every friends. It is believed in Esan that Witches and Wizards engage in

“Iduhonhon” (buying of head). This means the witch or wizard replaces his or her aged life with the life of the younger ones.

The believe is that that witches fly at night, turning into owls (ekpekukhu) and all sorts of animals like dogs, antelope, rat, and etcetera in attacking a victim or victims. “Witches act in concert,” they come together at night and have kings, courtiers, queen and all the functionaries in ordinary life.²⁹ Geoffrey Parrinda further expatiates that “witches, are believed to leave their bodies at night and to fly about as bats, owls and fireflies to feed upon the spirits of their chosen victims. They are thought to meet together, though the actual proof of their gathering is not available.³⁰ In Esan Cosmology, there is the belief that witches and wizards meet on top of big trees, market places and baobab etcetera. Witches are said to gather in “adala” (coven) at night with their spiritual bodies or the body of the animal they have assumed while the corporeal body of the witch remains asleep in his or her house. This is a kind of soul travel, the bewitched human Spirit returns to join the body after every night's activity.³¹ It is also believed that witches don't immediately kill their victims. If a man becomes suddenly ill, he may be sure of sorcery and not witchcraft for the effect of witchcraft leads to death by slow stapes.³²

In the midst of these seemingly proven acts of Spiritism exhibited by the practice of witchcraft in these African societies, measures have been taken in a bid to limit this phenomena and if possible, put an end to it. This is prevalent in the Esan communities where some persons are being forced to confess when accused of Witchcraft by the community. The accused is sent to Osunlele or alamhonka-a place where an accused witch or wizard is declared innocent or guilty, and when found guilty, the community can decide to send the person away from the community (Asun fig). In the same vein, when a person is accused of Witchcraft, close relatives are also suspected and sent to Osunlele for trials. However Witchcraft in Esan Land can be detected using different methodology like making the suspect drink concoction (ordeal). It is also popular in some of these parts that suspects are given a physical combat leading to their death.

Magic and witchcraft in africa: a comparative study

Having espoused the different dimensions of witchcraft and magic in the African society, we are met at a crossroad. Both terms are similar in act and purpose and despite the natures associated with both, they are often used interchangeably. Consequently, there is tendency today for one to be mistaken for the other. Magic is therefore used in place of

Witchcraft and when witchcraft is used, magic in fact was what was meant or intended. In view of this, it is pertinent to make a comparison between Magic and Witchcraft in African society in view of clarity with the goal of establishing the major difference between these phenomena, and attempting a philosophical analysis.

For Ant KhaforAkhonsu, Witchcraft is a quality and Magic is a Spiritual, mental and Physical discipline. Whereas being a Witch is an end in itself, being a ceremonial Magician is a means to an end.³³ The New Encyclopedia Britannica Vol 18, notes that Sorcery or magic is the manipulation of nature for good or evil purpose.³³ It is therefore distinguished from witchcraft in the sense that it may be practiced by anyone with the appropriate knowledge, using charms, spells, potions and the likes. Whereas witchcrafts can be practiced through invisible means. Although the difference between sorcery and witchcraft is not consistently and universally maintained; during the European witchcraft of the 16th Century, Courts regarded witches and magicians alike as candidates for burning.³³ The witch hunters of the 16th century were strangely observed men dominated by an intense desire to destroy all workers of magic whom they regarded as a part of sickness affecting both human beings and livestock.³⁴ However while it is pertinent also note that while witchcraft and sorcery are directed towards evil ends, magic can be directed towards a positive goal to help individuals or the whole of the community. In part of Africa like Melanesia, there are several specialists who carry out magical rites to bring rain, promote fertility in the gardens and ensure successful fishing.³⁵ The gathered magicians are regarded as the most important among the Trobanders. They officiate at large scale ceremonies involving all the men of the village and that takes place before any gathering begins.

Notably, anthropologists distinguish magic from witchcraft, defining the former as the manipulation of an external force on power by mechanical or behavioral means to affect others and the latter as an inherent personal quality that allows the witch to achieve the same ends. In other words, magic is a symbolic activity that has important psychological and social consequences, while witchcraft is an interior quality or feature which an individual uses in his or her accord to affect fellow human beings.³⁶

It has also been noted that many activities performed by operations of witches are unacceptable, hence are done in secrets since they are against the normal standard of living. Meanwhile, magic even as unpopular as it is, are more often performed in day time. Traces of it are seen in the day to day activities of the African people. Good examples are the rainmakers which are often found in societies, the rearing of snake and other dangerous

animals, as well as medicines and charms worn by hunters as defense against attack from wild animals. In anthropological terminology, it is noted that a witch differs from a magician in that they do not use Physical tools or actions to curse or carry out their desires.³⁷ Their malevolence is perceived as extending from some intangible inner quality, and in most cases the persons maybe unaware that they are witches unlike magician who are most often than not aware or conscious of what they are doing using the physical tools available in combination, with the foundry which are sequence to arrive at their desired goal. And magic is itself broad. It is a road for other practices to reach their end such as divination, science, technology, religion, diabolism, etc. and witchcraft as just one of the practices that employs the use of magic.

