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Magic, witchcraft and sorcery in contemporary Africa
and elsewhere
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“Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”
Macbeth, IV, 1.

Abstract

Following an overview of recent field data, particularly from Africa, the critical review of the canon established by classical anthropology on magical thought (Frazer, Durkheim, Evans-Pritchard) brings out some errors of assessment about the contents of the inclusive categories (good magic, sorcery and witchcraft). But this confrontation does not challenge the deep truth of Marcel Mauss and Sigmund Freud analysis: magic in general clearly reveals the omnipotence of ideas.

Two remarks can serve as an introduction to this essay: 1) the present discussion is on beliefs in magical phenomena and not on the reality of the supernatural, which is another matter; 2) the justification of this subject (as a choice for this seminar) is the fact that, among supposed magic phenomena, witchcraft in particular (accusation of witchcraft, and not witchcraft *per se*), instead of declining with modernisation, is on the contrary increasing in Africa, and within Africa, particularly in the areas affected by serious human problems like civil wars, social crisis, epidemics, etc.

One of the aims of anthropology is to propose explanations for human behaviours regarded as irrational by representatives of other cultures. That is the way that we will follow. After an overview of the approach to magic in classical anthropology, I will put these theories to the test of more recent field data.

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1. Definitions

There is a deficiency of vocabulary in the European languages regarding supernatural practices. The French language offers only two words. The first word, *magie*, is both generic (including all the supernatural phenomena) and specific, meaning good magic. The second word, *sorcellerie*, is synonymous with black magic. English is richer in vocabulary than French and can provide three or four words—magic (generic); good magic (which is good and learnt as well); sorcery (learnt black magic) and witchcraft (innate black magic). In the middle of the last century, the British anthropologist John Middleton suggested the word ‘wizardry’ to include sorcery and witchcraft, but this proposal was neglected by researchers (Middleton and Winter, eds. 1963). On the other hand, as will be verified in the following remarks, the African languages use more words than the European to qualify magical facts and practices.

If we consider magic in its general meaning, including beliefs, behaviours and practices (that is to say good and black magic, divination, witchcraft, shamanism and taboo), we will define magic by the principle that it is possible to undertake an action with means (generally occult) which conflict with common experience. The famous French anthropologist Marcel Mauss noted with a particular clear-sightedness that, in any magical expression, the universal determinism of the natural facts is completed or replaced with an intentional agent (Mauss, 1972: 18–24). Starting from this observation, we can infer a first conclusion—that magical thought does not believe in phenomena without cause. But, **it endows the cause with an intentional character**; it attributes to the cause a conscious will. Now, if we talk about intentional cause or initial cause, we are nevertheless in contradiction with one of the main scientific principles, which is the necessity of a previous cause. The intentional cause gives magic its supernatural character. We will discover later that if the magical fact is not a divine act, it is **like** a divine act because it has its cause within itself.

A small half dozen of authors have participated for little more than a century in enlightening the modern theory of magic. The main outlines of this general corpus can be stated as following:

1.1 Natural determinism

All societies acknowledge the existence of a natural determinism, even if individuals are generally unable to explain it. We can quote Evans-Pritchard in his famous study on witchcraft and magic among the Azande: "*Zande belief in witchcraft in no way contradicts empirical knowledge of cause and effect. The world known to the senses is just as real to them as it is to us*" (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 73).

1.2 Determinism

In some specific conditions (psychological or sociological, or both, these conditions remaining unknown to the first analysts, but which will later be discovered by Freud), the conviction emerges in the mind of some persons that determinism is not absolute. Within the natural world, intentional agents intervene: non-human spiritual agents, but whose behaviour is similar or analogous to that of humans. According to the circumstances, and depending on their specific strength, the intrusion of intentional agents leads either to a single inflexion or to the complete disappearance of the determinism (for instance in case of metamorphosis, ubiquity, etc.).

The hypothesis of a simply partial diversion of determinism is the ordinary form of magic. This occurrence is strongly described by Evans-Pritchard:

We must understand therefore, that we shall give a false account of Zande philosophy if we say that they believe witchcraft to be the sole cause of phenomena. This proposition is not contained in Zande patterns of thought, which only assert that witchcraft brings a man into relations with events in such a way that he sustains injury (*Ibid.*: 68).

