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Thursday May 05, 2011

**Columnist****Is witchcraft a trade, a belief or a craft?**

BY K'OYOO Nick, 11th February 2011 @ 16:00, Total Comments: 0, Hits: 776

IN the past three weeks, reports of cases of witchcraft have hit the headlines in the three East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

It is hard to believe some of the matters connected to witchcraft that we hear or come across in bar rooms. There was this one in Tanzania. A team of police officers on patrol saw a lone Taxi parked in a desolate place.

In their trained minds, the policemen immediately armed themselves for a possible confrontation with dangerous criminal elements.

The justification was, who, after all, drives a Taxi into the bush almost 70 kilometres from the nearest urban centre and stays in the dark under some trees.

They approached the taxi cautiously and ended up in a cave where they could hear muffled voices. It dawned on the law enforcers that they were stumbling on a scene of crime.

Lo and behold, their search lights swept into a cave. They were welcomed to a sight of a suited gentleman, seated close to a heap of files.

Before him sat a cross-legged, feather bedecked sangoma (traditional healer or witch doctor) who was busy doing his thing to the guest. Then wham, came the rude interruption by the police.

Upon inquiry, the tastefully dressed gentleman confessed to the full extent that he was from the Ministry of Lands and that he had gone to visit the medicine man with a view to ensuring that the plot owners do not remember their parcels.

In the process, he said, he and his colleagues would sell the plots of land and benefit from the proceeds undetected.

This, among others, is the stories of outrage and belief. It is one of the many stories that continue to find their place in the East African Federation to be. It is not long ago that we saw cases of albinos being killed for their body parts.

Who are the clients of East African sangoma's and what inspires them to seek occult intervention? Belief in the occult is not an East African predominance however as the stories of Southern Africa, Western Africa and even far-flung Haiti are concerned.

Where Science and logic ends, the occult begins. The quest for success, world wealth, love and triumph over evil seems to be the predominant driving force behind the sometimes very gruesome orgies that human beings go into to get what their hearts desire.

The popularity of Ki-Nigeria Movies can attest to this fact. Not a single Nigerian movie passes our shows that does not have a conflict between a seriously religious family and lone ranger who consults the occult mainly to find love and yes, wealth.

Our women seem to have bought into the belief that only by star gazing sangoma pressure can a man love you to blitherens.

So, no effort in the character department. They spend all the time looking for the right Ssenga (Auntie) as the Banganda call them.

And there is no shortage of what they can deliver, a rich lover, a husband, a baby as you want, virginity, a huge wedding, a car and a grand one not just any and immense wealth.

The other category of sangoma clients are the politicians. Any one who can tell you will that during the current elections in Uganda and last years election in Tanzania, sangomas made a huge kill.

Politicians in these parts believe that for one to win an election there must be intervention by powers beyond that from human nature. If you campaign you must also make your opponents ballot symbol invisible to opponents, and so on and so forth.

The guys who invest in sangomas produce serious cash. You do not expect a sangoma to receive a cheque do you? Pay cash.

As for delivery I am not sure? In Tanzania they advertise on Radio and television. In Uganda and Kenya it seems the print media is their place.

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Even the educated scientists seek sangoma intervention. A case is told of an accountant who was told he could be vice chancellor of a university.

All he had sought was throat treatment on referral from a friend. So much for the sangoma's lies. Yet the numbers of believers continue to grow.

Trouble is lives are lost and pain caused in the effort to achieve that which cannot be explained by facts, science or believe in Almighty God. Makes me wonder why a sangoma has not brought the world cup to our shores, yet.

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