

**Psychology of witchcraft among the Shona people Myth and  
Reality:**

***Case Study of witchcraft among the Shona people of Bikita District  
of Zimbabwe.***

**By**

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**Abstract**

*Bikita is one of the 59 districts in Zimbabwe. The district lies 80 km East of the town of Masvingo. It has a considerable number of ethnic groups, but the Shona are predominant. The Shona nowadays is no longer a single cultural group but a mixture of other cultural groups that have moved into the district. This study will be on the Psychology of Witchcraft among the Shona people in that district. It will be argued that witchcraft is a well-known practice across cultures in the history of mankind and that the practice can be explained through the Freudian and Jungian theories of the Psyche whereby witches operate in the unconscious area of the psyche. The paper rejects the idea that witchcraft is a moral issue and suggests that it is a psychological issue. Because of the current Covid -19 pandemic, it has been difficult to carry out on-the-spot interviews, so most of the information was collected through telephone interviews using a mobile phone. In a few instances, however, the researcher had the chance to witness activities that were deemed to be witchcraft.*

**Keywords:** *Witchcraft, witch doctor*

**Introduction**

The paper is not a legal reflection but an attempt to look at witchcraft in the context of African psychology as enriched by Freud and Jung. Reference will be made to some legal issues or acts but I am not interested in these except when they give relevance to my study. My interest is to look at how the two psychologists – Freud and Jung could be used to attempt an explanation of the dual forms of existence of those who practice witchcraft in Africa, especially in the Bikita District. My theoretical framework in this reflection is based on both Jung and Freud and their idea that we have three elements in our psyche that push us to behave in certain ways: the “id,” the “ego” and the “superego”.

### **What is witchcraft?**

Witchcraft (also called witchery or spell craft) broadly means the practice of, and belief in, magical skills and abilities that can be exercised by individuals and certain social groups. Witchcraft is a complex concept that varies culturally and societally; therefore, it is difficult to define with precision and cross-cultural assumptions about the meaning or significance of the term and if defined it should be applied with caution. Witchcraft often occupies a religious, divinatory, or medicinal role, and is often present within societies and groups whose cultural frames of reference include a magical worldview. It is not a religion to be believed in. Its origin is as complex as its conceptualisation since people seem to accept the phenomena with some fear. Chief Chabata who was interviewed on this phenomenon said that to understand witchcraft one must be a witch. Some people think that its source is some supernatural powers given to certain individuals. The supernatural power, however, is divided into the power of Satan and the power of God. Although witchcraft can often share common ground with related concepts such as sorcery, the paranormal, magic, superstition, necromancy, possession, shamanism, healing, spiritualism, nature worship, and the occult, it is usually seen as distinct from these when examined by sociologists and anthropologists (JSTOR March 1994:253). Sociologists believe that witchcraft played a social role in society both negative and positive. It negatively brought fear to society but at the same time created order. In other words, the order came as an antithesis of chaos.

In psychology, witchcraft is unique because it gives dual existence to the person practicing it. The individual lives in both the conscious and the unconscious worlds as indicated by Freud’s theory of the conscious and unconscious.

## **The Problem**

“A few studies of Shona beliefs and medicine have been produced. Some of these studies have been primarily concerned with traditional healers and their medicines, others have attempted to examine the place of religion in witchcraft” (Chavhunduka, 1978). (Chavunduka, 1998), defines witchcraft as the practice “*of people with psychic powers.*” He does not take a psychological view, but a sociological view of witchcraft. He seems to see the problem of witchcraft as emanating from the lack of acknowledgement of the craft by mainly western-influenced writers instead of looking at the commonality of its existence as a psychological phenomenon. This study attempts to demystify the social existence of witchcraft and looks at it from a psychological standpoint.

## **The purpose of this study**

This study attempts to demystify the mystery surrounding witchcraft among the Shona people by giving a psychological explanation of witchcraft among the Shona people of Bikita. The Shona people in Bikita form the largest ethnic group in that district. This district is in Masvingo Province and is bordered by Zaka to the South, Gutu to the North, and Masvingo Province in the West. It is popularly chanted by local artists as “*Bikita, Zaka rinopisa, makomo, varoyi, zvidhoma.*” This means in Bikita and the adjacent Zaka, goblins, and witchcraft are predominant. This has not just been prejudiced against the people of Bikita, but a common perception that is often based on a lack of fundamental research on both the culture and environment of the people. It however indicates the prevalence of such beliefs in and about the area. The question is, “Is witchcraft in Bikita a psychological machination or a conceptualised reality?” This question has been neglected by researchers in the past.

