

UNDERSTANDING WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE DIGO MUSLIMS ALONG SOUTH COAST OF KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *The question of whether witchcraft is real or not has proven to concern many people especially in the coastal regions of Kenya. Among the people living along the coastal regions, witchcraft is a common practice. It is not known, however, why the people living in this region practice witchcraft, the types and forms of witchcraft they practise and how they practise them. This paper sought to examine the witchcraft practice among the Digo people, who are believed to have been the first to convert to Islam and that 99.9 % of them are Muslims. The quest revealed that despite being 99.9 % Muslims, Digo people, in part, still seek traditional methods of problem solving. It was also found that the Islamic religion did not provide for giving solutions to the problems faced by the Digo Muslims forcing them to 'Digonize' the religion and become Folk Muslims. The study therefore suggests ways through which Christianity can be incorporated so that Digo Muslims may see light and turn to Christ where they will get solutions to their problems without resorting to witchcraft. Sahih Muslim: In-book reference / Book 39, Hadith 56, Ibn 'Abbas reported Allah's Messenger as saying, "The influence of an evil eye is a fact; if anything would precede the destiny it would be the influence of an evil eye, and when you are asked to take bath (as a cure) from the influence of an evil eye, you should take bath"*

KEYWORDS: Witchcraft, Muslim, Digo, Culture, Mosque, Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

"Is witchcraft real?" This is a question that people often ask. This question implies doubt over the existence of witchcraft. As I was being served at the counter at one of the banks in Karen, I heard a man next to the counter opposite me firmly and strongly saying to the lady who was serving him, "witchcraft is real". The woman who was serving him asked, "How?" The man replied by giving a story of how his friend's car had been stolen last week. "Bees filled the car before he drove far. He was found unconscious, covered by the bees, but the car was intact. That was witchcraft", the man responded. I do not know how the story started, but at least, I heard that part of it.

When I was doing my research among the Digo Muslims, the Imam in my village graciously accompanied me and my husband. He introduced us to the villagers who did not know us well and helped with translation. From time to time, my husband would make appointments to interview the Imam outside the mosque. On one such occasion, on a Friday just before the time for the usual prayers, the Imam seemed reluctant to head into the mosque to lead the Friday prayers. I was concerned that the time had come and we were delaying him. I interrupted our interview and asked him, "Imam, are you not going for prayers in the Mosque? He responded, "No, not today". I asked him again, "Are the people not waiting for you?" He responded, "I have already instructed one of the young men to lead the prayers. We can continue with our interviews". We continued with the interviews until 4.30 pm.

On another occasion, we had a meeting with the same Imam on a Thursday. As we met, I saw about seven Digo people; men and women, going in one direction. The Imam stopped what he was telling us all over sudden and said, “there is a lot of witchcraft going on in this village”. I was surprised by his declaration and I asked him, “Imam, what do you mean by saying that there is a lot of *uchawi* (witchcraft) in this village? Do Muslims believe in witchcraft?” The Imam, seemingly surprised by my question responded, “All Digo people believe in witchcraft. You see these people passing! They are going to *Boma la Mzee* Msamiati (The homestead of Mr. Msamiati, not his real name). *Mzee* Msamiati is having lots of problem with his health. A *mchawi* (witch) planted *uchawi* (witchcraft) in his Boma and we have called a *Mganga* (witchdoctor) to come and uproot the witchcraft from Mzee Msamiati’s Boma. The people are waiting for me. They cannot begin until I arrive, so I cannot continue with you. I have to go right now. Can we meet tomorrow?”

Most of the Muslims and non-Muslims living in East African coast believe in witchcraft. In support of this Kim (2013) comments:

Both non-Muslim East Africans and Zanzibari Muslims believe that the supernatural power to harm others resides within the evil person (*mchawi*). It is traditionally believed in East Africa that the *mchawi* ‘may be born with evil power’ or that a person can acquire the power of *uchawi* (witchcraft) by becoming callously evil. In either case, the mystical power to harm is believed to be inherently part of the person’s nature. However, people who believe in this are not sure of the source of the destructive power in the *mchawi*. It is often ascribed indefinitely to a mystery. There are many different opinions, which hardly contribute to a unified theory. As Muslims, however, Zanzibaris believe that all *wachawi* (witches) attain their malignant power from *mashetani*, that is, evil jinn. A person may be born as a *mchawi*, but the source of his or her evil power still comes from *mashetani* (Kim, 2013, pp. 96-97).