In contemporary scholarly and popular discourse the term witchcraft refers to a wide variety of ideas, practice and institutions. Among most social science scholars within the Africa context, especially anthropologists, Witchcraft is defined as the act of magic that results in harming a person or aspects of the material world on which he or she depends. In this context, witchcrafts and magic are used interchangeably; it is assumed, here that magic used for harm and magic used for healing or enhancement can be distinguished, either conceptually or in practice. As a general term that describes the harmful use of magic, witchcraft is not specific, with respect to the society or who use it. It is worthy of note here, to quickly emphasise that Witchcraft as a practice is not peculiar or limited to the African continent alone. Every society both in Europe and Africa practice witchcraft and magic at one point or another. And in the midst of this as many scholars have shown, Witchcraft has been positioned as a backward or erroneous system of thought. In the study of African religions, it is also interesting to note that western Scholarship has given it great prominence. As noted by John Mbiti in African religions and Philosophy, “Western Scholarship has often presented witchcraft ideas out of context and emphasized their association with harm, which has resulted in a fundamental misrepresentation of African religions.”³⁸

In the Igbo Society of Nigeria for instance, both Witchcraft and society are actions employing objects which are believed invariably to achieve a desired objective, not by virtue of the power known to be intrinsic to the media, objects, or actions, but by the inevitable intervention of occult and supernatural forces. Occultism, charms witchcraft and magic refer to the concept of Ogwu (medicine) in Igbo Cosmology. They merge these terms as one, that is as the act of medicine. The Igbos strongly believe in the power of medicine to the extent that most members of the Igbo community use the powers of witchcraft in order to settle disputes

or to inflict harm on their enemies during the time of war, especially with neighboring communities, magic and sometimes witchcraft are employed for protection and straight for their soldiers. This activity is more a magical ritual thoughts than an act of witchcraft, where soldiers are bathed in charms for sake of invisibility and protection.

Magic is also used to heal in the Igbo community and the powers are sometimes drawn from ancestral Spirits. This particular believe, up till today, have protected most Igbos to create a family shrine in their homes and sacrifices are offered in place of protection. These are other magical systems, conjured for use.

Evaluation

From the above work, our attempt to unravel the nature of witchcraft and magic, both generally and within the African concept have somewhat been achieved. We were also able to pay attention to the nature and practice of witchcraft on the one hand, and magic on the other hand, in some selected African societies, using particularly the Nigerian setting. We most importantly did not fail to point out the misconceptions surrounding the two concepts, their similarities and differences. However, in a bid to evaluate our discourse, I would quickly posit on a firmer note that Magic and Witchcraft as two distinct Phenomenon both within Africa and abroad. They are distinct in mode of operation, goal and meaning, though I would quickly add, that Witchcraft, as this paper earlier started, employs in a sense, the use of magic.

Drawing from the conventional Western usage of magic as the attempt to influence nature by supernatural means, it would be observed that the meaning of magic in the African concept is somewhat complex. This is due, in parts to the fact that there is no direct equivalent to the word in this context or particulars in the Igbo context. It can only be understood in Africa by means of interpretation of different phenomenon which have direct resemblance to the Western understanding of the concept. Thus the practice of exorcism, use of charms, and potent potions, wearing of amulets, invocation of nonphysical person, by means of incantations, have all come to be seen as the basic manifestation of magic within the African context. But doubts could arise though that these may just be vestiges of an African belief systems as incantations could also mean prayer in the Christian perspective, and the wearing of amulets in the African context if it is indeed magic, could also be related to the catholic act of wearing the rosary. Therefore calling that act magic could be completely absurd. But I would only subscribe to a basic fact that, African traditional religion plays a great role in influencing these seemingly magical practices. This makes the Europeans conclusion that the

African society is a whole different world of magic, Spiritism and sorcery alone, as most of these activities are parts of the African belief system and religious bearing and as such this western view holds little water. However the African world is not devoid of magic, but uses more of paranormal, rather than supernatural powers available to human beings. This is evident in the practice of divination, (consultations of oracles) which involves the throwing and reading of cowries, or the activities of rainmakers. These are instances of magic. Here of course magic in its strictest sense and magic in its loose sense ought to be carefully distinguished. The Esan sense has to do with preternatural events, which are believed to be real but not understood by the man with an ordinary eye.” While the second entails more tricks and abracadabra. In the first sense therefore, magic could be used both positively and negatively (Black magic and white magic).