## **Significance of the Study**

In the minds of the Shona people of Bikita witchcraft is real. It controls human life significantly and is even thought to explain some deaths (Bourdillon 1976:173). The people believe that the spirits protect them from anything even death. Death is often

attributed to the failure of the spirits to protect them from witchcraft and other causes. Ancestral spirits have been weakened by the witch, hence succumbing to death or calamity. It is hoped that the current study will help make the people see the naturalness of death and avoid witch-hunting in the community. The study could help people live in greater harmony as the practice has also created tensions and animosity between families and neighbours. People could learn that witchery is a psychological phenomenon and death is not necessarily caused by witchcraft. This is contrary to the Shakespearean view uttered by Caesar that death is a necessary end, and it comes when it wills. (Shakespeare *Julius Caesar*)

### **Limitations**

Witchcraft is shrouded in myth and the researcher was limited because he was considered an intruder by the people into their mysterious world of the powers of the unknown. Witchcraft being part of this mystery remains unknown in terms of its real origin. The concept of witchcraft could be considered an international rather than a parochial practice. Unfortunately, it has been associated with what Michael Tournier calls the practice of “the civilised savage.” Among the Scottish people, it is observed in the Shakespearean Macbeth. These people believed in witchcraft and the power of the witches to foretell the future. “Hail Macbeth thou shall be king hereafter” divined the witches showing the essence of the power of the unknown given to an individual. Witchery or witchcraft is the supernatural power that the individual has and can use to control others. The source of this power limits this study from delving into the origins of witchcraft since its source is given to the select. The researcher tried to investigate the source of this power but was limited.

### **BANQUO**

How far is it called to Forres? What are these  
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her chappy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so. *The witches disappear*  
That takes the reason prisoner?

Banquo echoes the dual existence of witches when he says:

'So, wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
So, wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught'

That man may question? You seem to understand me or have we  
eaten on the insane root

There is a clear outline of the witches. They live on this earth and yet they do not belong to the human world. The witches are not terrestrial and yet they live with us. St Paul said "he who is of flesh belongs to the flesh and he who is of the spirit belongs to the spirit." (Col.2:13) Where do the witches belong? The witches belong to the spiritual world which can only be understood by someone who lives in that world.

If the Freudian and Jungian ideas are applied, these witches operate from the *id*. It is a world hidden from the ordinary "inhabitants of this world." My argument in this study is that the witches have a dual psychological existence who's geographical "Thereness" is controlled by a rather unknown or mysterious existence. They have a dual existence. The witches can have an earthly human existence and mingle with other people during the day but take upon another realm which the ordinary person cannot penetrate. It is this secrecy of their operations that makes empirical research difficult. What one can only say is that it is psychological, and it is the whole idea of

this study to posit that witchcraft is psychological and may be based on powers yet unknown to humanity.

Among the Greeks, the *Theban Plays* manifest conceptual psychology of the dual existence of the women in that play. These women live a normal life during the day but live yet another life at night, - the life of the witches. They operate in the realm of the unconscious and I think this is the whole psychology of witchcraft throughout the world in the sense that the witch does not know what is happening. Once this is unknown to the outsider, the mystery remains personal. Although the phenomenon may differ from culture to culture, the mysterious aspect of witchcraft is universal. Bourdillon (1976), states that the world of the witches remains unknown because showing knowledge of it warrants someone to be a witch. I asked two religious' nuns to explain the possibility of the dual existence of witches and they shrunk away saying "it is too terrifying and we should not talk about it." Witchcraft remains a feared area of human life.

### **How Witchery is Acquired**

Among the Shona people witches do not give birth to fellow witches. Witchcraft is an art learned from erstwhile or experienced witches. I was told of how young girls become witches. The old witches observe the young girls who can keep secrets and usually invite them to their house during the day. This begins just like a social encounter but as time goes on the witch cooks food with some meat and gives the girl. This is human meat that has been dried. The girl eats the human meat and the friendship develops further. Bourdillon (1976) says that the witch believes that human meat has some potent which makes them resist fear and stigmatisation. The meat is meant to make the girl resilient, and it appears to work. The girl is gradually introduced to the midnight hunt and once she succeeds, she becomes a witch and goes with other witches during the night. What is of interest is that this girl is feared by others in the village, and she generally does not play with her age mates, she does not smile unnecessarily, and she is taken as being serious in her behaviour. Like any other witch, she has two lives, which I could derive from the Freudian idea of "psychic domination". This, I think, is the existence of any witch. The witch exists in the "id" jumps to the "ego" and exists in the "superego" of consciousness.

