

TANGAZA COLLEGE

(The Catholic University of Eastern Africa)

DEPARTMENT OF PASTORAL STUDIES

**UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN MYSTICAL POWERS IN THE
BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE:
*AMONG The Akamba Community Of Kenya.***

THIS LONG ESSAY IS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR
OF ARTS DEGREE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES.

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all missionaries, both ordained and laity who are emptying their energies in propagating the gospel faith in the diocese of Machakos. Their work and efforts have inspired me to study their greatest challenge and barrier, namely the belief and practice of mystical powers among the Akamba community of Kenya.

I also dedicate it to all the youth, parents, educators, Christians and all those who are making efforts to understand the problem of mystical powers among the Akamba society; especially Mrs. Kinama veronica, Miss Jane Mulinge, Fr. Tumaini CSSp, and Sr. Evaline all of Machakos diocese. May the good Lord bless their efforts with success.

May you please never get tired of bringing Christ into the lives of the Kamba People.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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I am also grateful to the Spiritan congregation and her benefactors and confreres, especially Fr. Ambrose Mutinda, Fr. Tom McDonald, Deac. Wilbert kalenga wa Kalenga, Gama Noel, Boniface Muema, Bernard Ndolo, Benedict Mutune, Kapango and all of you confreres, for without you I could not have shaped a missionary character of loving until it hurts,

It is only because of my loving young friends Stephen Muli, Jane Mulinge, Fr. Bonaventure, Sr. Anne, Lydia Muthoki, Jane Mukui, Mr. Stephen Ndunda, Mr and Mrs. Mulinge; who opposed strongly the reality of mystical powers that I derived the courage to venture a head in this study.

It is because of Tangaza College and its people who have given me the knowledge I needed and the competency the world craves for.

It is because of Dr. Mary Getui my tutor and moderator who walked with me and supervised this work, that it has come out refined as it is. For your companion and encouragement may your days increase Mary.

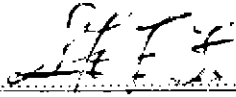
To all of you I say:

**Thankyou (English)
Asanteni (Kiswahili)
Merci (French)
Nuseo (Kikamba)
Zikmo (Chewa)
Ashe na Lang' (Maa)**

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Mwanja Andrew Ndunda, C.S Sp., hereby declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:

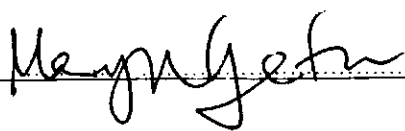


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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary society which is blessed with all sorts of technologies, science, and medicine; it sounds unbearable to speak of mystical powers. Many people would piously deny the existence of such a notion and call upon its burial. Those bound and committed to different religious denominations and sects will, with certainty, offer an open denial to the thought, leave alone mentioning it. Critical study reveals that, though many African Christians refute this notion of mystical powers, it is still a life and strong among many of their members, including African cities and religious circles in new forms and formulas. Hence, unless it is thoroughly revisited holistically and in a positive manner, the so called Christians in the African church will only live and remain at a nominal structural standing, that is Christians by name. Hence, the real impact of the gospel; the living faith in Christ will remain in total absentia.

In this study I am interested in examining critically the notion of mystical powers as a pastoral issue among the Akamba community of Kenya in East Africa. For up to today the Christian faith still battles with various issues of mystical powers. To achieve this I will first present the general understanding of mystical powers in Africa, this will be followed by mystical powers among the Kamba community. After, I will present the Biblical understanding of mystical powers. This will be followed by a highlight on how we can tackle this issue in a pastoral perspective. A general conclusion will serve to give my personal stand on the understanding of mystical powers and how we can deal with them in our pastoral contexts.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

I recently saw a situation in my home parish, whereby newly converted Christians were wrestling with the issue of mystical powers. One of their members was accused of possessing and practicing the art mystical powers. On the part of the church this crime amounts for one to be barred from all her service offered to the faithful. This case was taken to the parish priest, who was also both sensitive and insightful and gave his flock the typical answer that 'it is written that you should not worship other gods apart from me'. After preaching to them all that he would from the teaching of the church, the Bible and even his personal views, he left them and told them such a thing should never come across his ears so long as he was the Parish priest. After, I talked to him about his reaction and how it would prevent the growth in faith and Christian morality of his flock. Hence, I urged him to try something better than just telling his flock that the practice of mystical powers is evil. He asked me what option I would offer for such a case. I told him that, the Bible offers an alternative, and he should organise for Bible studies. It is only after talking to him, and after seeing the gravity of the matter, and sensitivity it offered, he organised a Bible study class for the people. This enabled them to see what the scriptures say about the subject. After the biblical insights, especially Lev. 20:6, Ex. 22:18, Acts.13:6-12, Gal.5:17-21, Dut. 18:10, the Christians decided for themselves what they should do, when they encounter such cases. Their decision was based on the scriptures. To me this was a very impressive and promising way of dealing with the issue of mystical powers, for it is in the heart of many African Christians and unless they are helped to deal with it by themselves, it will keep on crowning their faith and belief. For unless one wills to change, by his or her decision and judgement it is very difficult to impart a grain of change on any one from mere talks and instructions, for these do not enter the heart of the person as such.

The above encounter of the people and the scriptures on the issue of mystical powers made me to think over and over, on the impact it had on the people, the refreshment they attained from it, the joy they received from it, and I said sure this is a true encounter of the Gospel faith with a peoples culture. After witnessing the love and joy which a rose from the above event I started thinking of putting down some points for Pastors and Christians who are faced with the same or similar problems.

Thus, the notion of mystical powers which I am going to tackle in this work, is not purely a research made of books but a lived experience. This makes my work more of a reflection on the reality of my society, in which many people are believed and belief, to be blessed with the art of mystical powers.

At this point it is good to note that this belief in mystical powers has caused a tremendous effect on my life and faith. For I have seen people suffer and loose their lives in the name of mystical powers. Something which has moved me to look into the truth and density of the matter.

The many times I have witnessed public accusation, trial and punishments on those who use, and possess mystical powers in the Kamba society has made me to re-think over its reality. Moreover, looking at the number of church-drop-outs, that is, those who have left the faith, because their community has pointed them out as possessors of mystical powers, I feel obliged and deeply convinced that there is something the church should do for these poor people, who are persecuted either innocently, out of jealousy, or suspicious feelings, by the members of their communities.

The popular concern that African Christians go to church in the morning and attend to mystical power assemblies at night remain to me a non-speculation but a reality of life in

many African communities. Hence, I wish to analyse the nature of the problem and empty a bit of my reflective energy in seeing in what areas the church can shed a drop of help.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although many traditional religious practices are not compatible with the gospel, there are many traditional beliefs and practices which are advantageous in bridging the Gospel and a given culture.

Early books about missionary work in Africa are almost inevitably negative about the traditional religious practices, simply because they did not study the traditional religions and as a result they did not understand them. Hence, out of ignorance and misconception they considered them as evil, satanic and as practices that had to be totally rejected by their adherents (Africans) if they were to become Christians.

However, in more recent years a reaction has been set against this negative position, defending African traditional religion. Many views have been raised, but one theme is common to all. They all call for an African theology. One which fits Africans, their spiritual and cultural needs. But little consensus has been arrived on how to go about it.

Hence, for the church to be meaningful and profound in the African culture, she has the duty, honour and mission to dialogue with the religious core of the African traditional religions. For many of her traditional religious rites and rituals practices are tied in the belief in mystical powers. For instance, it is surprising to see how in times of problems; time such as during an out break of epidemics, drought, famine, sickness, and any unusual happening, how a traditional Mkamba will never rest until he has a recourse to a diviner or medicine man. For the medicine man is a very prominent and revered possessor of the most powerful and effective mystical powers within the Kamba society. This seeking of the

medicine man in time of unusual happenings is not only practised by traditional Akamba, but also by the Kamba confessed Christians.

Unless this belief in mystical powers and practices among African traditionalists is revised critically with a deep concern for traditional religious values, African Christians will live in a synergy faith. Thus, Praying “the rosary in the morning and take to witchcraft in the afternoon”¹.

The traditional missionaries response to African religiosity was and still is negative and many African missionaries have even clothed themselves with this mentality with a strong denial, and rejection of African traditional religions as purely pagan (evil). But my experience has told and proved to me that the belief in mystical powers is deep within the African person, and even the strongest African Christian will tremble before the nobility of mystical powers. Churches, families, job opportunities, and business have been forsaken in the name of mystical powers, but the church has remained undefined in such cases. Is it not because they have not taken this matter seriously? I hope by the end of this work a prominent and better understanding of African mystical powers will be arrived at.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

When a person, who originally practised a traditional religion, becomes a Christian, there are a number of things or points he or she must deal with. It is not realistic to tell a new Christian to ignore the spirit world, stop venerating the ancestors, stop going to a diviner, unless specific reasons are given to do so, and unless the church offers functional substitutes for these practices.

¹ Amecea. *The African synod comes home, a simplified text*. (1995)25

Keeping all these in mind, my goal in this work will be to bring into light the actual content, aspects and concept of mystical powers in African communities, basing myself within the Akamba community of Kenya.

Though much has been written on the notion of mystical powers, the very primary and actual practice of these powers has not been considered much, both in theology and the mission studies of the African church. Hence, this is what I wish to highlight, and open a new eye, through which the church will be able to present its message meaningfully to a people who are so much tied to powers and beliefs which stretch and push them away from the Gospel teachings, practices and obligations.

It is also my pleasure to show how throughout the centuries the scripture has kept its word and stance in regard to the existence of mystical powers. For instance, prophet Ezekiel in his prophecy, he condemns all those who use magic in hunting the souls of the just. "Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people, and keep other souls alive for your profit?" (Ez.13:18).

I will also give some pastoral suggestion as to how to deal with the belief in and practice of mystical powers.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

It is not my intention in this work to state whether mystical powers do purely exist or not, within the Kamba community, neither come into terms with the belief or not; all will be left open to the readers conclusion and considerations. My major aim will be to lay open the circumstances and practices which portray what goes on when one is said to be a practitioner and possessor of mystical powers within the Kamba community and more

specially among the Kamba Christian converts, for many reasons have been given on the nature, and function of mystical powers among African communities, many of which have been based on psychological, social and political structures of the African societies.