This paper deals with understanding witchcraft among the Digo Muslims on South Coast of Kenya. The Digo Muslims are briefly described here and witchcraft in the Qu’ran, and in the Hadith is discussed. Reasons and effects of witchcraft are also discussed in this paper. Finally, suggestions for Christian response to witchcraft are presented.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

The Digo People of Coastal Kenya

The Digo people are counted among the so-called *Mijikenda* (nine tribes) people found along the South Coast of Kenya and Tanzania. The other eight tribes are the Duruma, Giriama, Chonyi, Jabana, Kombe, Rabai, Kauma and Ribe. However, the Digo people have the highest population of Muslims with very few Christians among them. According to Sesi (2003), the Digo had contact with Muslims as early as 1050-1150 C.E. However, this did not make the Digo practice Orthodox Islam (Kim, 2013, p. 179). Although the first Digo converted to Islam between the late 1840’s and early 1850’s, the movement to conversion did not gather momentum until the 1880’s (Sperling, 1970, p. 6; Sesi, 2003).

Among the nine tribes, Digo people are the only tribe that converted to Islam as a community (Trimingham, 1980, p. 39). Sesi (2003, pp. 77-78), supporting Hartnell (1969), comments that

Digo conversion to Islam was not necessarily through proper teachings of Islamic faith, but as a result of social and economic pressures among them. Therefore, the brand of Islam practised by Digo people is Folk Islam. This was affirmed by a District Commissioner (DC) in Mombasa in 1915 who reported to his senior on Digo laws and customs that the Digo people are folk Muslims. The district commissioner describing a headman in Nyika, his area of jurisdiction, indicated that the headman was “*Islam u kwa nguo*” [literally meaning Islam is just like a dress that can be removed or exchanged any time] and could always exchange his *kanzu* [Muslim men’s formal dressing] for a blanket from the government” (Letter from District Commissioner of Nyika to Provincial Commissioner of Mombasa, 1915 July). The headman was responding after being asked whether he was Mahomedan or traditional Digo.

There are about 330,000 Digo people in Kenya, out of which 99.9 % are Muslims. On the Tanzanian side, there are about 180,000 where 100% are Muslims (Joshua Project, 2013). However, “the domain of total synthesis” is highly pronounced among the Digo Muslims (Kim, 2009, pp. 177-178; Sesi, 2003, p. 77), meaning Digo people ‘Africanized’ Islam among them and that is what they practise.

Trimingham (1964) explains the process of Africanization of Islam as a process marked by three stages, including: germination, crisis, and gradual reorientation. These two cultures benefited from each other. Kim (2016) postulates that when Islam interacted with African traditional view, it brought about the element of cultural synthesis, rendering Islam insignificant while dealing with problems. The Digo, like any other African tribe, followed African beliefs and practices before they converted to Islam. Since Islamic teaching did not play much influence in their conversion to Islam, the Islam among the Digo were ‘Digionized’. This is to say, Digo people “...continue to settle their affairs by their traditional customs that are contrary to Islamic law” especially when faced with life-threatening challenges (Sesi, 2003, p. 78).

The sense of communal life among the Digo people in early years of infiltration by Islam led them to live a syncretic religious life; as traditional Digo people and as Muslims. For the Digo, embracing Islam at that time was due to reasons other than spiritual fulfillment. Indeed, Islam was only outwardly expressed through names, clothes, and rituals, but inwardly they were traditional Digo (Marchant, n.d., p. 208). As early as the second decade of the 20th century, this confession was made by a headman that he is ‘Islamukwanguo’ and could always exchange his *kanzu* for a blanket from the government (Commissioner of Nyika to Commissioner of Mombasa, 1915). This was an indication that to the Digo, Islam was not a religion but something else.

Diène and Burrell (1999, p. 16), writing about the African culture, wrote: “There is an African ‘core culture’ that basically decides the forms of expression for Christianity and Islam, as well as the dynamics of their progress or decline on the continent of Africa.” That is why the Islam among Digo and basically in Africa is African Islam. Therefore, whenever problem befalls a Digo person, the first thought to the solution is the culture – to see a witchdoctor.

Dealing with Witches among the Digo People

If someone is suspected of witchcraft, the person who suspects him or owing to the death of one of his relatives reports to the village elders. All elders from the neighbouring villages are called together, and two elders from each village are chosen to go to a diviner. The diviner seats them in a circle or semi-circle. The diviner then snuffs his medicine and goes around them

holding the tail of an ox or buffalo. If one of the elders' relatives is a wizard, the diviner drops the tail on the elder's hips and tells him that one of his relatives is a wizard and identifies him. The elders then return and arrest the suspect as a wizard who is responsible for the deceased's death. If he denies the claims, he is taken to a blacksmith to take an oath. At the blacksmith's place, a hot iron is placed on the palm of the suspected wizard, and he recites, "If I am a wizard let this hot iron burn my palm, if I am not it shall not burn me". If this hot iron does not burn his palm, the process is repeated three times. If finally he is not burned, the man who accused him of witchcraft is fined 3 cattle (2 cows and 1 ox). The 2 cows are paid to the suspected person and the ox is killed and eaten by the villagers. These 3 cattle are called "*mkomolausawi*" which means "remove the witchcraft from the falsely accused person." On the other hand, if the palm of the accused person is burned by the hot iron, he is beaten to death. But if his relatives save him he is ordered to pay '*kore*' (compensation for the murdered person) which is made of 1 free nephew and 1 free niece (Kayamba, December, 1928).