### **Witchcraft and the Human Psyche**

It is now an internationally recognised psychological characteristic within the realm of the Freudian description of the operations of the psyche. Jung defines the psyche as the spirit or the soul but modern psychology takes the psyche as the mind and it is this latter definition that this reflection will take and attempt to relate to the mind of the witch and the psychology surrounding the practice of this phenomenon. There is a need to relate witchcraft to the operations of the human psyche and its dynamics. The existence of the psyche is determined by the operations of the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. This paper limits itself to the contribution of these three to the practice of witchcraft. If this is accepted, then it will be clear how the three elements of the psyche share their energies and are dependent on each other. The id is the source of this shared energy, and it passes it on to the “ego” which accepts or rejects the demands of the “id” or superego. At the times the “ego” gets inundated with the demands of the “id”. In the case of a witch, the ego finds it very strenuous to prevent the movement of energy from the “superego” and unwillingly permits the witch to pass through to the “id” and this is where the witch gets the energy since the “id” is the source of all the energy of the “psyche”. The person with a weak ego succumbs to the demands of the id and this seems to be what happens to the operations of the psyche of the witch. The ego of the witch becomes too weak and allows the mind to succumb to the desires of the id.

As indicated in Figure 1, the witches have a dual existence; one in the superego (The conscious) and the other in the id (unconscious). I am positing that while the ego is generally called the preconscious, in the mind of the witches this should also be called the *pre-unconscious* because the movement of life shifts from one structure to another. The personality of an individual is then determined by the dominance of either of the three elements of the psyche. One is inclined to say that witchcraft as a psychological process cannot be easily condemned and stigmatized apart from calling it misdirected energy from the “id” and because of the weakness the “id” is only allowed to temporarily operate. I am not suggesting that witchcraft is normal but as a psychological system, it has neither moral nor ethical identity until it is executed by the user. I am arguing that witchcraft is within the operation of the *unconscious* part of the psyche therefore, its morality or lack thereof seems very marginal. Could it be equated to dreams which dwell in the id and the person is not aware of it unless it is executed to do something immoral or unethical? Have we not

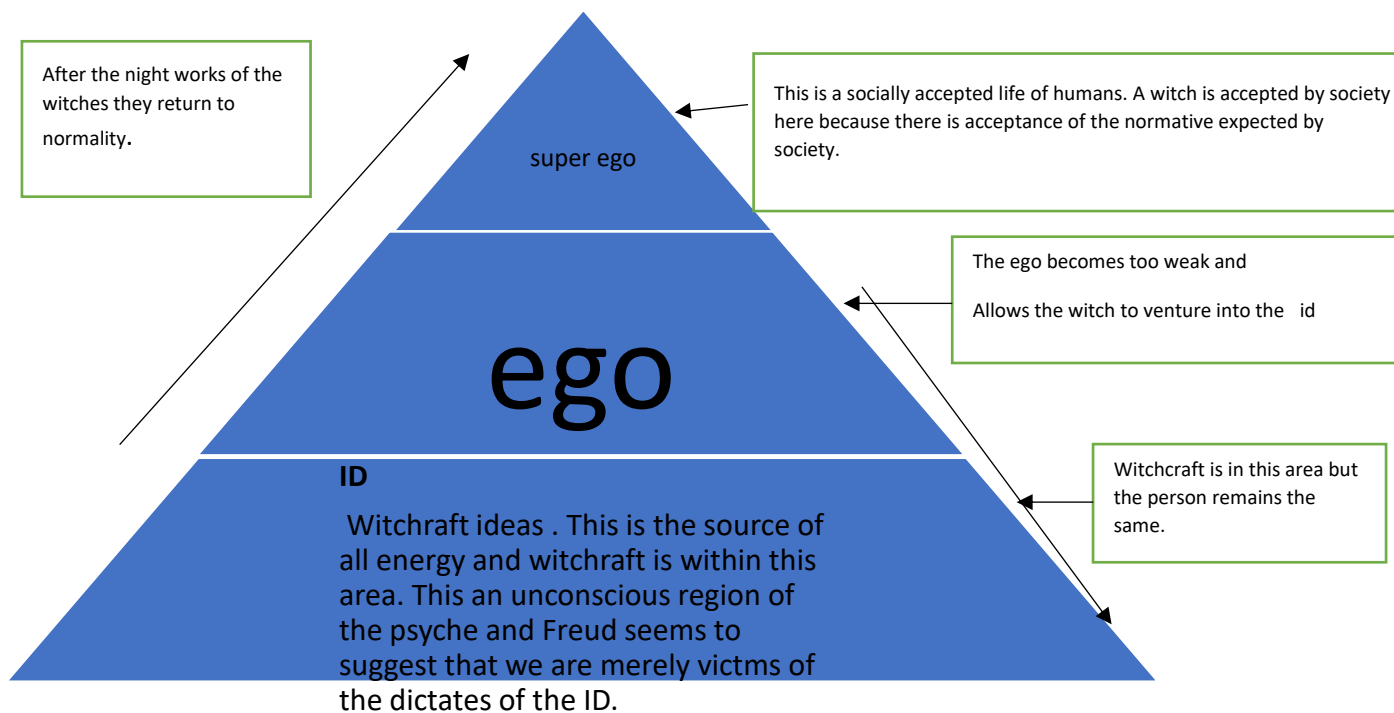
dismissed a rich area of research by stigmatising it as primitive, unethical, immoral, etc.? Is witchcraft a mental disorder or an orientation of the mind? The American DST-IV-TR does not give this phenomenon a code even in its axial analysis, so the whole practice seems mysterious. Probably the missionaries and religious personnel were the only ones who talked about witchcraft but from the desire to convert rather than from psychological perspectives.