Evans-Pritchard adds:

It is the particular and variable conditions of an event and not the general and universal conditions that witchcraft explains. Fire is hot, but it is not hot owing to witchcraft, for that is its nature. It is a universal quality of fire to burn, but it is not a universal quality of fire to burn you. This may never happen; or once in a lifetime, and then, only if you have been bewitched (*Ibid.* 69).

This same difference between efficient cause and final cause is well explained by Max Gluckman:

For every misfortune, like every piece of good fortune, involves two questions: the first is "how" did it occur, and the second is

“why” it occurred at all. The “how” is answered by common sense empirical observations: the man died because he was bitten by a poisonous snake. But this does not explain “why” that man was bitten by that snake and at that time and place, and not by another snake at another time and place; or indeed why that man was bitten and not some other man altogether. Beliefs in witchcraft explain why particular persons at particular times and places suffer particular misfortunes—accident, disease...and so forth. Witchcraft, as a theory of causation, is concerned with the singularity of misfortune (Gluckman, 1956: 83–84).

We have to notice that the intentional causality does not act in an arbitrary way. Most often, magic action is supposed to be ruled by natural laws. In 1890, these laws were summarized by James Frazer in two famous formulas (Frazer, 1971: 14–15):

- *First:* every similar calls for a similar; or: an action on the similar is efficient on the similar; that is to say: an action on the copy (or on the replica) is efficient on the original. This type of magic, is what Frazer calls **homeopathic** magic. It allows the magician to act at distance on single copies or effigies. Example: you can kill your enemy if you prick a pin or a needle into a doll representing him.
- *Second:* two things which have been in contact act one to another, including when the contact has stopped. This means that a part of the thing which is separated from the whole can represent the whole. This second type of magic, Frazer calls **contagious** magic. It permits the magician to act on a whole thing if he acts on a single part of it. Example: you will kill your enemy if you can obtain even a small part of his body (nail clippings or hair); conversely, you will be protected against the lion if you carry a lion’s tooth or claw, etc.

If we follow Frazer, we can conclude for the time being that, regardless of the reservations presented above, there is an analogy between the magical conception and the scientific conception of the world.

1.3 The supernatural world

In many respects, the general picture given on the subject by Evans-Pritchard completes and systematizes the previous developments.

In the supernatural world, Evans-Pritchard upholds, five actions are intermixed:

Witchcraft represents an intrusion of the natural spirits into the world of culture. They disrupt its order and they spread evil and suffering. This intrusion is achieved through the agency of some humans who are surrounded—without knowing it—by nasty or malicious power and become their involuntary servants. Thus, witchcraft is both a psychological action and it is organic and hereditary. To gain control of it, it is not necessary to use medicines or to be initiated. The witch is the spirit itself (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 33).

On the opposite side of witchcraft, **good magic** is a reaction of defence by culture against threats or attacks from the forces of evil. Good magic acts by means of technical formulas or rituals and it needs initiation or apprenticeship. As it is working for the common good, it is socially recognised and can express itself publicly, even if the recipes remain secret.

Separate from witchcraft and good magic, black magic, or **sorcery**, is similar to the first in its intentions, and similar to the second in its origin and processes. It aims at evil and the destruction of others. But it is not a psychological action. It belongs to culture and, like good magic, needs initiation, technical means, tools and stratagems. However, as it is malevolent, it is also underhand and secret. It is enacted by people who try to guess the secrets of witchcraft. Who are these people? Evans-Pritchard says that some of them (perhaps the majority?) are corrupted or perverted good magicians (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 406–416).

In the space between nature and culture, the **taboo area** (Frazer calls it 'negative magic') is a set of behaviours, things or places which are not in accordance or in conformity with the usual order (which means that they are disturbed by mystic troublemakers or disruptive agents). For that reason, they must be avoided (Douglas, 1970: 54–72). There is, of course, a relationship between what is taboo and the concept of *mana* (as a universal mysterious force) which was put forward by Frazer (Mauss, 1972: 108–121).

Magic, witchcraft, sorcery and taboos describe a relationship between nature and culture and are located in a field of representation and action which is within that which we can call **immanence**. In contrast, the divine entity rules over the universal order, including nature and culture and controlling universal determinism. Between humans and the divine, there is a **transcendental** relationship which demands submission and respect on the part of humans. This defines the difference between magic (in general) and religion. On the one hand, power struggle, confrontation or negotiation between agents located at the same level (and which we can call ‘creatures’); on the other hand, pleas, supplications or thanksgiving from the human creature to the Creator of everything (Durkheim, 1975: 119–123). This main difference explains the mutual hostility, or at least suspicion, between respective representatives of religion and magic.