Witchcraft in the Qur'an and Hadith

Muslims are not an exemption when it comes to dealing with the unseen world. They too have records of witchcraft in both the Qur'an and Hadith, however not much is mentioned in the Hadith. In the Qur'an, the second sura mentions witchcraft or sorcerer. Sura Al-Baqarah 2: 102 and also 113:4 is one of the famous *ayat* that refer to witchcraft. This Medina Suragives a story of how Allah's Prophet Muhammad got a revelation of the history of magic that two angels *Harut* and *Marut* brought a deceiving message to mankind during the reign of King Solomon which they got from Babylon. It is believed that it was a message that would lead to *Shirk* (idolatry) among the Israelites. The Babylonians were practising magic and thus they taught Israelites. Further, this *ayat* is interpreted that, only those who accepted this lie practised magic and have passed it on to succeeding generations (Hafiz, 2000, pp. 313-318).

Kim (2013), commenting on Al-Bukhari's narration concerning an episode where the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have been bewitched, agrees that there was witchcraft or sorcery during the time of Prophet Muhammad (Al-Bukhari, 1979). Prophet Muhammad himself recognized the existence of a certain form of witchcraft or sorcery, called *sihr* in Arabic. His experience of a psychological confusion was diagnosed as bewitchment when he met with two men (presumably angels) in his dream, and his problem was solved through Allah's intervention without recourse to any pagan healing method. This episode shows that the prophet actually hinted at the possibility that anyone could be bewitched; witchcraft is real (Kim, 2013, p. 90).

However, as it is believed in Islam that Solomon was the only prophet who could defeat Jinn (seen as witchcraft), these evil spirits did not gain root during his time in power. He is reported to have collected all the books that were written on magic and devil's deceitful acts and buried them under his throne. Burying them constrained and made them powerless. When the devil came around, it would be burned. But the evil powers once again became powerful after the death of Solomon. It is reported that those who came to power after Solomon were deceived by Satan who appeared in a human form, that, those books that Solomon had buried under his throne were treasures that they could use. In the attempt to gain these treasures, the evil powers were made loose and could not be controlled any longer (Kim, 2013, p. 313). This interpretation could suggest that magic or witchcraft is associated with Babylonians. However, Allah did not send magic to the world but the devil did after disobeying Allah. The devil then taught people magic (Kim, 2013, p. 315). Kim, 2013, p. 98 further argues that, in Zanzibar, magic which is

sihir or *sihiri* (in Swahili) comes from devils; even healing power (*uganga*) can be obtained by contacting jinn; mostly the malevolent jinn.

According to Hadith, Muhammad believed that he was bewitched. Narrated Aisha: Magic was worked on the Prophet [literal translation – “the prophet was bewitched”] so that he began to fancy that he was doing a thing which he was not actually doing. One day he invoked (Allah) for a long period and then said, “I feel that Allah has inspired me as how to cure myself. Two persons came to me (in my dream) and sat, one by my head and the other by my feet. One of them asked the other, ‘What is the ailment of this man?’ The other replied, ‘He has been bewitched,’ the first asked, ‘Who has bewitched him?’ The other replied, ‘Lubaid bin Al-A’sam.’ The first one asked, ‘What material has he used?’ The other replied, ‘A comb, the hair gathered on it, and the outer skin of the pollen of the male date- palm.’ The first asked, ‘Where is that?’ The other replied, ‘It is in the well of Dharwan.’” So, the Prophet went out towards the well and then returned and said to me, “Its date-palms (the date-palms near the well) are like the heads of the devils.” I asked, “Did you take out those things with which the magic was worked?” He said, “No, for I have been cured by Allah, and I am afraid that this action may spread evil amongst the people.” Later on the well was filled up with earth (Şaḥīḥ Al-Bukharī Vol. 4: 490). Since Muslims like to follow and practice what Muhammad did and said, it is my conclusion that Muslims also believe in witchcraft.

How Muslims Deal with Witchcraft

The Qur’an and Hadith do not advocate for witchcraft. Therefore, if a Muslim is bewitched then “They ought not to resort to any heathen method to deal with bewitchment but to observe Allah’s commandments and guidance as taught in the Qur’an and Ḥadith” (Kim, 2013, p. 92). Kim continues to state that “in order to prevent and protect from any witchcraft, a Muslim must recite the Qur’an. Approaching any sorcerer to resolve problems is only to invite more jinn to worsen the existing situation.” In addition to reciting the Qur’an, head cupping among the Muslims is seen as another therapeutic way of handling witchcraft.