More so, in speaking of Witchcraft in Africa it should be noted that contrary to some scanty beliefs, witchcraft as a Phenomenon or practice is not limited to Africa alone, in fact there are cases about the activities of witches and wizards in the Western world (the developed countries). However, witchcraft is seen as an inherently evil activity in the society, that do not necessarily claim the use of any object of Physical nature, but a purely spiritual activity through which the witch carries out malevolent acts, to harm people. This is indeed the common understanding of witchcraft in the African environment. The above work touched extensively on these and the result of it is the horror usually exhibited to the idea of Witchcraft in the African continent.

A school of thought also raises an issue of sortation as it pertains to Witchcraft in Africa. The words of H.Debrunner resounds in all clarity at this point. He argued that Witchcraft is only one of the ways in which the African react to his upsetting challenges.³⁹This view is surely borne out of the continuing belief in the practice of witchcraft and magic in contemporary society, and was made in view of criticizing the African society. For this school of thought witchcraft remains a reoccurring Phenomenon because of the primitiveness and backwardness that still characterizes the African society. This view however holds no water as infact the Western world today are guilty of the same practices and methods of application as in the African society. The view that witches fly at night in Africa is analogous to the European conception of a witch as someone who rides on a long broom stick that flies in the air.

Furthermore, Helen and Sodipo clearly buttresses that in drawing the similarity between the Yoruba view of witchcraft and the European perspective, “the quotation of

witchcraft are indeed representative but only of a Yoruba popular stereotype that is analogous to the one that may be reconstructed out of the remnants of European fantasy symbolism (facts with the Devil, cannibalism, night flying, e.t.c).⁴⁰ However, considering that the practice of witchcraft continues to appear in the African society, and considering that it defies the scientific laws of causality, it is safe to say that the underdevelopment and lack of tools for understanding the cause of things and understanding the cosmos, may spur the African to try and manipulate nature through means that are supernatural and this could make magic and witchcraft a continuous reoccurrence in Africa, while the Western world employs more scientific and physical means of answering basic questions, guided by the law of causality, and being a people inclined to the Spiritual and the mysterious, Africans grow more increasingly habitable for sorcery and witchcraft. This however does not jettison the fact that Witchcraft and magic is also seen in other parts of the world. Only Africans do not possess enough scientific means to explain different occurrences and phenomena.

While the advent of Christianity and the modernization and development, in the world today, Vis-à-vis the enthronement of religions that kick against the unnatural means of tapping into the supernatural forces, the practice of witchcraft have gradually come to be despised by many in the 21st Century. Though witchcraft used for evil are still done in secret today, other magical activities that are both related to religion or entertainment are still carried out today, provided these do not publicly harm others. However magic is still used today in the form of medicine in the Igbo part of Nigeria, to heal the sick and fetch answers and truths to difficult situations where the need arises.

In the midst of all these, the Phenomenon of witchcraft is one that should be jettisoned as it is a practice used by man to harm his fellow man, and is an instrument of manipulation. Though magic could be mere tricks and abracadabra (as earlier explained), the ones employed to harm others (black magic or sorcery), need not be encouraged. Above all Africans should strive for growth in all spheres of life. So as to be able to demystify some seemingly mysterious occurrences which indeed need only scientific knowledge and understanding, and to be able to explain them. When the African society finally begin to grow in scientific knowledge, the barbarous and evil practice of magic and witchcraft may perhaps be minimized. Need I say at this juncture that, in attempt to completely predicate magic and witchcraft from the affairs of man would be a futile venture.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to uncover the various understanding and practice of witchcraft and magic all over the world paying particular attention to Africa. A comparative expedition was begun and duly ended as the similarities and difference of Witchcraft and magic but in art, act and firm was laid bare. We have been able to examine the true value of these phenomena drawing from particular cultures in Nigeria, and have found a basic ground on this; that while both practices could be evil, and good and similar, the magician implores the use of physical gadgets and invocation, while the Witch dwells strictly on the Spiritual realm to perform although not without sometimes, a physical contact. Consequently, we arrived at our goal in this fastidious discourse.

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