However, my personal view on will be modified to suit my own conviction on the matter, and how to address it in more and better Christian approach. Even though a reader may not agree with my position on certain issues this work will cause him or her to grapple with the pending issue in a new way. Hopefully, I think that pastoral agents in Africa and more specially in Kenya, particularly Machakos dioceses, will learn from the contents of this work, and thereby promote the growth of God's church: a church that is both true to the word of God, and meet the deep spiritual and cultural needs of the local people.

1.5 METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Each major chapter will contain several complimentary subchapters. The purpose of the introduction will be to survey in brief the general belief and practices of mystical powers in traditional religions. This will be complimented by a case study of the Akamba in Eastern Kenya, and more specially those found within Machakos diocese. For, if I limit myself to generalisations I might loose some of the concrete dynamics, leading to misrepresentation of the enormous differences among the traditional beliefs and practices of Africa. On the other hand, if I content myself with a particular example doing away with generalisations I would be trapped in details, losing the wider perspective. For better results I have chosen to combine both the two emphases of generalising (Africa in general) and particularising (limiting myself to particular tribes), plus collateral reading on the Akamba, understanding of mystical powers, though not essential for the flow and argument of the work, but serves as an illustration of traditional religious practices.

It is important to note that most of the work will be from reading, research, and where necessary, individual testimonies, who have experienced or have been involved in the practice of mystical powers will be cited. These individual testimonies, are from stories shared by Christian converts who were good practitioners of mystical powers among the Kamba society before their conversion, and are now strong Christians, but with deep knowledge and understanding of the use and practice of mystical powers beneath their confession of the Gospel faith.

Most of the information will be focused on the nature, understanding and practice of mystical powers, and how deep they have influenced the life of the community at large.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING MYSTICAL POWERS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will give the general understanding of mystical powers among African communities. The communities have all sorts of stories on the practices, effects, possession and acquisition of mystical powers. In every village one has a story about an happening done or caused by the use of mystical powers. This story telling ranges from the young up to the elder generation. Hence, this chapter will give and lay down the general understanding of mystical powers, pointing out their kinds and distinctions as lived in the different communities, and the African Christians view of these powers.

The above will enable us to have a general picture of what mystical powers entail in their most pronounced sense. It will also enable us to get an overview of the Kamba understanding and practice of mystical powers, though in a generalised context, which will be elaborated and contextualised in chapter three of this work.

2.1 MYSTICAL POWERS IN AFRICA

Africa has a sound and audible belief in mystical powers, which are experienced and lived within its villages and cities. This belief is told of, by the young and the old alike. A power, a force and a machinery which echoes in the universe covering the living, living dead, spirits and the supreme being.

These mystical powers which engulf most of Africans view of reality can be classified into three perspectives, namely magic, sorcery and witchcraft. These powers affect each and everybody, for better or for worse.

“It is no exaggeration to say that one cannot gain any fundamental grasp of the attitudes which people have towards one another, neither can one understand many aspects of their behaviour in a wide range of their social situation without a fairly extensive knowledge of their ideas regarding good, evil and causation, plus their associated belief in witches and sorcerers.”²

In presenting this understanding of mystical powers among African communities I will base myself on the most and generally known mystical powers. I will base my work on the three widely spelled powers, that is magic, witchcraft and sorcery. The common understood forms of magic are witchcraft and sorcery. These beliefs about witches and sorcerers have a-world-wide distribution in Africa their occurrence is almost universal.

Before we proceed on further, let us have distinction between witchcraft, sorcery and magic. Witchcraft is a mystical innate power, which can be used by its possessor to harm other people. Sorcery is the use of *medicine (use of something tangible)* to harm those one bears a ill will. Thus, witchcraft is an innate power that causes harm on the intended victims, while sorcery is the use of material objects to harm others. These two types of powers, that is witchcraft and sorcery will be dealt with at later stage in this work Although in most places sorcery is commonly associated with witchcraft.

2.2 MAGIC

Magic can be defined as an endeavour through utterance of set of words or performance of sets of acts or both in order to manipulate, bend or twist the powers of the world to peoples will. This is enhanced by forcing things to happen rather than asking why they do happen.

² John Middleton and E. Winter, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, (1963) 55

Idowu, regards magic, as “that second course by which man seeks to reach the goal of achievements of self-effort and his own independent devices”³.

In its nature magic involves the use of impersonal powers through ritual, rites and ceremonies. These rituals, rites and ceremonies amount to the belief in the spirits, deities, gods and the attempts to pray to them for aid. This way of living has made many people, especially those from the west to look at magic as a kind of religion. But looking at the matter and art of magic critically, I find that there is a wide range of difference between magic and religion. For while magic commands the impersonal powers of nature, leading to belief in spirits, gods and deities, to which magicians pray for aid, in search of personal interest, religion has God as its supreme authority. This makes magic a self-centred act. Religion on the other hand, has generally God as its supreme objective, and prays that *thy will be done* as opposed to magic whereby one prays, *my will be done* and leads to submission to a super natural being, through ritual and ceremonies.

This nature and understanding of magic make it to be regarded as the “attempt on the part of man to tap and control the supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit”⁴. As such it serves man egocentricity, and it forms a shortcut to spiritual bliss.

In the same note we view religion as a matter of reciprocal relationship in which believers depend upon a deity for the fulfilment of personal basic needs, which surpasses materiality, and has a high hope of positive response from the super being. This expectation of a high hope implies submission, trust and dependence.

Among the two that is, magic and religion there is no imperial evidence as to which is prior to the other, for generally both cannot be separated, and sometimes it is not easy to separate the two, especially in dealing with beneficial magic practices such as prayer in

³ E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, (1973) 189.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 189-202.

ancestral veneration. Sometimes in this form of prayer is combined with the use of some magical practices, such as the slaughtering of a hen and pouring the blood in the form of libation for the ancestral spirits to come and drink.

Biblically there is much more similarity between magic and religion than differences. For as we have seen in both, magic and religion, the elements of trust, dependence, and expectancy of a response are popular characteristics.

Religion can also be regarded as a moral teaching, due to its stout teaching of a good God, whereas magic is a moral without any connection to a good God, neither any foreseen relation with Him. But to me this sounds like an overstatement or an oversimplified statement for there are certain kinds of behaviours and more serious concerns demanded before magic will work. For instance, the mystic behaviour experienced by diviners, when divining a given issue.

Howells, looks at magical practices and says that, “human nature[...]really wants magic, and gets true good out of it. It is not comforting for man [...] to realise how helpless he can be, and magic enables him to avoid realising it, it gives him a soothing conviction that can take care of himself, because nature can be bossed around by pulling imaginary wires”⁵.

2.3.0 KINDS OF MAGIC

Magic as the power through which man and woman controls the universe for his own good, is found in various kinds with wide spread applications. Magic can be used either for good or bad. Hence, due to these effects, we can categorise magic into two kinds.

⁵ Howells williams, *The Heathens: Primitive Man and His Religions*, (1948) 25-144.

namely, black and white magic. These two forms of magic can only be distinguished from their effects and results.

2.3. 1 WHITE AND BLACK MAGIC

White magic, which is also known as *good magic*, is the kind of magic that is extensively used for protection against black magic or evil forces. This kind of magic involves the use of amulets, charms, herbs, powder from seeds, skins, feathers, cuts on the body and magical formulas in the form of poems, songs, prayers, and rituals. This form of magic is used to protect people, domestic animals, possessions and assets, farms and land, from all forces of evil.

White magic is given by medicine men, who are highly respected people in any given African society. This protective or white magic is also used to invoke rain by rain makers and to predict the future by diviners. White magic is also used in the making of love potions (incases of broken relationship between a husband and wife), crop production, money making, fertility, examinations, sports, and generally in increasing personal fortunes in life. As a result of its positive effects, white magic often finds favour from the society, because it is beneficial to humanity.

Black magic is also known as evil magic. Due to its evil orientation and effects, black magic is practised secretly and is not approved by the society. The reason for its disapproval within the society stems from its use and the intended objective. Black magic, as its name reads is used for evil intentions and destruction. It is primarily intended to harm people and property. This form of magic is feared by everybody and meets a strong opposition from the society. It has imparted fear, suspicion, jealousies, ignorance plus false accusations in many African villages, to the extent that even a stranger is looked at in a

suspicious manner. Black magic is also commonly and more often associated with sorcery and witchcraft.

2.3.2 IMITATIVE AND CONTAGIOUS MAGIC

Imitative magic is also known as sympathetic magic. As its name *imitative* sounds, this kind of magic depends and operates on an apparent association or agreement between things. An agreement whereby the end result, or the effect resembles the cause. The most common type of the magic is found in the practice whereby one uses the image of a person to hurt him or her. Thus, for instance, an imitative magician can make an image with the use of mud, wood or other materials and use sharp instruments or objects, such as thorns, knives, arrows and needles to hurt the intended victim. The damage caused to the image is tantamount to the harm done or caused to the enemy or the intended victim.

Rainmakers too, do spit water into the air to imitate the falling of rain, and hunters, do make the images of animals, and cause harm on the ones they would like to kill on a particular season or time.

Contagious magic works in a relational manner. Relational manner, in that it is the use of the things which one time were in contact with each other. Contagious magic works from the belief that, these things which were at one time in contact with others continue to act on each other at a distance, even in the absence or removal of physical contact. Contagious magic, explains why many Africans, even up to today are afraid of leaving their finger or toe nails, hair, clothes, and other items which were once in physical contact with a person, for fear that they may be used to harm them with black contagious magic. The above too, explains why mothers after delivering, do bury the placenta very secretly or take it into sacred shrines, in the fear a contagious magician may come across it and use it to harm their babies. Some women even do refuse hospital delivery in fear that the after birth

may be used to harm them or their babies. However, it is wise to point out that both white and black magic can either be imitative or contagious.