As much as Sura Al-Bagarah gives details of the origin of magic and evil spirits, it is the same sura that is used to cure attacks of evil spirits. It is mostly used to dispel *Shaytan* from attacking Muslims. It is believed that if Muslims recite this Sura either at night or during the day, Satan departs from the house of the person who has recited it for 3 nights or days depending on the time the recitation was done. Kim (2013, p. 23) is very categorical that for the recitation to be successful, one begins reciting the first 4 verses, then verse 255, then 256-257, and then the last 3. It is also believed that this sura cannot be recited by sorceresses, thus giving it the power to deal with witchcraft (Kim, 2013, p. 98).

Sura 20: 56-76 also mentions witchcraft or magic. This entire passage covers the story of *Musa* (Moses) and *Fir’awn* (Pharaoh). According to Qur’an, *Musa* read or showed suras concerning Allah’s intention for the children of Israel leaving Egypt but *Fir’awn* denied, calling Moses’ signs magic. Pharaoh arranged for a meeting where his magicians would battle in power with Moses’ ‘magic’. This happened and the Egyptians’ magicians were defeated. Prior to this magic exhibition that Pharaoh had organized, Moses had clearly told Pharaoh that what he was doing was from God and those signs were to prove who God was. For example, *ayat* 54 states “... Verily in this is *ayat* for men of understanding” whose *tafsir* is proofs, signs, and evidence (Hafiz, 2000, p. 351). After this event, these magicians believed in God and left witchcraft (verse 71-76).

Witchcraft is also mentioned in the Hadith. Sahih al-Bukhari's Chapter 50 is titled as witchcraft. Here, it is narrated that Aisha had a conversation with her husband, Allah's apostle Muhammad, regarding his sickness. Muhammad is reported to have had an answer from Allah regarding his sickness from 2 men who told him he had been bewitched. The means that was used to bewitch him was pieces of hair in a comb and pollen of male date plant (Al-Bukhari, 1979, p. 444). The treatment for this kind of witchcraft is found in Al-Bukhari chapter 50 verses 663-664 where he was prescribed to take Ajwa dates every morning because they have the power to defer magic or poison harm (Al-Bukhari, 1979, p. 447). According to Kim (2013, p. 92), Muhammad gave "a model as to how Muslims should deal with witchcraft. They ought not to resort to any heathen method to deal with bewitchment but to observe Allah's commandments and guidance as taught in the Qur'an and Hadith". Therefore, Muslims are not supposed to practice witchcraft.

FINDINGS

Witchcraft Among the Digo Muslims

Although witchcraft is sometimes considered by the Digo to bring wealth to a person, in most cases, the Digo consider witchcraft as a source of all evil. This is confirmed by the Giriama's belief in witchcraft. Just like the Digo Muslims, Giriama who are part of the *Mijikenda* people, consider witchcraft to be the source of all evil and misfortune (Brantley, 1979, p. 117). Yet, as mentioned earlier, witchcraft has continued to be nurtured among the Digo Muslims. One would wonder; why do the Digo Muslims continue in such a belief and practice? This is answered by looking at the types of witchcraft Digo practises, reasons for practising it, and its effects among the Digo Muslims.

Major Types of witchcraft Practiced among Digo People

There are three types of Witches: Witches that use the "books" (written in Arabic but not the Qur'an); Witches that use Calabash; and Witches that use herbs from certain trees e.g. from the baobab tree. All these witches use the witchcraft as listed below, but using different methods according to their expertise.

Mtsamuro: This is a type of witchcraft mostly intended to separate people who work in union and who always co-operate in official duties to achieve their intended goal. The instruments for *mtsamuro* type of witchcraft are a brain from a chicken with standing feathers, a piece of paper, and some words from the Qu'ran. As Maalimu (spiritual leader) explained to me how the chicken is slaughtered, Qur'anic words written on a paper and burnt together with the chicken's brain. The hash is buried under a special tree that has dried by itself or in an old grave that has been neglected. It is the Digo Muslim belief that, as soon as the hash is buried, the group dissolves itself immediately.

Riza: This is a type of witchcraft that is used to hide one's identity and is mostly used in war. Someone become invisible spiritually yet he or she is there. *Riza* was used during *Kayambombo* (Digo Youth Revolution) where many Digo youth lost their lives.