1.4 Compatibilities

Now, let us go back to an important observation that we presented above, that is to say the universal and amazing compatibility between acknowledgment of determinism and magical thought. Whatever society you consider, none will believe that magic is always present and is everywhere. In ordinary life, there is no magic for anybody. As a result of that, we have to discover the conditions which drive the magical machinery.

To solve this difficult problem, we have to come out of classical anthropological references and question Sigmund Freud. What is magical thought? asks Freud in 1903 (a few years after Frazer and the same year as Mauss). Magical thought, he says, is a psychological mechanism peculiar to every human. It represents a sort of disactivated potential. How is it activated? Freud answers: *“by the force of desire, or more specifically: by the force of unsatisfied desire; when human desires (or the obsessive worry to avoid a threat) do not find any outlet in the rational world of experience.”*

In 1903, Freud gives a first definition of magic which is borrowed from the British anthropologist Edward Tylor: *“Magic, he says, is a means of action on nature which is mistaking an ideal connexion for a real one”* (Freud, 1968 (1912): 83). Coming back to psychology, Freud seeks the roots of this confusion in the infancy of the individual, at a stage where the young child is not yet confronted with the principle of reality. During this period – called ‘narcissistic period’ by psychoanalysts—the child has unlimited desires. To satisfy them, he

creates illusory or false realities (*Ibid.*: 83–84). He is the victim of the power of his ideas. Referring to Frazer, Freud notices that this process follows some rules which are in fact the laws of language, or, more generally, the laws of symbolism (Freud *Ibid.*: 84–85, Jakobson and Halle 1956: 76–82) 1) **metaphor** (which Frazer calls "similarity" or "homeopathy", meaning to substitute one thing for another, or substitute a thing by a word); 2) **metonymy** (which Frazer calls 'contagion', meaning to substitute a thing by one of its parts). Conclusion: magic is a way (for the child) to create reality corresponding to unsatisfied desire. The child is like a divine creature, he creates reality with words.

At this stage of the demonstration, Freud adds a decisive complement. At the beginning, he says, the child ascribes to himself only the power of the thought. But later (in the stage which is called 'animist'), the child projects his own psychological organisation onto natural objects. He believes (and sometimes fears) that natural phenomena are in fact **events** produced by the will of other thinking beings. To communicate with these thinking beings, it seems logical to use language. Through magical formulas, magic speaks **their** language (which is not human language) to other non-human speakers (for instance: 'abracadabra' or 'open sesame'). Everybody will understand that, in this face-to-face, the magic formula is an act in itself. It is—as the linguists would say—performative. As we have already mentioned, in magic, man is like God; that is to say, words are acts (Favret-Saada, 1977: 21).

In his early research, Freud believed that magical thought was the exclusive prerogative of childhood, neurotic individuals, or also primitive people lacking the means of action on the natural world and unable to explain scientific causality. But he soon discovered that belief in the superior power of thought (or desire) survives in some circumstances in every adult, including in cultural contexts which promote a scientific conception of the natural world (Freud, 1968 (1919): 240). Magic, says Freud, is the universal sickness of Desire.

2. General theory

Now, we have to confront this endeavour to synthesize a general theory with more recent data from ethnographic surveys, particularly in Africa.

2.1 Immanence and transcendence

First, probably the easiest of the series checking: the validity, in the cultural facts, of conceptual opposition between immanence and transcendence. The ethnography, on this particular point, is not entirely uniform. In Africa, most ethnic groups acknowledge the distinction between the priest (who belongs to the ancestors' cult or religion) and the magician, either good or bad. Such is the case among the Gikuyu of Kenya who strictly separate the priest (*mũthuuri ya ukuru*), the good magician (*mũndũ mũgo*), and the witch (*mũrogi*).

Nevertheless, this distinction is not universal. Referring to Africa and the figure of the 'Magician King', Frazer already admitted the historical reality of a confusion between magic and religion. For instance, among the Yoruba of West Africa (Apter, 1992: 97–116), some goddesses are supposed to be magicians' mothers, and even witches or sorcerers' mothers (the information is not clear on this point). Elsewhere in Africa, the magician can request the intercession of the divinity. If we come out of Africa, and travel to far-east Asia or America, we meet the figure of the shaman, a medium between heaven and earth through animal spirits—magician and priest as well.