2.3.3 PERSONAL AND PUBLIC MAGIC

Personal and public forms of magic are mostly used to serve personal needs and desires. For example an individual may purchase personal charms in the name of protection against evil forces. These protective charms and amulets include a wide range of objects, such as chains, wild animal horns and pieces of skin, powders from plant leaves or even the leaves themselves, iron bracelets, text from sacred books such as the Quran for the Muslims, lion teeth, crocodile tails, and snakes.

Public of magic is ultimately intended for the whole community, village or household. It is used for the protection of the homestead, family, clan and ethnic group against evil forces. Public magic trends involve the use of charms, which are hung over the doorways of houses, gates for protection from witches, bad eyes, evil word, and any evil force. For example, you might find pieces of bones, feathers, skins, bottles, and horn placed on straws or poles in some home, fields or business centres.

The suggestion behind the above distinction between white and black magic, is that there is no objection to magic when it is allegedly employed for harmless, or even useful purpose. For example when magic is used for healing, invoking rain among others. This will be made clear when we shall speak on the Akamba understanding of mystical powers in the third chapter.

Thus, on the above interpretation, the wearing of amulets, and charms to ensure fertility or to ward off diseases, or the use of medicine to promote good crops is

unobjectionable. It is only when magic is used or practised to harm other people, is labelled as black magic.

However, it is worth noting that: magic beliefs that lie behind the idea of black magical practices serves to foster the sentiments that are condemned in it. Sentiments such as envy, hatred, revenge, anger, and jealousy which are all familiar to every human being. It is thus, clear that if a group of people does encourage the belief, that they can give and get effective expression to the above named sentiments by practising magical trends, they will be seriously tempted to indulge themselves in the art of magic, after which, each will be tempted to believe that others in the group are doing the like. In such societies then, it is not a surprise to find that each person has his or her enemy or enemies, those against whom he has long standing grudges. Such a person is certain that someone somewhere is injuring or harming him. For instance, if a man's crop is successful, his stores are full of grains, he is convinced that he has become the butt of his neighbour's jealousy, and he will be bewitched. Then follow that his crops fail, animals die, and his stores are empty, this presents clear signs of his conviction about his neighbour, and by these signs he confirms that he has been bewitched by the jealous neighbour.

This gives a picture of the traditional community values of most African societies. Therefore, however innocent seeming certain magical practices may be, it must be said that the whole system has deplorable effects on the social life of the people concerned. For this reason, a diviner though viewed as a person who averts evil powers, he cannot be considered as harmless. For his very *raison d'être* obliges him or her to look with suspicion on all the people in his or her client's social circle, in order to achieve his or her objective of restoring a sick person to health. This he does by first identifying and then attacking the third party (magician).

Of course, in every society there are good people and bad people, people who are well-disposed towards others, and people who seem to have a natural tendency to regard others as enemies. In magical societies, good people will be clearly less inclined that bad people would make use of magical weapons to harm others, or to suspect that others are using such weapons against them. But it is being urged here that magical system itself tends to make people regard each other as enemies.

2. 3.4 SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT

A sorcerer is one who is thought of practising black or harmful form of magic against others. The practice is termed magical from the point of view of anthropologists. In Africa the most common belief is that sorcerers use, *medicine* to harm those against whom they bear ill will.

Witchcraft: By contrast to sorcery, the power of witchcraft is mystical and innate, and it is used by its possessor to harm other people.

Often it is thought that the witch merely wishes to harm his victim and the power in him or her does this, or it may be enough for one to feel annoyance or jealousy against some one for the power to set itself in operation without his or her awareness of the fact that it has done so.

Witches are also thought of being capable of doing and performing extra-ordinary things and acts which are beyond the capacities of ordinary human beings. For instance, witches are thought of being capable of travelling great distances instantaneously, having the ability to turn themselves into wild animals, such as hyenas and leopards, going out as spirits and killing their victims, while their bodies remain home in bed, among other things.

On the other hand, acts of sorcery, although theoretically observable, are rarely seen due to the secrecy which surrounds them.

The powers of witchcraft are thought to be transmitted from one generation to another within the family; through certain channels, which are regulated under very strict discipline. This will be illustrated in chapter three of this work. It worth noting that magic and sorcery deal with each other, but each on its own and exhaustively. Both men and women can practice witchcraft, though in some societies the practice of witchcraft is gender oriented. Gender oriented in that some do helief that only men have the ability to practice witchcraft, while others strongly link it with women. For example the Akamba of Eastern Kenya. believe that a man who is a witch transmits his powers to his sons, but not to his daughters, while a female witch transmits her powers to her daughters but not to her sons. This belief is complementary to the Akamba idea and understanding of procreation and their eschatological notion of the life here-after. They do believe that, if a man is happier than his wife during their sexual affair, a boy will be born, if on the other hand the wife is happier a girl is born. The new-born (child) then takes after its parent of the same sex, in its inheritance of a body-soul and witchcraft substances. Hence, among the Akamba, both men and women are exposed to be practitioner's of witchcraft.

Many reasons have been adduced to these practices of witchcraft. Some of the major ones include security and recognition within the social structure of the society. Most of the reasons adduced to these practices of witchcraft and sorcery do explain why people continue on holding to these beliefs and to utilise them in the conduct of their daily affairs. as the satisfactory ways in which they account for the incidence of misfortune.

Witches, as personifications of evil, as innately wicked people who do harm against others, do so by virtue of the possession of mysterious powers unknown and unavailable to ordinary people. it is this which sets them apart. from the other members within the society.

This has made witchcraft to be associated with some people or a certain clan within a given society or community.

Since it is conceived that witches constitute but a part of a given community, (a secret community) however large it may be; it becomes logically possible to believe that the possession of such powers is restricted to the members of a certain category of people. Many societies do utilise this possibility and maintain that all witches are female. Other societies do precisely the opposite and hold that witchcraft powers are possessed by both men and women. A good example of such societies is the Akamba society of Kenya. The practice of sorcery cannot be thought of as being restricted in this manner, since sorcerers are not abnormal in the sense of being people set apart.

2.3.5 ACCUSATION OF MYSTICAL POWER POSSESSORS

The basic principle which seems to underlie the use of witchcraft accusations is that the accusation directed against a kinsman is tantamount to saying that he has denied the obligation of a kinsman and so should be cast out of the existing kin-group. This may, of course be done by banishment, but this is rare and leads to physical weakening of the group.

It is clear that people will be relieved of these fears only when they relinquish their belief in the reality of witches and cease to believe that others can harm them through the use of evil magic.

The above accusations do express areas of tension in social relationship, and of changes, for most new social relationships are associated with achieved rather than with traditionally ascribed status.

Many of the cases (accusations) of witchcraft in the modern urban cities reflect these tensions produced by modern social changes:- one finds accusations of witchcraft between fellow workers who are competing for the regard of their employer; between rivals for the acquisition of money earned at work or of property bought with it, between political opponents fighting for positions of leadership within the society and many other forms. Thus, wherever modern changes have brought about situations for which there are no indigenous precedent, and problems for which customary rules of thumb can offer no solution, these tensions arise and are often expressed in terms of witchcraft.

A. Shorter says that witchcraft and sorcery beliefs “flourish in small enclosed communities with clearly defined external boundaries, but with weak internal structure. Such communities favour competition for internal leadership, coupled with phobia towards strangers”.⁶ These beliefs endanger economic, social-structures, security, and political organisation of a given society.⁷

2.3.6 AFRICAN CHRISTIANS AND MYSTICAL POWERS

Early Christians from Palestine retained valuable ideas and images from the Hebrew tradition. These images were not present in the scriptures accidentally but intentionally, and yet they were broken apart by the power of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus and transformed to speak that Gospel in particular historical and cultural circumstance.

This can also be achieved in the African ways and imageries of life. For example, the power of witchcraft and sorcery continues to disrupt and threaten the life of the church .

⁶ Aylward Shorter, *African Culture, An Overview*, (1998) 68

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68

This problem can and will not simply disappear as we have seen, by simply forbidding people to believe in their traditional practices.

As long as our missionary activity is dominated by the attitude that all aspects of indigenous African traditions are pagan and worthless, these traditional practices will persist in the lives of many Africans converts.

This dual practice as already stated is not unique to Africa. It is only when we are entirely honest about what is happening behind the Christian villages, and what we expect to find there, that we can surely say something about these practices. What missionaries bring to African traditions and rites is the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ, and his way of life, what they discover are the indigenous symbols and rituals traditions that draw their attention to the need of God in life.

Symbols which are encouraging and powerful, reminding the African that there are indeed praiseworthy and Godly given ritual symbols in their history and past. Through the light of the gospel these ancient symbols and rites should draw their attention to God's saving deeds in Jesus Christ. We should not look at them purely in a negative sense, for the traditional African rites are for something, that is they address a people's particular needs when its life in a community has been threatened.

The above has made many of the African practices to be viewed as pagan, evil and ill oriented, leading many gospel preachers to regard African beliefs as undesirable. Having, this in mind let us now look at some of the negative attributes towards African traditional religious practices. For as we have seen it is only out of a critical study of African beliefs and practices we can give a sincere and honest gospel message to the Africans.

2.3.7 NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES ON AFRICAN BELIEFS

It is true that the African Christian have much to learn from the Christian faith on how to purify and complete their belief about God. However, it is equally true that the Christian too, has something to learn from the African traditional religion. This learning is not in the sense of new doctrines, but in the sense of new insights and new ways of understanding God. This learning should not only comprise of the positive aspects but also from the shortcomings and errors.

Up to the present time, the approach among Christians towards African religions and cultures is negative. though a more positive appreciation of African traditions is now taking root. with the call for inculturation. Nowadays one hears of African religiosity, wisdom, philosophy and the like, but little is mentioned of African deviations, especially on Africans belief in mystcal powers. Hence, to be sure the truth lies between these two extremes, for each culture and people have both their positive and their negative qualities. Having said this, let us have a view of the negative factors in African cultures.

2.3.8 ONE -SIDED ANTHROPOCENTRISM

African religious behaviour is centred mainly on man's and woman's life in this world. This makes religion functional. That is a means through which people are led to acquire earthly goods namely: life, health, fecundity, wealth, power and to maintain social order.