Hunter (2007), attributes witchcraft and all actions related to the phenomena to the power of Satan. It seems he does not attempt to look at the psychology that lies behind witchcraft. This is probably where the confusion on the definition of witchcraft comes in. It became equated to both ethical and moral principles. Most of the missionaries and colonial agents looked at witchcraft with fear and equated it to human moral decay and condemned it. What is of interest is that witchcraft was condemned in the west and when the colonialists came to Africa, they used the same instrument to condemn what they did not know in terms of its operations in this culture. Most of the writers who wrote about witchcraft did so as a justification for western thoughts and civilisation. No psychological analysis was attempted because everything was considered primitive and unwanted behaviour that was to be replaced with western civilisation. Writers like Bourdillon (1998) Gilfand (1964) Aschwanden(1982) and those who authored the *Zambezi Missionary Journal* wrote to show those “back home’ how backward the Africans were and not about how his psychology operated.

During the day witches are aware of their responsibility as required by the social demands of the superego. According to Freud, humans operate mostly in the superego using all the faculties that have been cleared by the ego. I would like to suggest that the witches operate in the superego during the day when they are aware of what is going on. This process is immediately sent to the unconscious id at night when they go for their witchcraft activities. They are not aware of what they are doing. I already mentioned the women in *The Bacchae* plays of Euripides, who practiced witchcraft, and Agave the mother of Pentheus, the king is only aware that she is holding the head of her son when she arrives home, and the “superego” takes over from the “id.” It is only when she goes back to the social “ego” that she is aware the boot she received or claimed was her son’s head. It was the propensity of the “id”



that led her to claim the head and that of the “superego” that gave her some remorse. The latter is the social conscience.



**Figure 1: The Operations of the Psyche of the interpretation of Freud’s activities of the Psyche.**

The unconscious behaviour of the witch is in the id part of the psyche

It seems while the ego allows a witch to return to the superego and be a social being, it has no power to prevent the operations of the id in the witch, in this case, I would like to believe that people with a weak ego are easily taken into witchcraft whereas those with a strong ego will tend to resist.

## CASES

### Case 1

A novice witch (name supplied by a young man and villager) in Bikita was found naked in the middle of a village in the early hours of the morning. When he was asked why he was there he manifested ignorance of his presence. The people who knew about witchcraft indicated that he was late to return to his house after the

witchcraft involvement with other witches who had already returned to their homes. Here is an example of the operations of the conscious and that of the unconscious. Was this somnambulism? There seems to be a clear dichotomy of the psyche system operating at different consciousness levels.

### **Case 2**

A group of witches agreed to eat their children. (Area of Growth point supplied). They killed and ate two children belonging to the other two witches. When it was the turn of the other witch to supply the boot, she refused to say her child was plumper than the others they had eaten. At the time of writing the case was at the chief's court. The chief had expressed disgust over the incident.

### **Case 3**

A woman was found walking naked in the streets of Mutare in April 2020. When she was questioned why she did that, she expressed ignorance of her whereabouts. The explanation was that she was left by other witches who had returned to their homes where they were normal again.