So, it seems that we can bring a first, critical revision to the anthropological theory. In some cases, God can come down from heaven to earth, onto the natural scene. He can also want or accept evil also. This interpretation is in conformity with the dogma of several great religions, including Christianity.

2.2 Witchcraft v. Magic

Second confrontation: the difference between witchcraft and magic (good or black). If we consider Africa, we can point to the fact that, everywhere, witchcraft is supposed to be an organic inheritance, but expresses itself through psychological means. Hence, technical means are not needed. Thus, witchcraft is effective among relatives, that is to say within the kinship, or sometimes—and with exception—between husband and wife.

However, the general association between witchcraft and evil or witchcraft and antisocial action is not confirmed in the ethnography. We have to develop this important point.

If we carry out a survey of witchcraft activity in Africa, we discover that its aim is to seize the vital force of others. Very often, this hold is metaphorically expressed by an act of manducation or cannibalism. The belief in a vital force peculiar to everybody and likely to be caught and devoured by harmful supernatural forces can be observed in many societies, including in Europe (Favret-Saada, 1977). In Africa, this force is acknowledged almost everywhere, not only among humans, but also among animals or beings in general (Tempels, 1949). It is not always easy to separate this force from the other components of the person (shade, double, soul, etc.). Within the Bantu area, different names are used to qualify the vital force: *tsav* among the Tiv of eastern Nigeria, *ke* among the Bamileke of Cameroon, *militi* among the western Congo, *ngere* among the Gikuyu of Kenya. There is a general consensus to think that this force lies inside the small intestine, sometimes in the form of tiny animalcules (this is in conformity with the description of witchcraft among the Azande by Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 21–39).

It is striking to point out that the moral orientation of the vital force is not assigned in advance. It seems that it can be used either for good or for evil (Augé, 1977: 109; de Heusch, 1971: 176). There is, inside the vital force, a destructive power. This power is not immediately opened to everybody. It is a potential which is activated either by initiation or by age, so much so that all the elders are endowed with it. Among the Gikuyu of Kenya, this destructive power is called *kírumi*. It can be used for self-defence. The *kírumi* is present among the unsatisfied natural entities. Under the name of *thahu* ("stain"), it affects humans guilty of transgressing taboos (Hobley, 1967: 32; Cagnolo, 1933: 134).

Three principles are present in the use of the vital force:

- The individual vital forces are unequal, including in terms of harm;
- The vital force belonging to an individual of high status is stronger than a vital force belonging to an individual of low status;
- In the use of vital force, an action on one part is similar to an action on the whole (metonymy).

The vital force has the property of leaving the body during sleep and then it can wander and grab other vital forces. This is why many people believe that an old man asleep could bewitch somebody else. A person who seizes another vital force will reinforce her own force (Devauges, 1977: 117). Conversely, a person whose vital force has been eaten is doomed unless a magician whose vital force is stronger can grab it. Some people (the Lari of Congo) believe that some witches trade in their supply of vital forces, particularly with Europeans.

It is important to notice (we will come back to this observation later) that, for many African peoples, a witch—regardless of his (or her) bad intentions—frequently possesses a vital force stronger than the average (Augé, 1977: 109). Conversely, a person—single person or magician—who possesses a superior vital force is able to resist the witches and even destroy them (Favret-Saada, 1977: 251).

How can we morally judge the use of the vital force? At first sight, the answer is quite simple. The destructive use of the vital force is legitimate or justified when it is socially empowered, or in case of self-defence. Therefore, the designation of ‘witch’ must be reserved for those people on the fringes of the law, that is to say using their vital force for stealing, swindling, killing or acquiring an illegitimate power. Hence, also another important conclusion: since the weapon of witchcraft—that is to say the destructive vital force—exists universally, over and above the person of the witch, this one is no longer the inhuman character described by the literature. It is when society is unable to remedy or correct the bad inclinations of some individuals that witchcraft, defined by use of destructive vital force with malevolent purpose, begins to be effective. One can explain in this way the fact that, for some people, the witch is not entirely responsible for his (or her) acts. For the Africans, as the French anthropologist Philippe Laburthe-Tolra writes, “*every human being bears in himself the original sin*” (1977: 1080).