It is true that traditional Africans have a deep sense of the sacred, as a supernatural and a cosmic reality, and their cultural efforts are dominated by their desire to appropriate the sacred forces. However, this attitude betrays and presents the lack of a sharp and clear distinction between the natural and supernatural. The supernatural is often conceived in

anthropomorphism and cosmic forms. Thus, the next world is believed and conceived to be similar as the present one. Religious rituals are centred on human ancestors and other cosmic realities such as totemism (animal) and tellus mater (the earth). Through this attitude the image of God has been vitiated by excessive anthropomorphism. Natural objects have been revered as divinities. This has made the Akamba to see God as one who is so far removed from his people and as one who has no interest in men and women. Hence, the cult of ancestors and other cosmic realities tends to overshadow monotheistic form of worship.

The above reflection on African Christians towards mystical powers, shows that modern African society is deeply committed to the pursuit of authentic cultural journey of discovery. If some of the cultural practices and beliefs are gravely destructive to Christian authenticity, this is not the first time, nor the first culture, in which this would have happened. For Pope Paul II told the African Catholic Bishops at Kampala in 1969, there is indeed a great chance of having and we must have an African Christianity.

CHAPTER TWO

MYSTICAL POWERS AMONG THE KAMBA

3.0 INTRODUCTION

After having a recourse of the general African view and understanding of mystical powers, let us now have a look at how the Kamba community which is our point of departure understands, practices and lives this belief in mystical powers.

This chapter will take us deep into the Kamba conception of mystical powers, their effects and how they are lived in the peoples daily lives. It will lay open the effects of mystical powers as experienced by the traditional Mkamba as well as citing of the experiences of the a converted Mkamba.

We do have various kinds of well known and prominent mystical powers among the traditional Akamba, the famous ones includes witchcraft (*uoi*), and divination (*uwe*). Others include, the curse (*kiumo*), the oath (*kithitu*) and the evil tongue and eye (*Kyeni*). Let us now examine each of these mystical powers and see the effects they pose to a Mkamba.

3.1 WITCHCRAFT (*UOI*)

The Akamba do virtually explain every unusual event by witchcraft. Everything from a poor performance in crops to death is explained in terms of witchcraft. To them nothing happens accidentally or by chance, or the laws of nature. For instance, there is nothing like natural death to a traditional Mkamba. Thus, in this culture there is no significant aspect in which this power is absent.

The Akamba are famous for their witchcraft, and as we have seen, like in many other African societies; they do have innumerable stories of very unusual experiences which can only be explained by mystical powers. For instance, at Kitui Central a father and his son, both possessed the powers of evil eye and evil tongue, and they competed to see who was the strongest. The son went to his father's field of sweet potatoes, and saw that it was ready for harvest. He then said, *why don't porcupines come and taste the potatoes?* All of a sudden a large flock of porcupines came and devoured all the sweet potatoes. When the father came and saw the porcupines feasting on his field, he commented, *why don't they stop and go back to their hidings?* The porcupines all left. The father then went to see his son's goats grazing on the leaves from the tree's bottom as goats normally do. He looked at them and said, *why don't they reach to the top of the trees and eat like monkeys?* The son was surprised when he saw the goats climbing trees and eating like monkeys. The son then commented, *why don't they come down and eat like goats?* From that moment the son and father shook hands and agreed that they both had a possession of these great and most feared powers of *kyeni* and *kita*(the most deadly form of *uoi*).

Witchcraft then, gives the explanation of all the unusual events. Though this power gives the answer to all evil happenings, no traditional *Mkamba* can tell or has tried to tell the nature and source of this power. But every person young and old seems to acknowledge the reality of *Uoi*.

When asked of the origin of this power, many respond that, *uoi* finds its way into a person either from birth (that is, *uoi* is innate) or from another person possessing it (inherited), or it is bought from those who are believed possess it from the spirits.

One who has possession of this power is known as a witch (*Muoi*). In this community many of the witches are women.

The witch does her job secretly as have seen, above:- the witches form a circle of a secret society, which execute its functions secretly. But among the Akamba they do believe that witches are mostly active during the night.

Another property or characteristic is that, these witches are very anti-social and unwilling to reveal their knowledge or activities. Within the Akamba society witches are described as evil persons, who thirst for blood.

The above belief also finds its way not only among the traditional Akamba, but also the baptised, educated and modern Akamba do acknowledge of the existence of this power, and need not ask what it is or what it does.

As we have already seen, in the previous chapter the witches use all manner of items which had once been in contact with a person, things such as nails, hair, pieces of cloth to harm their victims. The Akamba witches also do use the vital organs of the human beings. This vital parts include the sexual organs and other parts of the body, where great power resides. For this reason efforts are made to offer maximum protection to a corpse lest a *muoi* comes at night and cuts the vital parts for use in black magic. For these vital parts are mostly taken by witches from the dead bodies. In connection with the above, burial of bodies might have found its way earlier in this society.

Contagious magic was and is also famous among the traditional Kamba. In this kind of black magic, the witch is said to spit on the foot prints of a person or take part of the soil in the foot print and mix it with other powders to cause harm on her victim. This practice is known as *ndato* or *ndatho* in the Kamba community.

Personal names are also used for black magic in the Kamba community. This is because, the Kamba have a strong belief that names do bear a very essential part of the person. This kind of belief, gives the reason as to why a typical Kamba can withhold his

or her name to a stranger or would give a false name, lest one's real name is exposed to a witch who in turn uses it to harm the person.

Many people today associate witchcraft with poisoning, but the traditional Mkamba had a name for the practising or art of bewitching through the use of poison. The use of poison as witchcraft is common, it is known as *muthea*. *Muthea*, is not the act by which poisoning is conducted, but it is the term for the black powder used in this art. This powder is obtained from crocodile tail, certain roots of various trees and grasses.

Muthea is mainly placed in drinking bowls or tobacco containers, especially for strangers and unknown guests. It was very simple for a mkamba to poison a stranger or any visitor, for good table etiquette required the guest to be served first. For a stranger was seen as a threat to the circle of the people. This kind of practice explains, the reason as to why many Kamba people demands one to taste any form of edibles that is placed before them.

There is also direct killing in the Kamba society by the use of witchcraft. In this form of witchcraft the practitioner use a mirror. It is good to note that this kind of practice is recent and if you allow me an *improvement* in the practice of mystical powers. The witch takes the mirror and draws seven lines with red and black colours on it. She then invokes the person's name. The victim appears in the mirror. If such a person has been treated against evil powers, the image appears from sideways, if on the other hand he or she is not treated she comes straight into the mirror. The witch then takes a sharp instrument, dips it in some blood and draws a line across the mirror. The person (victim) is believed to die immediately after the drawing of the line.

The witch in the Kamba community is not only restricted to the use of poison and material things only. She or he, is also able to use other things which produce evil effects or results. The commonly used form of this kind of black magic is charm (*Kithangona*).

The charm is aimed at destroying one's property, fame and possessions. The witch is said to plant it in the cow-sheds, and gardens of her victims.

3.2 DIVINATION (*UWE*)

let us now have a look at the other famous kind of mystical power among the Akamba. The second type of mystical power in this community is beneficial as opposed to the first one (*uoi*) and is known as *Uwe* (divination). For a Mkamba rotates his or her life (view of reality) around the powers of good and evil.

Uwe is the power that counteracts the evil power *Uoi*. This power is exercised by a diviner, who is known as *mundu mue* (wise person). In some places this person is also termed as the medicine man. The *mundu mue* is wise in that he knows and understands the local herbs for the victims who have been bewitched or those who have fallen sick. As a diviner he is also capable of foretelling the future, hunting out witches and seeking out the evil power (witchcraft) which troubles his or her people and helping them in times of need.

He or she is the mediator between the living and the dead (ancestral spirits). The Akamba pass through this person wherever they need to communicate with them. It is widely believed that the medicine man does communicate the message of ancestors to the living, for he does know and have the right and authority to communicate with the ancestors. Hence, the medicine man plays a very prominent role in the traditional life of the Akamba.

In times of devastating happenings in the lives of the individual , family or group the Akamba run to this person for advice. As such the medicine man serves as a counsellor, doctor and adviser. In fact he is the defender of the community against the powers of witchcraft. His powers are granted through the ancestors.

Due to his prominence, the medicine man is viewed from three perspectives, namely : as a prophet, diviner and herbalists.

3.3. 1 PROPHET

As a prophet the medicine man predicts the future, and warns of impending disaster. His revelation about the future happenings are received in form of dreams. “The term *prophet* is loosely used both in anthropology and in the Bible.”⁸ As such he reveals hidden messages. If the message is disastrous he also gives the solution. The most famous of these prophets who is still recalled to the present date is Syokimau, who foretold about the coming of the white men (colonialists). a long time before they arrived in East Africa. She also foretold of the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. It is told that in her vision she saw a long snake from water to other water, which carried people in it. This was later understood as the Kenyan-Ugandan rail way, which extends from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. It is worthy noting that the Akamba understanding of prophets is not to be confused with the Biblical understanding of prophecy and prophets. The Akamba “prophets belong to the category of diviners, seers and mediums, and may have other religious or political functions in their societies.”⁹

3.3.2 DIVINER

“A diviner is a specialist in operating oracles. The oracle is usually a magical ritual based on a combination of chance and manipulation in varying degrees, for the purpose of discovering hidden knowledge.”¹⁰ While a prophet has a revelation beyond his or her

⁸ Alward Shorter, *African Culture, An Overview*, (1998) 72

⁹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (1967) 190

¹⁰ Op.cit., Shorter, 1998. Page 72

ability, the diviner works from probabilities presented to him or her by a client. As a diviner the *mundu mue* responded to the unusual happening. He gave the who and the why of the event. The details of the art of divining varies from one diviner to another. If a diviner is unable to divine a happenings, he or she would recommend the client to another person or diviner. "The main duty of mediums [diviners] is link human beings with the living-dead and the spirits. Through them messages are received from the other world, or men are given knowledge of things that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to know."¹¹

Though powerful and prominent the diviners are not always believed, because many have opted for this kind of trend with an aim of exploiting their clients. This is also supported by the many posters one finds in our towns today, referring to such and such medicine man. Even our media today is open to the advertisements of this profession.