Finiko: This is another type of witchcraft involving obstructing or even killing someone so that the person who went for this type of witchcraft gets whatever he or she wants. Mtuma (not his real name) explain, For example, "when someone has a case or conflicts of any kind, he or she

might decide to visit a wizard who will help him get the case dissolved either by killing the opponent in his or her own ways which are not easily understandable . . .”(Mtuma, March 2017). Instrument used in this kind of witchcraft is “*kisimrima* (old *jembe* that is overused), *kisirima* (spoiled coconut fruit), *fuwe* (mature red rooster), and *kaniki* (black piece of unsewn cloth). The chicken is slaughtered by a person believed to have been bewitched (note a witchdoctor), then left to die. The voices heard after it has died determine if things are good or bad for the person who sought the treatment” (Mtuma, March 2017).

Mbayumbayu: Someone who is bewitched with this kind of witchcraft will never settle in one place; he or she will move from one place to another for the rest of his or her life unless treated by a witchdoctor. The instruments are, “A chicken with standing feathers, three eggs from a black chicken, and an old cloth that belong to the enemy. The witch (*mchawi*) will cut a small part of the finger of the chicken, get few drops of blood, smear it on the eggs, then say/read some words holding the eggs and the piece of cloth. After that, the eggs and the piece of cloth will be given back to the customer with instructions from the witch as follows: to throw the eggs in a garbage place and take the cloth to the owner secretly. At a certain time, the enemy will start behaving crazily and will not settle at one place (Mgwasa, 2017, March).

Nene: is another type of witchcraft that makes one feel very tired or have a feeling of laziness. This type of witchcraft is mostly used during competition such as football with an aim of weakening your opponent. A player bewitched with this kind of witchcraft will not be able to walk because his or her body becomes weak. The instruments are similar to that of *mbayumbayu*.

Dzongo/ Dege (Bad Eye): When a person goes to a wedding or burial ceremony and eats food from there, or any other open place, he or she may be faced with someone with bad eye or evil eye. He/she may then be affected by stomach upsets including expanding stomach and aches with abnormal and unbearable pain that eventually causes death of the person. This is treated by using hot charcoal in a cup of water. Then cut the charcoal and the water across with a knife. The victim is given the mixture of water and charcoal to drink, thus gets healed.

Minor Examples of acts of Witchcraft

Mwanga/kuwanga: witchcraft act where one may be taken magically away from his or her bed. For example, one can be taken to work in someone’s field for the whole night while his or her physical body is still in the bed. He or she will wake up feeling very tired.

Kuminywa: This involves torturing a person while still sleeping. The bewitched often wakes up from sleep making loud and scary noise or even crying.

Kutsorera: Taking someone’s wealth or even harvest in a supernatural way. The enemy may find himself or herself conducting a business full of losses or with little or no profit.

Snake Witchcraft: One may be set to get a snake bite from an abnormal snake but the one who experiences the bite will not know if it’s not a normal or abnormal snake. This kind of witchcraft is mostly practised by the Digo, Duruma, Kambe and Giriama communities.

Wende: A Mijikenda word that is used to explain a kind of wicked act where one will get one’s beloved and gain fame in the eye of the public. It is commonly used by the Digo and Giriama community. Digo Muslims use it for the purpose of making their spouses, or someone’s spouse

give more love and attention to the one that has gone for the *wende* witchcraft. Young people also use *wende* to get love that is not based on the principles of love.

Kukatakivuli (shed cutting): This is a type of witchcraft that aims at eliminating the opponent through sacrificing him or her to the evil powers. This is done through cutting somebody's shed - meaning to kill that person. The *mganga* uses *kuwanga* (take the victim magically from his/her bed) and *kuminwa* (impose torture to a person while still sleeping in his/her house). This happens a lot during the political campaigns. If one needs to win a certain post, he/she will go to the *mganga* and ask the *mganga* to get rid of the opponent. The person will be brought magically on a mirror. That person will be tortured on the mirror and the unbearable pain will make him/her to die.

The place where the evil spirits are connected to witchcraft is known as *Mzuka*. The tools used in witchcraft are kept at a place known as "*pangani*".

Difference between Major and Minor Witchcrafts

Witchcraft is a common act among Digo people, but not every type is practised daily or commonly. The major witchcrafts are commonly and often practised by many witches. The minor ones are not commonly used and whenever used, they are performed by experts. Although the minor ones are not commonly used, they are said to be the most destructive.

Reasons for Practising Witchcraft

As a protection mechanism. Digo and Giriama people believe that people can become wealthy through evil powers, and the same wealth can be destroyed through higher evil powers. To protect their wealthy status, they seek *mganga* whose medicine gives them protection (Brantley, 1979, p. 113).

Weapon of destruction. The Digo community uses witchcraft as their weapon to harm other people or to take people's things in a crafty way. During campaign period, some very influential politicians seek powers from the witches to win elections. They pay the witches well and hence the witches become very wealthy. Accumulation of such wealth through witchcraft thus gives them a sense of pride.