On whom, finally, is the destructive power effective? We have already answered. It is inside the kinship or (by exception) within the couple (Hobley, 1967: 147). To enlarge the number of victims, witches make societies. With a system of criminal concessions and debts, witches are able to attack people outside their family.

Now, we have to consider the relationship between witchcraft and social or political power. In many African countries, it seems obvious to everybody that leading personalities and political chiefs

must be endowed with a strong and powerful vital force (which implies also other magical qualities like extra lucidity or clear-sightedness). We can check, first, that, at an infra-state level—within tribal societies—the elders are empowered to penalize misdeeds, or even misdemeanours, of the younger generation in operating their destructive power (Middleton, 1960: passim; Gluckman, 1965: 234–235; de Heusch, 1971: 172). Let us examine for instance, the case of the Gikuyu.

Among the Gikuyu, a spiteful action may be punished by using the *kírumi* (destructive power) under the form of a curse (Hobley, 1911). As it is a physical and moral manipulation of a member of the family by a single spell, the *kírumi* seems to correspond to the academic definition of witchcraft and it leads to the most serious misfortune called *múrimú* (often outbreak of incurable diseases). But, if we take a closer look to the facts, it appears there are at least two differences:

- The *kírumi* is socially justified as a familial penalty (abandonment of parents, refusal to pay bridewealth to the wife's parents, robbery without remorse, murder, sale of the ancestor's land, etc.);
- Its expression is public and not at all secret; the curse is a solemn act; it has to be pronounced aloud and the guilty party must be present.

After having examined the power of punishment held by the elders, let us look at the case of countries' rulers. In many African traditions, the sovereign, the king, the monarch—in spite of the fact that he must preserve public order and peace within the population—is supposed to be the possessor of witchcraft powers (Adler, 2004: 43). A few years ago, one of the former presidents of an East African country was, during his mandate, considered by some citizens to be a follower of the devil, that is to say a superior witch. After having travelled in a remote country of Eastern Asia, he was accused of causing many road and railway accidents through magic, in order to pay, in the form of human lives, the price of the medical treatment he had received from this country. According to other rumours, this president was the chief of a witches' society, whose aim was to pile up riches in exchange for human blood. The blood was from children belonging to poor families and whose throats were slit on a sort of sacrificial altar.

The relationship between witchcraft and power leads to another question: how does one become a witch? If we refer to the academic theory, the witch does not 'become' a witch. He (or she) was born like that. But, as we saw previously, at least for some people, there is—in a dormant state—a sort of universal witchcraft power, which grows with age, and, notably with the beginning of old age. We saw also that this power could be used either for justice or for evil. In other words, **there is witchcraft beyond witches**. Then, what is a witch? We can suggest now (for these people) that a witch is a person who, being endowed with a very strong vital force, is completely corrupted by evil. Therefore, we are led to another conclusion: if we distinguish witchcraft (which is practically everywhere) and witch (as a specialized and qualified function to practice and fulfill witchcraft), we can say that witches are almost necessarily initiated. Such is the case in many societies—contrary to the observations of Evans-Pritchard among the Azande. Such is the case, in particular, among the Gikuyu where the initiation of the *múrogi* (witch) is supposed to be the fact of super-witches of foreign origin (generally Kamba).

There are still a few more words to say about witchcraft and criminality. For many Africans (but also for other peoples around the world), there is a connexion between witchcraft and criminality, which does not mean that criminals are witches (Turner, 1968:49). We come round again to the distinction between witchcraft and witches. In Kenya, for instance, we can observe that, very often, a criminal is suspected by the mob to be filled by witchcraft. Is he (or is she) looked upon as a witch? Not necessarily. If we define, first, education as a means to destroy the animal in the human, and if, secondly, we regard witchcraft, or destructive vital force, as a resurgence of animal instincts, selfish and violent, we can maintain that a criminal, even if he (or she) uses non-magical means, is somebody filled by witchcraft because his (or her) education has failed. And, if this education failed, it is now too late to remedy it (Droz, 1999: 379–380).