What is essential in all these operations is the proclamation of ignorance. When a witch is caught there is always a question, he or she asks the people, *ndiripi* - where am I. This is not a mere rhetorical question but a question of the conscious and the unconsciousness. The id (the unconscious) has stopped operating and there is an attempt by the superego to be with the rest of the social system but is confused and therefore the question "where am I" comes forth. Most witches who are caught tend to be ignorant of what they have been doing. There is an association between reality and dreams when a witch feels that it was a mere dream. Freud believes dreams are an expression of the unreal and Jung takes this as the shadow or the other side of ourselves. Could witchcraft be equated to a dream? If so, then there is a moral dilemma because society does not hold anybody accountable for actions that take place during a dream. This is a complex phenomenon because the same society that does not see dreams as reality often condemns witchcraft. A dream lies in the unconscious area of the psyche and so do the operations of the witch.

According to J.M. Brown (1926) in *Traditional Basotho, London, Seeley & Co.*, witchcraft was part of society's fabric among the Bantu, and it was more feared than respected. People knew the role of the witch. The ceremonies held were religious and the person who was a witch was considered a doctor, "di ngaka, and among the Bantu nomads, they protected the chief and always stood behind him. These according to Brown (1926) were not only priest doctors but were women who were involved in witchcraft, sorcery, and divination. They were also rainmakers; therefore, the whole clan was under their control. This was a profession that was handed over from one generation to the next within the family (Brown 1926). The future witch had to go through an apprenticeship and be paid a fee to be a witch. The skills learned included: throwing bones and interpreting their meaning, knowledge of the herbs, and witchcraft. It was after acquiring the skills that the future doctor or witch was allowed to wear a mantle made of baboon skin and allowed to sit on a hyena skin. Basotho do not make a distinction between a witch, a healer, and a diviner; therefore, the art of witchcraft seemed more acceptable because of those functions. The Shona on the other hand seems to look at the functions separately. The diviner seems to depend on the witch whom he or she consults, and the diviner can flash out witches in a village and clean homesteads of malicious evil forces.

Amongst the Sotho today, witches are men, but mostly women, who have acquired supernatural powers which are not given to just everyone (Ashton (1956) *The Basuto* Oxford, University Press). They behave only as witches at night. During the day they are just ordinary people, this makes them have a dual existence controlled by the conscious and unconscious which are psychological dual personality systems. The unconscious seems to play a dominant role. This is the basis of my argument that witchcraft is a psychological phenomenon that has not been explained or researched fully in Africa. Most of the witches have special powers, the Basuto witches gather naked at night in secluded dongas and sing waiting for their friends who ride on the backs of fleas and fly. In this, they are like Western witches who ride on brooms and fly (Ashton 1952). In one case, they visited a village and put the whole population to sleep while they slaughtered an ox and had a celebration. These midnight feasts were generally not seen by ordinary people - if they did, they are believed to fall sick. They fed on human flesh which they gleaned from badly constructed graves; The

Basotho witches had the power to change humans into small people called *Tokoloshes* who became a menace to the community.

Among the Lake People of Malawi, David Livingstone described the witches as people who were possessed by hidden powers and their objective was to bring disaster to the tribe. Livingstone (From Murray's, and *Livingston's Lake People*) indicated that some of these witches were ignorant of their power or its origin. This seems to agree with the Freudian concept of the unconscious which overtakes human rationality. Are the witches then responsible for their actions or it is merely attributed to the unconscious which lies within the area of the id?

Among the Shona people, witchcraft is considered real, and witches are respected and feared (Bourdillion 1976). People are discouraged from taking food from strangers because of the fear of witchcraft. It is ingrained in the people's psyche that these supernaturally powered people do exist and that their power cannot be controlled. Recently, I got a message from a university graduate now living in the UK who said; "I cannot come back to Africa, I am afraid of witchcraft." (22 April 2020). The concept of witchcraft is a code of ethics amongst the people because one cannot just pick up anything in case it was dropped by a witch. Such culturally pervasive notions and fears have protected animals, fruits, and even money from being stolen. Is this fear merely psychological or it is a reality? People fear wandering around at night because the witches do their business at night, people cannot take non-frequented paths because they fear witches.

It would seem to me that witchcraft is not a mere practice of the civilized savage as some western writers like Michael Tourneur envisaged it. Recently I spent some time in Bikita and at night an owl came and perched on the roof of my dwelling and started hooting. I wanted to record the hooting sound of the owl, but my tablet would not open. When I told the people the following day, they asked me to switch it on which I did and it responded fast. They laughed at me saying the owls were not just ordinary birds, but they were there to remind the witches to return to their homes after their night hunt. They explained that my machine had been disabled by the power of the witches. This indicated what is in the psyche of the people and one cannot convince them that witchery does not exist.