Inheritance. According to Digo belief, witchcraft is a weapon that has to be passed on to family members, maintained and protected within the family. Although the Digo will say someone can/may be born as a *Mchawi*, I do not think this is the case. I believe it is through assimilation and induction into it when the child is born; a feature of inheritance deemed important among the Digo people. There dilemma is how to deal with the cases of witchcraft among the Digo people, especially given their strong beliefs about it. However, Christian workers among Muslims and Digo people must develop missiological approaches that combat this belief.

To explain the unknown. Digo use witchcraft to describe anything that is hard to understand. In 2000, I travelled from the United States of America, where I was studying, to my home village on the coast among the Digo Muslims with my family. That was the time when many people did not know what HIV/AIDS was. There was no life in the village. People had no hope because of the high mortality rate caused by HIV/AIDS. I could not believe the death rate in the village. People did not want to talk about it. I asked the elders whether they know what they are dealing with. Each one claimed that *uchawi* (witchcraft) had invaded their village. Through this, it can

be deduced that witchcraft among the Digo people has been and continues to be used as a way of explaining what is beyond their understanding.

Spiritual or physical wellbeing. Traditionally, the Digo people practise witchcraft for their spiritual or physical wellbeing. Others seek medicine men to eliminate those who pose threat to their lives in one way or another, or as an act of expressing supremacy over the unseen world. It is said that even young men resort to witchcraft to better their future family lives. “Before marrying, every Mdigo consults a medicine man who tells him the exact day and hour when he should be married” (Marchant, n.d., p. 202). Some medicine men would also show their powers by controlling nature. Some would, for instance, stop rains from falling on the land. Since this affect the whole community, once the medicine man is identified, he is punished severely. Any “Wizards who stopped the rains were however killed with swords” as a way of paying for causing others to suffer (Marchant, n.d., p. 199).

As Mbiti (1969) puts, “Death is caused by magic, sorcery and witchcraft” and for the Digo, this is very real. Those who want to harm others among Digo, carry out witchcraft in two ways. First, in form of poison that a wizard puts in food and gives to the person he intends to kill. The second way is that wizards do a magic dance while nude at night at their enemy’s house or compound. This magic dance should disturb and make the owner of the house babble in their sleep and later die. Since these ways of witchcraft are done in secret, medicine men are treated as suspects before it is proven who killed their enemies. The process of identifying the wizard is a community affair and takes a process.

Effects of Witchcraft among the Digo Muslims

Although Digo Muslims use some witchcraft (jinn) to enrich themselves, it negatively affects both the individual and the community in most cases. Some of the effects are:

Creates Fear. It is also believed that witchcraft can cause diseases to people and harm them. A case was reported by a District Commissioner in Malindi in 1925 when there were many cases of syphilis, that the main cause was witchcraft. In his report, he said that the natives said that a man with a grudge with his neighbour would visit a witch to *tega* the wife of his rival who in turn would transmit the disease to her husband or lover. According to the letter from District Commissioner of Malindi (1925, August 24), the cure for this disease would work in the same way for the witch to reverse or stop the spell. Other remedies to witchcraft act, especially that of the jinni effect on people is to visit a professional witchdoctor who offers incantations in the name of Allah and give charms. Brantley (1979, p. 117) further posits that Muslims, just like the Giriama people, believe that Muslim culture that infiltrated Digo traditional culture brought another source of evil; alien spirits or *mapepo* which were exclusively regarded as Muslim spirits. These spirits are known as *Mwarabu Mume* among the Digo and are feared by the Digo women. They can bring devastation among women. One time I found a Digo woman, who was a third wife of *Mzee* Siribiri (not his real name). The woman had been bewitched and given over to *Mwarabu Mume* who demanded sexual relations with the woman all the time. This is in line with what is said to have happened to Muhammad. In the Hadith, Muhammad is said to have an experience Digo people have – to believe that he had sex with his wife while he did not (Al-Bukhari Vol. 7, 660).

Poor Relationships, Divisions and Suspicion. Brantley observes that “the Giriama believe not only that some members of the society are witches, but that all are potential witches.” Due to this belief, people are suspicious of each other, have poor relationships and are divided among

themselves. This understanding led the Giriama to develop ways of combating witchcraft or witches in the society; a step by which Giriama people are known for with regards to combating witchcraft to date.

Under-development. Digo land is under-developed even today; not because Digo cannot get money, but because the Digo people do not want to work. Digo people seat on titanium. In 2008-2010, the Kenyan government through foreign investors started dinging titanium. The Digo people who had land covered by the titanium were moved out of the zone and compensated by the Kenyan government with good amount of money with an expectation that they would buy another land elsewhere and settle. However, instead of buying land at another place, some of them squandered the money they had received from the government with prostitutes at the beach while others spend it on drinking. A few of them who did business opened small kiosks. This was because they do not want to develop in fear of witchcraft. As a result, there is a lot of poverty among the Digo Muslims (Joshua Project, 2013).