3.3.3 HERBALIST

This is the third category of the medicine man. He is known widely as *mundu mue wa ngondu* (the cleansing herbalists). His major role is cleansing one from evil powers and bringing them into a fruitful result. For instance, a barren woman when taken to a herbalist is believed to have the possibility of giving birth after the cleansing. In cases of miscarriages or abnormal births, this medicine man is consulted. But with the coming of clinical care and medicine this role is slowly dying. Moreover many practitioners of this art have been involved in many immoral crimes and many people have lost trust in them.

The herbalist also treats and does give solution to problems and removes curses imparted on his clients. This cleansing herbalists (*mundu mue wa ngodu*) should not be confused with the tree herbalist (*Mukimi wa miti*). The tree herbalist uses purely herbal

¹¹ Op.cit., Mbiti, 1967, page 172

medicine: medicine obtained from tree, bushes and herbs to remedy his clients. This true herbalists is also told of being under the guidance of the ancestral spirits who enable him or her to indentify various roots and leaves which are used for medication.

Many of the true herbalists have been recognized by the (KEMRI) that is the Kenya Medical Research Institute. Collaboration is encouraged between them and the medical practitioners. For example the late Dr.Muia from Machakos district, Salama village.

The distinction between the cleansing herbalists and the tree herbalist is noted from the art of their skill. Whereas the cleansing herbalist uses or applies magical formula in his art , the tree herbalist uses only natural method, herbs from plants, and identifies the illness and prescribes the herbs for treatment. On the other hand the cleansing herbalist, invokes the client to describe his or her illness.

There are other various kinds of mystical powers among the Akamba which one cannot place under either of the categories of *Uoi* or *Uwe*. These mystical powers include curse, oath, evil tongue and evil eye.

3.4 THE CURSE (*KIUMO*)

The power of the word in the Akamba community is found primarily in the words of the senior person spoken to a junior. These words can be in the form of a blessing or a curse.

A curse is said to begin with the shaking of the head, removing of clothes by a parent when seriously wronged by a child (son or daughter). The curse is known as *kiumo* in the Kamba language. The real essence of this kind of power is not grounded in the shaking or removing of the clothes, but in the bitter feelings in the heart which are directed towards the other person.

This form of mystical power is believed to destroy one's prosperity, melting it to nothing. The cursed person becomes helpless and hopeless and can even die if the curse is not reversed. In some places curses are believed to last forever, while in others it hunts up to the fourth generation. Mixed reactions have been said about the reversal or the removal of a curse. Some people believe that the curse can never be reversed, while others say it can be reversed when the proper procedures are followed to the letter.

To remove the curse the Akamba have a common ground that the client has to bring a goat to the curse pronouncer, very early in the morning. The goat is slaughtered and eaten by gathering. After eating the pronouncer of the curse washes his or her mouth with a mixture of water, milk and finger millet and spits the content on the hands and chest of the client. This spittle is said to remove the curse and imparts blessing on the client. In case the one who pronounced the curse has died, the client approaches the relatives of the pronouncer. The relatives represent the pronouncer of the curse and call for cleansing herbalist (*mundu mue wa ngodu*) as we have see above. The harbalist reverses the curse by purifying the client, with a purifying medicine known as *ngo'du*. This medicine is a mixture of water, certain leaves and roots of plants. Through the sprinkling of this mixture to the victim, while saying certain words the client symbolically restored back to his noraml life.

3.5. OATH (KITHITU)

No one knows about the source of this power nor its potency. What many Akamba know of it, is that it is real and effective. A *kithitu* is an object, and for specificity a cooking pot which is filled with medicinal collection upon which an oath is sworn. When one swears falsely by this power, his life or that of a nearby relative or his livestock is

taken within the days prescribed. The minimum days for the effects of this power ranges from one week to three weeks. This power is generally directed to those people who harm the community and refutes it before every one else.

Being the highest judicial authority, *kithitu* is used in land disputes, theft and murder. As the highest appeal, it is done publicly. It is administered by a council of elders and if someone performs it in secret or privately and its effects are noticed, guilt is reversed upon such a person, that is the one who initiated the oath

3.6 EVIL TONGUE AND EVIL EYE (KYENI)

Those in possession of evil tongue or eye are said to impart harm on people or property by merely complimenting or giving positive comments about others. This kind of mystical power is in-born. This power is reversed by spiting wherever one comments positively on something or somebody. To reverse *Kyeni* one must spit on the one effected by it. The spiting which is commonly done on the chest is accompanied by certain words such as *I have no evil tongue nor do my kinsmen*. This type of power is not always accompanied by evil intent. A person with evil tongue can also produce positive results. Such a person for example, can wish a person good luck in something and the wish comes true.

The real cause of this power is the intent of the words used while speaking. *Kyeni* can therefore be used for good or evil, depending of the intention of its possessor. However, the most notorious effect of this power is negative, that is, it is evil oriented. This power is counteracted by another in-born power known as *Kita*. This kind of power is said to be innate and some people are believed to possess both *kyeni* and *kita*.

In addition to the evil tongue the Akamba also believe in another power commonly known as the evil eye. This kind of power is experienced but its real origin is not known. For this reason the Akamba do not like people who count or point their fingers at others when speaking, for fear that this would bring harm, through the power of the evil eye.

The above powers are evil and are perceived as coming from the ancestral spirit (*aimu*) for each Mkamba is believed to have his or her own ancestral spirit. Christians believe that these powers can not originate from God but from Satan due to their evil orientations and results. The Christians too, do belief that a witch who has bought her powers, once converted and her power is burned she or he ceases to be a witch. But for one who possesses an evil tongue, conversion does not abolish it, but only weakens it, to some extent.

As we have seen above most of the evil powers among the Akamba community are from the ancestral spirits. These powers are mostly directed towards evil intentions.

CHAPTER THREE

MYSTICAL POWERS IN THE BIBLE:

4.0 INTRODUCTION

After having seen the Akamba conception and understanding of mystical powers, let us now turn our minds into the Holy book and see if we can have any trace of these powers in it. The Scriptures divide history into two ages, that is the age to come and the present age. The two ages are contrasted. While the age to come is the Messianic age, the present age refers to the one in which we are living now. This present age is characterised by sin and misery. In fact it is the opposing sides of the kingdom of Satan and the Messianic kingdom. In this present kingdom, the Bible holds that Satan has set himself against God and His people and seeks to direct his own children to transgress God's law and to rebel against Him. He is the spirit who is at work in the sons and daughters of disobedience. What of witchcraft in Africa today and especially among the sons and daughters of the Akamba community, is it satanic? The Bible teaches that mystical powers originated in man's rebellion against God. God had commanded Adam and Eve. "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen. I:28). This was to be actualised through total dependence upon the Creator and according to His will. But the Prince of lies, offered knowledge and power apart from God. In tempting man to disobey God, the father of lies, told him that "you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:5). Hence, man rebelled against God's will in his quest for knowledge and power. This rebellion entailed the need of controlling his own life independently of God, which is exactly what mystical powers offers to humanity.

As we have seen in the previous chapter mystical power is oriented towards harming of the good. The above analysis shows that mystical powers are as old as the Fall

For in the Fall the search for knowledge and power harmed seriously the good relationship which was there between Man and his Creator, thus, endangering the first social structure between humanity and God.

This chapter will help us to trace and see what the scriptures says in regard to the possession, use, and nature of mystical power. It will provide the scriptures stand on the use of mystical power, and its effects on God's children. Mystical powers as viewed by the scriptures will give us the opportunity of analysing how African understanding of these powers differs from that of Christian teaching and more especially with those of the Kamba society of Kenya.

In the Bible we do find references to this phenomenon of witchcraft and sorcery. Although the Bible recognises the reality of mystical powers, it does not say whether or not those referred, to as witches, sorcerers, and mediums, were engaged in the same type of activities as it is in the case of African witches and sorcerers; though the principles are the same. Hence, it leaves us uncertain as to whether witchcraft in African understanding is the same as witchcraft in the biblical sense.

Whereas in African context witches belong to a secret society and would hardly disclose their identity, those called witches, wizards, sorcerers, or mediums in the Bible were well known to the society and did not hide their identity. Theirs was a profitable trade.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians 5:20, the term used for witchcraft is Pharmakeia. This term can be translated as witchcraft or sorcery. It is the use of *medicine* of any kind, whether for good or evil end. Thus, witches and sorcerers in the Bible may be equated to medicine-men in African societies today.

4.1 MYSTICAL POWERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the art of witchcraft, sorcery and mediums is openly condemned. In Leviticus 20:6, it is stated that “if a person turned to mediums and wizards the Lord would turn his face against such a person and cut him off from his people. Mediums and wizards are to be stoned to death, and should never be allowed to live (cf. Ex. 22:18) for all who engage in wizardry and mediumistic practices are an abomination to the Lord. In the book of Deuteronomy, the use of mystical powers is highly condemned. It states categorically that, “there shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer[...]" (Dut 18:10)

In the book of I Samuel a similar prohibition is presented, after Saul consulted a magician to bring up Samuel from the dead. The story goes like this,

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the wizards out of the land. The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “Behold, there is a medium at Endor.” So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments, and went, he and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you”. The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?” But Saul swore to her by the Lord, “As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said, Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.” The king said to her, “Have no fear; what do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a rope.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do. (I Sam. 28:3-20)

The above, shows a practitioner of mystical powers is one who is in personal contact with the spirit world. Hence, for any Christian to consult a medicine man as described above is to commit spiritual deviance from God. For a believer is *married* to God, in covenant relationship. Hence, any attempt to rely on a specialist who communicates with the spirits and who is empowered by the spirits, is in fact distancing oneself from God. In the Old Testament these kind of transgressions were capitally punished for they constituted idolatry. This form of punishment imposed on mystical power practitioners is also reflected in the traditional African societies, and more specially among the Kamba community, and it amounts to death. In this community mystical power holders are highly punished. The punishment amounts to one being shot to death with poisonous arrows. In other societies such as the Masaai, victims of mystical power are automatically excommunicated from the community and looked at as outcasts.