The concept of the dual existence of good and evil is illustrated by Freud in his perception of the shadow which has a dangerous and valuable existence. Jung explains witchcraft in terms of the existence of the anima and the animus in humans. He recognises the anima as the female element in a male psyche and this is generally recognised as a witch. These are people who have a connection with the unconscious and the underworld. I would like to think that witchcraft as I already mentioned operates in the subconscious where it has dominated the preconscious and the conscious part of the human psyche. These two have been made subservient to the dictates of the id whose main idea is to maximize its pleasure and minimise pain. With due respect for the dynamic of the feminine world, one tends to agree with Jung that women have greater touch with the unknown world but unfortunately during the witchcraft activities, the men consider this demonic and evil. It is true psychological existence that needs understanding rather than condemnation. To me condemning witchcraft is a denial of the composition and dynamic of the psyche and a denial of the psychological component of humanity. This does not canonize the concept of witchcraft in humanity, but rather tries to give it a psychological explanation instead of a stigma. It is a cultural practice that requires a relative perspective.

### **Witchcraft as Conceptualised by Different people**

It seems that individuals view witchcraft differently (Figure 2. Below)

Gender	Education	Residence	Occupation	Answer to the question: Do witches and witchcraft exist?
1. F	Diploma	Rural	Teacher	Gave a detailed account and connections she has with diviners.
2. M	Post Grad	Urban	Admin	There is no witchcraft, but African science.
3. M	Graduate	Urban	Teacher	There are witches and they are real.
4. M	Graduate	Urban	Teacher	It is people's imagination, there is no witchcraft.
5. M	Graduate	Se Urban	Bus Manager	Witches are there, recently they caught someone walking naked in the streets of Mutare.

6. F	Graduate	Urban	Housewife	Not committed
7. F	Nurse	Urban	Nurse	Yes, I do/ ask me I was once bewitched. We need to sit down and talk about this. Detailed how she was bewitched.
8. F	Graduate	Urban	Teacher	Not committed
9. F	O level	urban	Sweeper	Not interested
10.F	Dip	Rural	Teacher	I do not believe in witches or witchcraft, and they do not exist in our area.
11.F	Grade 7	Rural	housewife	No witchcraft
12.M	Graduate	Urban	teacher	I don't know.
13.F	Graduate	Rural	Teacher	Yes, I do. I lost both my parent's nations to witchcraft. The witches are associated with old people.

Figure 3: Summary: Responses to the Question "Is there witchcraft?"

Yes	5	38.46%
No	3	23.0%
Don't know	1	7.9%
Not committed	2	15%
Indifferent	1	7.9%
Scientists, not witches	1	7.9%

#### Witchcraft among the Shona people in Bikita

'*Bikita, Zaka, makomo, varoyi, zvidhoma.*' This is a slogan one generally hears. Why do people create such labels for this area? A few years ago, a man was asked by the missionaries at Silveira Mission to dig a furrow from the Zizhou River to the mission and he did and until recently this furrow supplied water to the whole mission and its gardens. This man was known for his witchcraft and magical practices, and it is believed he used lightning to dig the furrow. This furrow now is disused, and the

man is dead. He used to do a lot of magical operations which people never understood but this has been dismissed by others as a combination of witchcraft and magic. In schools in this district, there were girls called “Tondekeni”. If such girls pointed a finger at you in anger, then you were cursed. These girls possessed extra powers whose sources were unknown. The missionaries with all good intentions tried to perform exorcism rituals on the girls to get rid of their powers which they perceived to have come from evil spirits. Were the girls aware of what was going on or were they victims of the dictatorship of the id?

### **Witchcraft and *Tsikamunda***

‘*Tsikamutanda*’ comes from the concept of a dead person’s wife who at the *magadziro* ceremony was meant to jump across the walking stick left by her husband. She worked forward and backward and if she did not stumble over the stick, then, she was clean, but if she did then she had to confess to the elders on infidelity following the death of her husband before cleansing rituals were carried out.