In Kenya, and in other African countries of Bantu cultures, there is a very old and cruel custom of destroying witches when they are identified. They are shut up in a circular beehive (made from a segment of a big tree trunk) and burnt alive with the wax of the beehive before being rolled—like a tyre - from the top of a hill. There is an explanation for the fire: it destroys the soul and prevents any possibility of haunting or reincarnation (the same belief is widespread in Europe). We are all aware of the existence, in the same cultural area, of a horrible torment called 'mob justice' which often consists of

putting criminals (or sometimes suspects) inside old tyres which are then burnt. However terrible the process, the moral of the story is the following: in burning criminals, it is witchcraft which is being destroyed, and, in the eyes of the crowd, there is no other means to get rid of it.

2.3 Magic

We have talked mainly of witchcraft and witches. Now, let us talk especially about magic. There is a first point where all the ethnographic inventories converge in Africa—good magic is made to counter witchcraft (Evans-Pritchard, 1951:439). Other authors have specified that the aim of good magic is to destroy a harmful vital force whatever it is; human or animal (Hobley, 1967: 52; De Heusch, 1971: 171). Hence, the good magician is primarily a counter-sorcerer or a counter-witch (Evans-Pritchard gives details about the Azande). These duties are the same for the soothsayer or the seer—because the role of the soothsayer is to prevent, or at least identify, the threat of misfortune. For instance, among the Gikuyu, the *mündũ mũgo* can both practice divination (*ĩragũrĩ*) and erase a *thabu* or stain (the name of the ritual is *gũtabĩka*: “to vomit the evil”). In the case of bad predictions, he can give out magical prophylactics (*gĩthĩtu*).

Is a good magician able to commit evil? Here again, the ethnography confirms Evans-Pritchard (see also Gluckman, 1965: 233). There is no doubt that a good magician can possibly be evil or malevolent as we have seen previously. Without counting the fact that black magic—as a single technique or a recipe—can be subjected of a single trade, for instance in the guise of talismans. Then, it is up to the purchaser to decide on the use of the talisman, either to protect himself or to harm others. Everybody knows that in West Africa, for instance, all kinds of talismans are nowadays commonly used as defensive or offensive weapons at sporting events, commercial competition, electoral campaigns or civil wars.

Conclusion

As we mentioned in the introduction, witchcraft is increasing in several areas of Africa. If we consider the case of the rural Gikuyu of Kenya, many witnesses say that the increase in witchcraft accusations is connected to the crisis of these last few years. Ruin or, at the very least, impoverishment of coffee producers, drift from the land, loneliness of women and old people, unemployment of the youth, the rise of criminality, the Aids epidemic, etc., all these things are factors of anxiety and fright. It seems that witchcraft is involved in almost all misfortune: loss of the land or loss of a job, family conflict, illness or accident. Before any rational explanation, a person who fails in his or her business is normally assumed to be a victim of witchcraft.

If we question ordinary people, some of the interlocutors claim not to believe in witchcraft, but accuse the devil or finally end the conversation by telling stories of witches. We can give the example of a poor woman in a small village of Central Province. Wanjiru is about 40. She was born in another remote village from a blacksmith lineage. Although she attended school for a very short time, she knows how to read and write. She lives by making *ciondo* (traditional Gikuyu baskets) and, with her husband, cultivates some maize, coffee and vegetables on a very small piece of land. Nevertheless, she never lacks money. Several people know that this money comes from prostitution, which helps her to pay the school fees of her three children. But most people consider Wanjiru to be a witch. They say that she has been initiated by a master-witch with three other women of the village. This is what permits her to *enthrall* her husband and change him into a weak and feeble character, and finally produce his metamorphosis into a woman. For several months on end, the husband remained silent and numbed, as she sat in the doorway of his house. After that, he installed himself in the role of spouse, gardening, cooking and washing while Wanjiru was away from the home. This role-inversion lasted until the day a friend took the husband to a *múndú múgo* who released him from the spell.

The case of Wanjiru is the illustration of a situation that we can qualify as paroxysmal. If many neighbours are convinced that Wanjiru is a witch, it is probably because, suffering themselves in utter destitution and without hope of changing their life, they believe that every way out—even the most modest—is a manifestation of magic,

that is, of witchcraft, towards the majority who are kept in the background.

Whatever the interpretations of magic phenomena, we are then taken back to the reasons why its practice is today in full expansion. That is to say, an unlimited desire to escape misfortune and suffering on the one hand; unlimited desire for power on the other hand. Escape from reality or dream up an imaginary reality—magic and witchcraft are the enlighteners of adversity.

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