4.2 MYSTICAL POWERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament Paul includes the practice of witchcraft (*Pharmakeia*) in the list of the works of the flesh. In the apocalyptic literature, the same word employed by Paul is also used to indicate the art of witchcraft. Those who involve themselves in this art are referred as already consigned to the lake of fire, they are excluded from the city of God (Rev.22:15)

The biblical position in regard to witchcraft and sorcery arises from a recognition of the reality of witchcraft and sorcery, and of the fact that it has its source in the devil. This recognition places Christians on their guard against approving, and condoning the practice of witchcraft and sorcery.

This attitude of disapproving the art of magic does make Christians to worry and less ready to dismiss out of hand alleged cases of witchcraft.

However, with the coming of the missionaries to Africa, in the wake of the western imperialism, and a supposed enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the reality of mystical power was rationalised and many people maintained that there were no witches. Consequently, any one who was accused of witchcraft ran to a mission house or to the colonial government for protection.

In regard to this issue the attitude of the church was no less than that of the colonial government with those who were suspected of witchcraft. Subjects victims were subjected to certain ordeals, through which, it was believed, the innocent would pass unhurt. A few illustrations of the treatment meted to those suspected of witchcraft will clarify the point of cruelty which the church did well to prevent.

For instance a client or victims of witchcraft would be exposed to severe punishments, such as hanging to death, be shot with poisonous arrows to death, separated from his family and instructed to live in the forests alone, cast from the society and prohibited from even visiting his or her own family.

It was mainly because of this inhuman treatment inflicted upon persons accused of witchcraft, that the church offered them protection. However, the church declared belief in witchcraft as heretic. As a result of this reaction against the practice and the belief in witchcraft the missionaries who came to Kambaland, as far as they were concerned, were not prepared to consider the question of mystical powers, whether or not the person accused of it was guilty of the offence or not. This attitude of missionaries towards mystical powers explains why Christ in Kamba land has never transformed the inner self of the Kamba's.

Hence, many of the Kamba People who adhered to their traditional religions regarded the church as defender of witches, who to their view were very anti-social persons, and detrimental to the society, even if they benefited their secret society.

The scriptural teaching on mystical powers is firmly built upon divine revelation in both the Old Testament and the New testament. In the Acts of the Apostles Elymas the magician is rebuked as “the son of the devil and enemy of all righteousness”(Acts13:6-12).

The Gospel on arriving in Ephesus, the magical charms and medicines of the converts were burned and destroyed. All these events and happenings have made sorcerers to be regarded as those who are specifically excluded from the holy city, the new Jerusalem and the kingdom of God (Rev.21:8). This exclusion of mystical power and practitioners possessors is not only limited and strictly tied to the Gospel teaching, but also finds its place in the Kamba people.

The scriptures forbid the use of all mystical power, whether this mystical powers is socially acceptable or unacceptable. Whether this mystical power is purported for the good of the people or for harm, personal gains, or for the benefit of the community. As Paul states in his letter to the Galatians, that:-

the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are pain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal.5:17-21).

This non-recognition and non-acceptance of mystical power sounds correct but on the other hand it leaves some gaps unfilled. Gaps such as the effects brought about by white or good magic. The major claim of non-acceptance is that, all mystical power is not

pleasing before the eyes of God, and as a result those who embrace Christianity are greatly warned on resorting to the use and possession of mystical powers, for any help whatsoever.

The above protest on mystical powers has its origin in the Old Testament where the practice, use and possession of mystical power is greatly challenged and levelled as evil.

The catholic Catechism, teaches that “all practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them of one’s service and have a supernatural power over others, even if this were for the sake of restoring their health- are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming some one, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible.”¹² Thus, the theological position of the Catholic church is that witchcraft and allied practices are evil and inhuman. The devil is real. His disciples are actively harassing the children of God. He and his disciples have to be resisted and indeed fought; hence the need to put on the armour of God. Only that which is real and exists can be truly resisted and fought. The evil is however, not to be fought and resisted with his own weapons of force and brutality, but with faith, prayer and the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit.

However, as already indicated above, the non-recognition of the reality of witchcraft and sorcery, by the Christian faith has given birth to a theology which does not take the devil seriously into account especially in the African Church. It is the product of the age of reason, which attempted to reason out the existence of both devil and the belief in witchcraft. The modern theological approach to the problem of evil forces in Africa, and specially by African theologians is different. It goes back to the biblical recognition of the subjective and objective reality of the devil and of the evil emanating from him. Hence,

¹² *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (1994) 499-500

theologians owes much to the study of mystical powers, especially the African theologians because this phenomena is widely experienced in many African societies. It has also led to poor reception of faith among African believers.

For in its most celebrated impulse, mystical powers work toward the abolition of the good which was initially intended by the Creator, and in attaining its celebrated effects, it waters down the good of its possessors, the victims to whom it is intended, the society's social structure, the order of relating, and generally it inflicts fear and insecurity in all the spheres of a given community.

This shows that mystical powers is "a kind of penumbra of human wickedness, an in-born preternatural power to harm and kill enjoyed for its own sake"¹³ that is enjoyed for its evil and selfish nature.

Just as the Bible does regard mystical powers, as powers that opposes the kingdom of God, even the African and more especially the Kamba view hold the same position. For at all cost mystical powers are seen as enemies of that which is good. The good comes from God and he is good in its totality. Hence, any thing which works to counteract this good, is in opposition to God, not by its effects but by its very nature.

¹³ A. Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctors, An Approach to Healing and wholeness*, (1985) 95

CHAPTER FOUR

PASTORAL APPROACH TO MYSTICAL POWERS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Having seen the nature, effects and impact of mystical powers, on the life, and faith of African communities and in a deep way among the Kamba community of Kenya, and the biblical perspective on these powers, let us now see how mystical powers can be approached pastorally. In dealing with the pastoral approach to mystical powers, it is good for us to first understand the deep meaning of culture. For any pastoral has to be done in a given cultural context. It is good to keep in mind that it is at the pastoral level, where the culture of a given people encounters the Gospel and the vice versa.

In the book of Acts of the Apostles serious questions arose when the Gentiles began to enter the church by thousands. This entry of non-Jews into the way (the church) provoked the first church council. (Acts 15). This council dealt with and answered questions that arose from missionary out reach of the early church.

The above paragraph seems to affirm that we can preach, teach, broadcast and handout traditions, without having to deal with the new converts. But when people are converted into a given system, or trend of thought and life, we are faced with numerous questions and decisions. For instance, in Africa with the coming of the gospel of Christ many questions have been in the air. Questions like, can African converts into the gospel faith keep several wives? Should they offer libation to their Ancestors? What should they do about their old religious customs, rituals and beliefs? Should they in their good conscience carry on with their songs, dances, rites, symbols or do these have non-Christian connotations?

Most of the above questions deal with the relationship between the gospel and human cultures. From the previous chapters we have seen that the belief in mystical powers forms and saturates the entire life of the African people, and in a special way so to say the Kamba community. For as we have seen it is useless to communicate to a traditional Mkamba without citing something on the impact of mystical powers. This is because mystical powers make and form their lives, beliefs and way of living. This means to speak of a certain Nazarene who was the son of God the most high would land on deaf ears, unless one speaks of the power of this man's magic, witchcraft, sorcery and how it inflicted fear and insecurity on his enemies and the society at large. How his art of divination was revered, honoured, respected and produced the best results amongst his clients. For it is only in a such line of thought one would reach the heart of a traditional Mkamba, and find a listening ear. This is because their whole life project is directed and guided in the name of mystical powers right from birth to the day of burial and after burial.

Lack of the above understanding will always support the synodial statement of the Bishops that, many African converts have Christian face during the day and that of their traditions during the night. This practice has made the gospel a white washed tomb in many African communities including my beloved Kamba community. Looking at the reasons behind this form of *acting the faith*, I found that the converts from this community do not find solutions to their own problems in the gospel ground, but do find fulfilment even to their long term problems in the belief and practice of mystical powers.

One might be prompted to say that the gospel is more mysterious than any other given power in this world and the next, for it is not the word of a mere human person but the word of God, who transcends all that is even the mystical power practitioners. Here the

question is not about the mysteriousness of the gospel, but is, why it does not find a resting place in the hearts and life of the Kamba people.

There might be many factors which may contribute to the above phenomenon, but the most re-owned ones are, evangelization, theory and praxis, dialogue with the traditional religious core, western mask of the gospel, and poor participation.

I will show how each of these problems has degraded the reception and the acceptance of the gospel among the Kamba community, but before we jump into the above let us have a look of what the gospel did to the Kamba culture, for this poses the major problem.

It is very unfortunate for one to learn that when the gospel came first to Kamba-land like in many other places in Africa, it posed a strong negation to all local rites and rituals of worship. It refuted them as pagan, evil and inhuman. The missionaries who brought this good news, did not understand the culture of the people neither the fact that the gospel has no culture. Why do I say that the gospel belongs to no culture? This is because the gospel is a self-revelation of God. It is God's revelation of Himself, His acts and deeds to all people. However, it must be understood and expressed within cultural forms and structures. There is no way one can communicate it a part from human thought, patterns and language.

Moreover, God has chosen to use human beings as the primary means for making Himself known to all His creatures. Even when he chose to reveal Himself to the world, He did so most fully by assuming the form of a human being, who lived within the context of human beings and a particular culture.

To understand this relationship, which ought to exist between the gospel to the human cultures, let us have a close look of what cultural patterns encompasses.

5.1 CONCEPT OF CULTURE.

Culture as such is an ordinary English term that has been given many interpretation and meaning according to the field of its application. For instance, when I say that Frank is a *cultured* person. All I mean is that Frank behaves in a *civilized* way. When we use the term this way we are equating it with the customs of the elite members of a given class or society. This is exactly what the missionaries did to African customs and practices, they saw them as uncivilized and inhuman. Since anthropologists use the term in a different and more technical sense, there is considerable debate among them as to how this term culture can be defined. Without entering into this debate and for my purpose, I will begin with a simple definition of this term.