Chavunduka. (1998), defines witchcraft as the practice “of people with psychic powers.” Unfortunately, he does not take a psychological view but a social view of witchcraft. This probably is the psychological approach taken by a group of “witch hunters” called *Tsikamutanda* who do witch hunts and work with the social psychology of the people. These individuals ask the chief to call the whole village and tell the people that the village has evil individuals and there is a need for cleansing. Socially each village has some people who are suspected to be practicing witchcraft. These are people who generally are well to do and often get better harvests than others. They are suspected of possessing special medicine called *divisi*. They are the first culprits for the *tsikamutanda*. I came across a young woman who was a border jumper and had over twenty-nine head of cattle and her brothers accused her of having a *chikwambo*. A *chikwambo* is a goblin that feeds on special food. The *tsikamutanda* came and indicated that the goblin was feeding on the human liver from the woman’s relatives who had died. The *Tsikamutanda* asked the woman to take a chicken, cut its neck off, and burn it. She did. It was claimed the goblin was gone and the *tsikamutanda* was given five heads of cattle and he disappeared towards the east. A year later he was dead. From my findings a senior

*Tsikamutanda* was not happy with the exorbitant payment demanded by the junior Tsikamutanda, so he bewitched him and retained the cattle.

### **The Psychology and Methodology of Tsikamutanda**

As I was gathering material for this study, I was told that the Tsikamutandas are very clever born psychologists who play with peoples' fears. When there is death, the Tsikamutanda sends his scouts to attend the funeral and collect information and then disappear while another stays behind telling the bereaved family of a prophet somewhere who can put things in order. He then refers them to the master Tsikamutanda. The Tsikamutanda comes armed with the report from one of the scouts and he is now the owner of the information which the people believe in the collects lots of animals after he reveals the calamities of the family. The Tsikamutanda induces fear in the people and even the chiefs are afraid of him. The Tsikamutanda uses the psychology of fear and intimidation One of the newspaper reporters in Bikita found that:

1. Villagers in Masvingo Province's Bikita district heaved a sigh of relief when two witch-hunters, known as tsikamutandas, were dragged to the courts.
2. The witch-hunters had been terrorising the area east of Masvingo town since late 2020, taking away cattle worth thousands of dollars, allegedly as payment for "exorcising" goblins and other items.
3. They had camped in Bikita for close to a month, traversing the length and breadth of the district, "flushing out" goblins and snakes while taking away cattle, goats, sheep, hens, and cash as payment.





Figure 4 The two tsikamutanda asking an old person to confess her witchcraft.

### **Female and Male witchcraft**

Among the Shona people of Bikita witchcraft “Uroyi” is a prerogative of women. Men had their type of witchcraft called: *chitsinga*, and *muposo*. Chitsinga is equated to what we call “gout”. A person gets it from a man and the legs get rheumatically affected because muposo or chitsinga has been case onto him. The word seems to be derived from “tsinga” meaning ‘nerve’ or ‘vein’ that when infected is believed to make it difficult for a person to walk. The ailment is believed to be ‘removable’ by the person who sent it in the first place. The removal is called “*kuombonora*.” A man deliberately operates this and can even boast at beer parties that he can fix people who annoy him. He is much feared in the village. He usually moves about alone and this is the sign to people take as the source of his power. He would be aware of his powers, but I have not been able to establish if he knows the source of his power. *Chitsinga* is very painful and those affected go a long way to pay for its removal they at times are forced to confess their evil actions to be relieved.

*Muposo* is nearly like *chitsinga*, it is a remotely controlled type of witchcraft that can be sent from remote places to the victim. The person affected by this can collapse at a beer party and get paralysed until the man who sent it removes it. It is a very complex system of witchcraft whose origin is believed to be in the Chipinge and Birchenough Bridge area to the east of Zimbabwe near the border with Mozambique. This kind of witchcraft was at times used to fix the parents of a woman who had failed to honour their contract. In Bikita when there are droughts people give their daughters to rich people and in turn get food in form of maize and other forms grains. With the situation today a girl may refuse to go and the man sends a *muposo* to the whole family. A lot of calamities could happen which cannot be explained. It could be lightning striking the homestead or the man himself.

### **Origins of Witchcraft (Interview with Chief Chabata)**

#### *Uroyi hwokukamba or kutenga*

This is a very sensitive type of witchcraft because the witch must be very careful in approaching the individual. It is based on a very close relationship and carefulness not to break the traditional law of “*kupumha*” to accuse someone of witchery is tricky in this situation. An example of this is *mubobobo* which means having sex with someone far away from you. This is considered witchcraft and the person needs to be very careful to get to the person. In these situations, one could be sued if a careful approach is not observed. In this category belong the witchcraft element of *chitsinga*, *muposo* and *muchehiwa*. These can be sent to the victim by the remote system using the power of the witch.