Digo Ways of Dealing with Witchcraft

To deal with witchcraft or witches, Digo, just like Giriama had medicine men who administered *fisi* oath that was made to kill the witch. The medicine used in *fisi* oath was known as *mbare*. Apart from this oath, other means were used to deal with witches. Hot axes or rocks were placed in the palm of witch's hand or treated bread which was made to stick in the throat of the guilty. If the witch did not confess he would die. If he did confess, a cleansing medicine was given which negated his witchcraft (Brantley, 1979, p. 115).

During the colonial times in Kenya, the British colonial administration also "felt witchcraft was the main cause of their lack of administrative success" among the Giriama (Brantley, 1979, p. 119). In response to this failure, the British administration in Giriama land demanded that the Giriama swear an oath of allegiance to British using the *fisi* oath that was anti-witchcraft. This meant that they couldn't bewitch or harm anyone. It is also said that some British officials joined the *Vaya* elders class of the Giriama in order to be allowed to practice *fisi* oath with Giriama elders, but they had to pay some fee for acceptance (Brantley 1979, pp. 114-115). In addition, at some point, a man who was believed to deal with witchcraft was given government pass to conduct witch-cleansing among Giriama by the British government. What is said of the Giriama is the same with the Digo Muslims.

Implication to Research and Practice

This study reveal the types of witchcraft practised by the Digo Muslims, why they practise them and the effects of such practice on both individual and community level. The light into this knowledge is therefore paramount in dealing with witchcraft by Christians and other stakeholders so that the misfortunes of the practice are combated. This knowledge is important too as it helps parties interested in researching and learning about cultures of the people living along the coast region of Kenya. They can use it as a basis of their research as it explicitly provide basic information about the Digo Muslims and their religious and traditional practices.

RECOMMENDATION AND WAY FORWARD**Christian Response to the Concept of Islam among Digo Muslims**

Love (2000), affirming Charles Taber's, underlines the following vital questions "What usable concepts and symbols do this religion provide for the approach of the gospel? ... What particular obstacles does it place in the way of a true understanding of the gospel?" According to Taber (1991), Christian discipleship process should make use of Islamic concepts and symbols that are appropriate and relevant to Muslims so that Christianity will not be seen as a "western" religion, but this approach should be void of syncretism. Syncretism will make the Gospel lose its power in ministering to the Muslims.

Hiebert comments "No matter how hard they [missionaries] try, they cannot completely 'go native,' since the earlier culture of their childhood can never be fully erased. While the bi-culture borrows from different cultures of its participants, it is more than the sum or synthesis of those cultures" (Hiebert, 1985, p. 228). It is true here that the outcome might go any extreme. Not only do the fact that Digo Muslims believe that witchcraft can protect them from all troubles indicates how much they value it and that they are folk Muslims, but also the fact that the witchdoctors will use verses of the Quran to treat different sicknesses shows that they have some elements of official Islam. This is also as an indication that Islam has achieved very little impact on Digo Muslim life. This may lead to the conclusion that Digo Muslims put their faith in witchcraft because there is a lack of option in their new religion (Islam). This conclusion, therefore, calls for Christian missionaries to trust the Lord to provide an option that can lead Digo Muslims to put their faith in God rather than witchcraft.

Despite 99.9% of Digo people being Muslims, they are viewed as still clinging to their African cultural practices. This trend brings into question what kind of influence Islam has over the Digo traditional worldview on witchcraft. Has the 99.9% of Islam among the Digo permeated all aspects of Digo life in terms of Digo religious tradition and practice? If so, why do Digo people still fall back to their traditional practices, especially to seeking witchdoctors when calamity befalls them? Does it mean that Traditional Religion offer better answers than Islam? These are pertinent questions that need to be answered as it is vivid that a Digo traditionalist and a Digo Muslim are not very different with regards to religious practices. Christian missionaries seeking to work or working among the Digo should therefore focus on such concerns; otherwise, Christianity may be taken as Islam by Digo people.

For Digo Muslims to protect themselves from evil spirits, they use *suras* of the Quran such as Al-Baqarah 2:255). An-Nami 27:17-19).

Ordinary Muslims relate to the supernatural, make decisions about their future, and deal with sickness and death. Orthodox Islamic doctrines provide categories for faith, while folk Islam practices give meaning to faith. When Christians interact with Muslim friends at the folk level, then witness passes from their minds into their hearts. It is ultimately at the heart level that faith is engendered (Musk, 1989, p. 35).