I will for this respect define culture as the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feeling and values and their associated patterns of behaviour and products shared by a group of people who organise and regulate what they think, feel, and do. This definition may sound psychological but I feel that it will serve our purpose in this context.

5.2 DIMENSION OF CULTURE.

Having defined the term culture let us now unpack some of its meaning, dimension and their relation to the gospel. Before we empty our energy in the unpacking it is wise to note that culture relates to ideas, feeling and values. These three then form the dimension of culture.

A. HEURISTIC DIMENSION

This dimension deals with the knowledge shared by members of a given group or society. It enables and encourages communication and community life. Without it both

communication and community life are impossible. Knowledge puts together people's experience and forms a system of understanding between them. It tells the people what exists and what does not exist.

Cultural knowledge transcends categories used in sorting out reality. It includes all the images, descriptions, assumptions and beliefs we make about reality, nature of the world and how it works. It provides us with the basic ingredients of our thoughts and we find it impossible to break away from its grasp.

Most of this influence is almost implicit and we are not aware of it. This knowledge is preserved in many ways depending on the culture of the people. In the west it is stored in written form, while in Africa it is preserved in form of stories, drama, dances, rituals, poems, songs, riddles, proverbs, and other forms of oral tradition that can be easily remembered.

The above distinction of oral and elite societies is of vital importance to any mission activity today. Since missionaries saw themselves as literate people, they have and often misunderstand oral societies and their forms of communication. Consequently they conclude that the most effective way to plant churches in the mission field is to teach people how to read and write. This education is good and important but least in the life of the people. It is like dressing in new clothes, without having a bath. As Jesus puts it, it is like putting new wine in old skins, for people do not have to read and write to become Christians.

B. AFFECTIVE DIMENSION

Culture also includes people's attitudes, notions of beauty, models of dressing, likes and dislikes, and ways of entertainment or expression of sorrow. Members of a certain

society learn to express the above in different ways. The Akamba express this under a self-control discipline that is guided by calmness.

Some religions apply meditation, reflection, mysticism and drugs in order to achieve inner peace. Others stress on ecstasy, which is achieved through songs, dances and self-torture. In short cultures vary greatly in how they deal with the emotional side of human life. Emotions also play a great role in human relationships. Through them we communicate love and hate, and other attitudes.

C. EVALUATIVE DIMENSION

Each culture is blessed with a number of values by which it judges human relationships. For human relationships are either moral or immoral. This dimension helps us to separate truthfulness from falsehood, right and wrong. Thus, each culture has its own moral code and its own defined sins. This moral code helps the society in judging some acts as righteous and others as immoral. Each culture also has a set of its highest values and defined goals. For example, the Akamba have a highest regard in propagation and the preservation of life.

After looking at this three important aspects of culture let us have a look at how the gospel relates with all these dimensions.

5.3 GOSPEL AND CULTURE

It is worthy noting that every good missionary should have the three dimensions of culture in mind in his or her work, for the gospel has to do with all of them.

At the heuristic level, the gospel has to deal with knowledge and truth. This level calls for the understanding of biblical and theological foundation about God. The gospel

also takes with itself the affective dimension of culture. It includes feelings. For example, we feel and experience awe and mystery in God's presence, shame and guilt for our sins, comfort in the company and fellowship of God's people.

The gospel too, deals with values and objectives. In the synoptics Jesus proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God, in which righteousness is the rule and norm.

All these dimensions of culture are essential in the conversion ministry. Through them we need to know that God is the creator of all that which comes into existence, but this knowledge alone is not enough. We too need to have affectionate feelings toward Him, but still this is not enough. Both our knowledge and feelings about God must lead us to worship, submission and total reverence to Him. Thus, they must lead us into full communion with God. They should lead us to full discipleship and produce in us the fruits of the spirit.

The problem with our missionaries is that they tend to work under the cognitive level, which involves the knowledge of the Bible and theology. In their preaching and teaching this aspect is clearly reflected. This only emphasises on information and reason.

They often fail to understand the importance of feelings and attitudes in the everyday lives of many people. Hence, we must present and teach the truth in the gospel in a way that will encourage people to respond to it, not because they are rationally persuaded, but because they are freed from fear and clothed with experience of forgiveness and joy in salvation. This will actually reflect the phrase 'good news'.

Having looked at the aspects of culture and their relationship with the gospel, let us now go a step further and see what went wrong as it regards the response to the gospel among the Akamba community. It is true that the gospel and the church preaches on freedom. Not only any form of freedom but human freedom. Stressing on this point St.

Paul affirms convincingly that, its only the gospel not the law that as missionaries we are sent to preach. A life of freedom as opposed to compulsion that we must belief. However, "almost everywhere in the past the church has tended to be over authoritarian, but this is particaulary true in the missions."¹⁴ This method of preaching dresses off human freedom, which is the greatest gift God has given to men and women of all ages. This authoritarian outlook of the church has harmed the deepest levels of Kamba culture, and its fundamental beliefs and values.

This form of preaching has harmed the reception of faith among the Akamba society and how it can be repaired. To show this harm, I place my point of study in the diocese of Machakos.

Machakos diocese was evangelised by the Holy Ghost Fathers, who laid the foundation of the gospel message in its absoluteness and superiority, as it was the order of the day. Since, then many people live in the faith of the gospel, though not to its demands and obligations as we have seen in the general introduction. For now, and then we have cases of Christians who have sought refuge or guidance in the traditional rituals and rites, and especially of mystical powers. But with inculturation and the church's review on her missionary activity, many are embracing the faith, making it their own and developing it more and more to suit their daily lives. This process is helping this community to embrace the faith despite its notorius belief and trust in the use and practice of mystical powers. In showing how this process is being developed in my local church, I will note down all the possible signs which will enable us to see its impact on the life and faith of the people. Signs such as the new way of doing and understandig theology. Signs found in the sharing communities and espeically in the small Chrsitians Communities which have been well

¹⁴ Adrian Hastings, *Church and mission in modern Africa*, 1965.

established in the diocese, thus, theology as praxis. This will be supported by the dialogue with the religious core of culture, which also finds its proper field in the small Christians communities. From the outcome of this dialogue the local church is now busy striving herself from the colonial mask of the western culture, thus, the removal of the colonial mask and the western culture leading to self-identity. Towards the re-discovering of the local church, which for long has been fused in the trends of western culture. Then, the major shift from the western mentality of evangelisation as conversion to collaborative ministry, the new agents of this form of evangelisation, and the new outlook of mission as mission to mission.

A. THEOLOGY AS PRACTICE

Theology is arising from the reflection on present Christian action that goes on in shared praxis groups (Small Christians communities). For when a group of people reflect critically on present historical experience in the light of the Christian vision they are doing theology. For it is the faith of a community reflected in light of experience and not from a group of scholars isolated from the community to reflect on the communities behalf. Hence, instead of scholars informing the faithful, the local faithful are informing the experts.

This is contributing much on the ongoing faith life of the Christian community, for they now have the gospel message as their own as developing on its impact on their whole life, this falls with the Vatican II teaching, in which the mother church exults and encourages the move from theological foundations to anthropological foundations, and has true mission as that springing up from the human nature¹⁵ and bringing into fullness the

¹⁵ AD Gentes no. 7-8

values in the peoples culture, purifying and bringing them up into perfection for the glory of God. In this the local church sees mission from a completely new approach and attitude. An attitude which starts from below. For mission is never destruction, but taking up in fresh building. Bringing into fullness whatever good is found in the hearts, rites and customs of the people. This has called for dialogue with the religious core of culture.

B. DIALOGUE WITH THE RELIGIOUS CORE OF CULTURE

“We cannot possibly dialogue with or witness to people if we resent their presence or the views they hold”¹⁶. For dialogue as such is the continuous encounter and transformation of the cultural values by the gospel. Which is unlike the past, taking a deep respect, esteem and discernment on the people’s worldview along with their religious core. Something which had been neglected and taken for granted in the past. For in the past adaptation in Machakos diocese was characterized by a negative disposition toward the local religious practices, which have a strong foundation on the power of mystical powers. Powers which for long had survived and served the religious quest of the people. This in itself separated the local culture from its religiosity motives.

It is and has been disastrous for the church to shy from their religious core (belief and practice of mystical powers) and occupy itself with the socio-cultural elements or replace it with aggressive way as it did formerly by claiming indigenous religious practices as absolutely evil and pagan.

¹⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, 1991, 483.

C. REMOVAL OF THE WESTERN CULTURE.

The local church of Machakos is continuously finding its expression in the local culture. This involves the assimilation and expression of the gospel in languages, symbols, categories, and a theology proper to the culture, an idea and aspect which of past was neglected and brought much problem because the gospel was seen as immutable and absolute while culture as variable and relative. As such faith is now viewed as the gospel as understood and expressed by culture. Hence, the Bible has been translated into the local language to enable the Christians to read and digest its authority clearly. It is now exposed to the eyes of the faithful who in former years had no access to it, for it was seen as a tool for the ordained ministers only. The work of the faithful was only to listen to it, without even questioning its burning issues and teachings.

D. REDISCOVERING OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Young churches and especially the local church of Machakos are striving towards a more authentic response to the gospel message through re-interpreting and re-expressing of their Christian faith. This response is marked by wakening of their cultural identity, which has been trembled on by evangelisation. Though political and economical factors contributed but worse was the down looking upon their dignity and identity through suppression of their indigenous culture and imposition of foreign one. In Machakos as it were, in other places in Africa, inculturation implied westernisation in socio-cultural aspects. This led to deculturation and alienation of the natives from their religious values, experiences and cultural life. In short it meant doing away with all their mystical power practices. This reaction made many people cultural orphans and traitors. Hence,

inculturation in the modern perspective involves dealing with those Christian who have been uprooted from their culture. Helping them to discover their identity, for it treasures one's sense of belonging and dignity. To attain this the local church is looking back and cherishing its native heritage. It is restoring to the natives or the local community their rightful traditions and reintegrating and transforming them in the light of Christ. For I am convinced that unless this is achieved Christianity will never and cannot become cultural, that is part and parcel of daily life. For faith though not cultural I am strongly convinced that it can only have an expression within culture, where it develops and touches the people as they are.