#### *Uroyi hwokutememerwa*

*Kutemerwa* in the Shona language means to have some incision on your body. The incision is made with some medicated powder called *mbanda* in a very secret part of the body. The powder will gradually circulate in the body and the person becomes a witch. The witches in the village may wish to leave their practice with a young woman. The girl is invited for a meal and first time it is just an ordinary meal. Eventually, the meal is served with meat and this is human flesh because it is believed that “human flesh is the most powerful of the witch’s medicines” (Bourdillon1976:175). The young woman becomes a witch and as a novice goes around with the older witch. The girl is generally feared by other girls and she stays alone most of the time.

#### *Uroyi hwedzinza*

Some families are known for their witchcraft activities. The children born in these families automatically become witches because they inherit this from their parents. It is a very complex psychological experience for the family. I was told that the names of children indicate the whole process of this type of witchcraft.

Vhomorai.....remove this

Chenesai.....Make my family clean

Tutsirai.....give us more of this witchcraft.

### *Uroyi hwekurotswa*

It is believed that one way of being a witch is through dreams. The dream is only privy to the witch and this leaves the other people out of the world of the witch. This then goes back to the Freudian and Jungian interpretations of dreams.

Freud also believed that our dreams can access be repressed or anxiety-provoking thoughts (mainly sexually repressed desires) that cannot be entertained directly for fear of anxiety and embarrassment. Thus, defense mechanisms allow a desire or thought to slip through into our dreams in a disguised, symbolic form – for example, someone dreaming of a large stick in Freud's view would be dreaming of a penis. It was the job of the analyst to interpret these dreams considering their true meaning.

Jung Position: Like Freud, Jung believed that dream analysis allowed for a window into the unconscious mind. But unlike Freud, Jung did not believe that the content of all dreams was necessarily sexual or that they disguised their true meaning. Instead, Jung's depiction of dreams concentrated more on symbolic imagery. he believed dreams could have many different meanings according to the dreamer's associations. Jung was against the idea of a 'dream dictionary' where dreams are interpreted by fixed meanings. He claimed dreams speak in a distinctive language of symbols, images, and metaphors and that they portray both the external world (i.e., individuals and places in a person's day-to-day life), as well as the person's internal world (feelings, thoughts, and emotions).

Jung agreed that dreams could be retrospective and reflect events in childhood, but he also felt that they could anticipate future events and could be great sources of creativity. Jung criticised Freud for focusing purely on the external and objective aspects of a person's dream rather than looking at both objective and subjective

content. Finally, one of the more distinctive aspects of Jung's dream theory was that dreams could express personal, as well as collective or universal contents. This universal or collective content was displayed through what Jung termed 'Archetypes'.

This kind of witchcraft comes to a person in the dream. The person is told which bushes or animals to use. If he or she reveals the dream the power of witchcraft is taken away and he or she may die. It is a secret from either the ancestors or some witches. This involves the acceptance of the unnatural powers of the witches. This is the kind of witchcraft to which the person is the only one privy to the unnatural powers. In psychology one is not responsible for actions that happen in dreams. Where is the morality of witchcraft in this case? Are the subsequent actions to the individual moral or immoral? Ethical or not ethical?

### **The Bewitched**

Among the Shona people, there is no natural illness or death. All death and ailment are caused. The question is "who causes them." The Shona always attribute death to witchcraft. A person falls from a tree in the village and dies. It cannot be, because this man has been climbing up trees in the past, why should he fall and die today, of all days? The person must have been neglected by the ancestors who allowed a witch to cause the death. A witch is not talked about in public. It is an individual who does evil performances secretly at night. The fact that it is a nocturnal act makes it psychologically very complex. These witches are supposed to meet at night when they perform their acts naked and in darkness.

### **Conclusive Remarks**

As early as the 1890s, the colonial government looked at the practice of witchcraft with fear and suspicion but did not attempt to follow the whole psychology of the phenomenon, they never took psychological measures to deal with it. 'Witchcraft is arguably a subject that has created a lot of controversies in both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe, as well as in many parts of the world (Sibanda, 2017). Witchcraft in Zimbabwe is defined as "the use of harmful medicines, harmful charm, and harmful magic and any other means or devices in causing any illness, misfortune or death in any person or animal or in causing any injury to any person or animal or

property". This is a recognition of the reality and existence of witchcraft, and it cannot be dealt with by suppressing it. One does not suppress a belief out of existence. To me, people must go back to the drawing board and look at these phenomena from a psychological point of view and not merely from a political, economic, or moral perspective. In this reflection, I feel the attitude toward witchcraft is based on colonial stereotypes instead of predicting it on psychology. Once the psychological view is taken, then the whole phenomenon of witchcraft shines out for what it is - universal. Some of the actions attributed to the witches are imaginary. These include flying to distant places on a broom or in a winnowing basket or riding on various animals at night.

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