Christians should emphasize on contextualizing the gospel for the Digo Muslims. This contextualization should be biblically foundational, culturally appealing, and contextually appropriate. This will help Digo people to understand the fundamental truths of scripture that communicates to them in the light of their cultural heritage and present circumstances (Pang,

1995). According to Saal (1991), contextualization's goal should be the fulfilment of the Lord's commission to make disciples of all nations, where churches formed are "culturally rooted in their society of origin." Thus, the ultimate purpose of contextualization should simply be: to win people to Christ.

Christians should portray their faith in Christ. Communicating the gospel to Muslims requires an honest representation of the Christian faith as the Digo Muslims will be drawn to the person of Christ Jesus. Here, it is critically important to impress upon the Digo the fact and truth that embracing Christ is not synonymous with or equivalent to abandoning or renouncing their sense of belonging to their own culture. They should not be made to feel that they must become a Westerner in order to follow a "Western" religion or any other group of people to feel that they are Christians (Love, 2000). The Digo should feel that he/she is a Digo Christian, and of course be careful with any syncretism.

As mentioned earlier, Digo Muslims are ordinary folk Muslims who have 'Digonized' Islam among them. According to my observation, witchcraft is an issue that troubles Digo Muslims and it is like they have no way to escape it. Bill Musk observes how seriously the ordinary Muslims view the supernatural, when it comes to making decisions, and dealing with sickness and death related issues. In Christian witness to the Digo Muslim, the Gospel message should be directed to their troubled hearts so as to create faith in God (Musk, 1989, pp. 245-249).

Digo Muslims are afraid of being harmed by one another and outsiders too. They have to keep on spending a lot of wealth to protect themselves from any internal or external harm. Haggai observes that fear makes one lack influence in one's life. It can undermine personal dynamism, leading to unnecessary apologies which decrease group influence (Haggai, 1991, pp. 227-234). The only cure for this is for one to choose to love and trust God rather than fear people and get to witchcraft for protection. This will only come to Digo Muslims if Christians will purpose to take the gospel to the Digo Muslims.

When I talk about the real situation among the Digo people, it should be understood that it is in the context of the spiritual world which the Digos are operating with (Eph. 6:10ff). We need to understand their deep-seated beliefs and practices that drive their lives every day. Many of the Missionaries and Christians among the Digo reach out to the Digo within the missionaries context. Digo need to be reached out within their context which is more to their beliefs and practices, that is seen more than Islam beliefs.

Christians need not be conformed to the Digo culture and practices, but to be transformed to the living standards of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom He conquered the world and He promises us that we are more than conquerors. We need to trust Jesus for the salvation of the Digo and take away our fear and intimidation and obey our commission – to make disciples of all nations. In addition, Christians need to understand the Muslim culture.

What is Culture?

Culture is a system of structured customs, and the way people organize their lives (e.g. politics, religion, economics, communication, and their social life). Culture may be seen as forms, structures, and patterns that human use in the process of living (Kraft, 1996, p. 133). Culture is the strategies that groups of people use in order to survive as a group. Culture is owned by and belongs to a particular group of people and that group operates it within themselves. Culture can also be learned (Kraft, 1998).

As Kraft puts it, a river has a surface level and a deep level. The surface is visible but most of the river lies beneath the surface and it is largely invisible. Whatever happens on the surface of the river affects the deep level part of it. This happens exactly with the culture (Kraft, 1996, p. 31). Therefore, before the gospel can make any impact in a Muslim life, one has to understand the depth of the Muslim culture and all that lies beneath that Muslim culture.

Why Understand the Digo Muslim Culture?

“Understanding a people’s culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14).

Understanding Digo culture will enable Christians to begin sharing the love of God with the Digo from within the Digo environs. When Paul went to Athens, he saw the city was full of idols and he was distressed. However he did not begin with a condemnation to the Athenians. Rather, he began with saying; “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’. Christians will be able to use some of the forms within Digo Muslims and be able to contextualize them. This can only be effective if the Christians take the time to understand the Digo Muslim’s culture.

Christians must be willing to accept Digo Muslims and love them unconditionally and be patient with them. Nothing wins more than love (I Cor. 13). Many Christian missionaries have tried to show the love of God to the Digo Muslims, but with very little or no success. It is only love that will make Digo Muslims be open to us, thus be able to learn them and their culture. Accepting Muslims as important people in the eyes of God and showing them the love of God may help us win the Muslims confidence and trust thus be able to tell them about God’s love.

CONCLUSION

The paper, from analysis of existing content and interview with a number of stakeholders in Islam religion at the south coast of Kenya and Digo community, concludes that the Digo Muslims practise witchcraft for many reasons including protection, destruction and to explain pertinent questions among others. It has been revealed that the Digo Digionized Islam so that they could get solutions to the challenges and problems they faced thus forcing them to practise, in part, witchcraft despite the negative effects that it caused the individual and the community at large. This is simply because Islamic religion did not give such provisions.

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