E. SHIFT FROM CONVERSION

With inculturation, the local church is facing a shift of emphasis from conversion, whereby, the local church was regarded as a batch of pagans who needed quick conversion. This is changing to the local situation and context, which has been overlooked for many years. Vat II, emphasis on the local church has already highlighted on this direction, and puts it clearly that the universal church finds its true existence in the particular churches¹⁷. Something, which the local church is taking seriously, and has moved her to realise inculturation in a deeper sense. Thus, inculturation as comprising of more than just culture in the traditional or anthropological sense, but as involving the holistic aspects of the context, that is, social, economic, political, religious and educational. To accomplish this the local church is greatly involved, with various groups, such as justice and peace commission, catholic women association and youth teams among others. She is laying great emphasis on

¹⁷ Lumen Gentium No. 23

humanity as such, not on the point of conversion, but on the promotion of decent human life and changing of the oppressive structures.

F. COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

Formerly the church was seen as the supreme authority, in which the ordained ministers directed everything and were everything and the rest were seen as recipients. This has really endangered the growth of the church. With the flourishing idea on collaborative ministry a deep awareness of the church as a communion of people is gaining much glory especially in the local church. A voice which calls for the “recognition of the unique experience of others and the realisation that no one person possess all the answers”¹⁸. A voice which invites for “a dynamism of exodus for all of us”¹⁹ laying much emphasis on declecalization of the church and advocates for deep ministerial communion among all pastoral agents. Thus, a new outlook on the clerical authority to democratic praxis “which draws together, the variety of gifts women and men put at the service of the kingdom”²⁰. For Christ came to serve not to be served. Hence, the local church its striving herself slowly from the rigid authority and over control linked with the sacramental ministers to this idea of Christ. Hence, there is more involvement of the laity into the ministry, with a new understanding of authority as in the hand of the people, and not in the hands of the ordained ministers. A noticeable ascend of women into the life of the church with most of the non-ordained ministers being women plus a continuous strive to break through the clericalism mentally and exercise of authority. Thus, the move, “from ministry as the monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God,

¹⁸ Pierli F., ‘*Collaborative Ministry*’, *Tangaza Occasional Papers*, 2003, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 10

²⁰ David J. Bosch, 467

ordained as well as non-ordained”²¹. For “the church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy”²². An idea which invites each member “to collaborate in the work of the gospel, each according to his opportunity, ability, charism and ministry”²³.

G. NEW AGENTS OF PROCLAMATION

“In all earlier models of proclamation it was the western missionaries who either induced or benevolently supervised, the encounter between Christian faith and the local cultures”²⁴. With the modern time the church is viewed as pneumatological. That is, as “a dwelling place of God in the spirit” (Eph 2:22). Hence, the local church is continuously exposing herself to a listening life. A life of “discovering the presence of God’s word and spirit among people, a presence which has preceded the missionary. In this the light of the gospel can continually illuminate the signs of the time to manifest the language which is to be used by one who proclaims the gospel here and now”²⁵. Through this light the local church furthers and brings to the lives of the people, the values of the kingdom of God, under the guidance of the Holy spirit who is the missionary per excellence. “For it is not the church that has mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church”²⁶. This has given another outlook in the vision and practice of mission. A vision whereby proclamation is seen as taking route from the local church other than from the point of view of the missionaries. Hence, a growing sense of dialogue between the gospel and culture: taking place in the growth and

²¹ Ad Gentes No. 21

²² Lumen Gentium No. 12

²³ David J. Bosch 453

²⁴ Lumen Gentium No. 12

²⁵ Gadium et Spes No. 28

²⁶ Bosch J. David, *Transforming Mission* 1991, 391.

development of the people, under "the spirit of God, who with wondrous providence directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth"²⁷

H. MISSION TO MISSION

The local church "should be left free to grow and mature as local churches, taking responsibility also for their task of evangelisation"²⁸. A fact which rises from the former methods which fed and pumped the local church with models of church institution that have hindered the natural growth of such institutions locally. This calls for a new age of mission: whereby the local church is called and sent to bring the gospel to its surrounding milieu and to the entire world.

The local church is then, moving from the notorious understanding of mission as 'sending' and 'receiving' to mission as getting involved; that is doing mission. An understanding, where every baptised is seen and understood as a missionary. For the local church is not completely empty in its traditional religious core but "have something original and important to offer all: their sense of salvation and liberation, the richness of their peoples religiosity, the experience of the basic ecclesial communities, their flourishing diversity of ministries, and their hope and joy rooted in the faith"²⁹. This idea of sending and receiving is also dying and aging, partly because of the rise of many vocations. A situation which helps and instills "the conviction that all are mission-sending as well as mission-receiving churches"³⁰. Now we have a number of local ministers, both ordained and lay who are carrying out special missionary activities through which they appropriate the local culture. For the church is seeing mission as response to human needs, that is, as

²⁷ Gadium et Spes No. 26

²⁸ Jenkison W., and O'sullivan, Trends in Mission 1991 389.

²⁹ Ibid., 389.

³⁰ Ibid., 408.

buond up in human nature and inspiration, moreover, mission as worked from below and not from above as in the past. As Vat II says “in manifesting Christ, the church reveals to men their true situation and calling, since, Christ is the head and exemplar of the renewed humanity, imbued with that brotherly love, sincerity and spirit of peace to which all men aspire”³¹. This will enable the Faithful to understand that the gospel faith is from their own efforts and as teachers of this faith they are obliged to transmitt it to all coners of their lives and the world.

The above shows how the local church was rooted its heritage and how it is striving to relive its lost cultural trends and customs. It is my conviction that when the above is attained the local church will enjoy a theology and faith of its own efforts. A theology and faith that will cleanse it from its dorminant stand and beliefs which are erroneous and inhuman. She will attain her lost hope in the gospel, love and unity among its members, that is lost by the belief and impact of mystical powers, and their practice. For mystical powers as such leads to division, disharmony and hatred among its practitioners and their victims. Hence, unless one goes deep into the culture of the Kamba people, he or she will never get the effects and the belief laid on the practice of mystical powers by this society. For as we have seen mystical powers surround the culture of the Kamba people and forms their pattern of thought, relating and religious views. As such mystical powers give the solution of all misfortune and success within the Kamba community, for their is nothing that transcends their belief in them. In fact every event is explained in relation to mystical powers, starting from the most simple event like headache to the most complicated events, like death, barrenness and drought.

³¹ Ad Gentes No. 8

CHAPTER FIVE

6.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION

As we have seen in our study of mystical powers, the Kamba society has believed in the mystical powers of magic, witchcraft, sorcery and divination since time immemorial. They have not only exercised this belief in mystical, but have also found in it solutions for life's fortunes and failures and much more, they have sought refuge in these powers.

The Kamba's are not alone in the fear and adoration of mystical powers for among many African communities, in spite of their diversity and dissimilarity in cultures they do have a similarity in the belief and practice of mystical powers. Hence, underlying their diversity, difference, and culture there is a fascination for mystical powers. This fascination in mystical power that is not only limited to the Kamba community, but stretches to cover man's nature has and continues to be a great challenge to the society, and the Christian faith or the gospel of Christ in many African communities. One can even be tempted to call it a chronic virus, that is gradually killing the society.

As such mystical powers have become sources of division, hatred, and fear among the Kamba community. They have caused much harm to the unity, peace, and love of the people. Mystical powers have also left many Kamba's without families, friends and neighbours, for no one is ready to associate with a named witch.

However, some practices of mystical powers as we have seen have socially and publically been accepted in this society. Powers such as good magic, which counteracts the black magic, and herbalists practitioners, especially the true herbalist.

The Church since its implantation in Kamba-land has had a negative approach to the belief and practice of mystical powers among the Kamba society. It regarded this belief and practice as evil and pagan. Hence, as a result those who practice this art go through the

most painful purification process, sometimes lasting a considerable time in order to be incorporated in the church. Likewise those who get to be incorporated into the church and carries with them this practice suffer from the pain of exclusion and excommunication.

However, in all these attempts to cleanse the belief and practice of mystical powers among the Kamba society, it is good to note that true cleansing, cannot be attained by exclusion or excommunication, for the suffering of others cannot be experienced without personal suffering. Thus, for the church to understand and help in fighting this belief in mystical powers, she has to get involved with the life, customs and experiences of the people. Moreover, one who has never been ill cannot realize the pain, humiliation, and the helplessness of a sick person. Likewise one who has never been involved in the practice, belief, life, and experience brought about by mystical powers cannot imagine the feelings of instability and insecurity caused by this belief and practice. Similarly a heart that has never been weighed down with bitterness has no idea of what is endured by those despised, deserted or starved of love. This is the kind of life experienced by a society that is ruled by the belief and practice of mystical powers.

True enough, there is need for prudent discussion on mystical powers that has to involve the church and the Kamba society. For as we have already seen mystical powers forms the Kamba's way of life. This life is not healthy, for it has been infused with many sentiments, which include, pain, hatred, disunity and fear, due to their belief and practice of mystical powers. These sentiments has led to a lack of harmony and tremendous fear among members of this society and even of strangers. Lack of harmony has brought about torn relationships and above all has opened the doors of sin. For through man's complicity the devil becomes the king of the world.

To root out this belief and practice in the Kamba society, the agents of evangelisation ought to set a brave fight against it. This fight should begin by first putting on the strong man (Christ) who takes possession of the devils stronghold. This should be followed by putting on the Kamba culture to its deepest heights. For through Christ (the good news) the Kamba's will be purified, healed, helped, and above all rescued from the evil powers of magic, witchcraft and sorcery. This fight should be approached with a positive attitude, and not negatively as the former agents of evangelisation did. It should be approached with the attitude of love as opposed to law. For there is always a transforamtion of suffering when it is allied with some love and joy.

For it is only the pure Gospel of Chryst with the full teaching of God by the power of the Holy Spirit that can remove the evil of mystical powers, and through it cause people to trust and obey God fully from their hearts. To attain this one has to go back to the cultural roots of the people, understand their way of life and work with them towards a better world view.

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