

# The witchcraft- substance of the azande belief



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Among the Azande, a person doesn't become a witch, a person is born a witch. Being a witch, which is determined by one having the witchcraft-substance or not, is something that is passed on by genetics. If a father is a witch, then all his sons will be witches. If a mother is a witch, then all her daughters will be witches. As clearly stated by the title of the first chapter, "witchcraft is an organic and hereditary phenomenon". The Azande believe that the witchcraft-substance can be found within one's belly, attached to the liver.

Although all the Azande entirely believe in witches, sorcerers, and the witchcraft-substance, it hasn't been seen that a witch accepts his or her crimes. On the contrary, those who are deemed as witches by the poison oracle usually state that they don't wish injury or death on anybody, and that if they are a witch, it is unknown to them. In short, witches within the Azande aren't conscious agents when they are bewitching others. Even if someone has ill-will against another, they wouldn't realize when or how they bewitched someone. Those who have been accused of bewitching others but who are unaware of doing such a thing often conclude that the witchcraft-substance had its own soul that gained independence whenever the said witch went to sleep.

However, even if a Zande is doubtful of themselves bewitching someone, when a fowl's wing is placed on the doorstep of their homestead, it is rare that a Zande is offended and shows anger. Rather, a Zande tries to prove his innocence by emphasizing the fact that none of his kinsmen have the witchcraft-substance since they haven't been accused of bewitching anyone before and they don't wish any injury not death on anyone. But a Zande

normally follows the tradition of the community by blowing out water and saying that if he does indeed possess witchcraft in his belly that he is unaware of it and that he wishes it to cool. When a Zande discusses of the witch-craft substance remaining cool, what they mean to refer to is that they wish that their witchcraft-substance will be inactive, without a harm to anyone.

Witches have witchcraft-substance that is believed to be attached to their liver, which is examined during autopsies. However, whenever bewitching takes place, the witchcraft-substance takes the form of a bright light that can only be seen at night by those who aren't witches (it can always be seen by those who are witches, but within the day those who aren't witches can't see it) that has been seen heading to people's homesteads who have either died before or had relatives that had died. Whenever one is bewitched, they are usually afflicted with a painful injury that leads to a slow death. Witching is distinguished clearly from sorcery. But the witchcraft concept is thoroughly embraced by the Azande, and daily problems that one faces and usually links to relevant causes, is linked to witchcraft by the Azande. For instance, if a Zande has a poor hunting trip, he might blame it on witchcraft.

The Azande have this perception of double spears, with the first spear being the actual cause, and the second spear being the witchcraft. So, if one's homestead burns to the ground, one would see the first spear as too much of a close proximity between fire and the house, while the second spear would be witchcraft. But as aforementioned, witches aren't conscious agents of bewitching, so they don't have organizations, nor do they get together. Even though that's what the details point to, the Azande believe that witches lead

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a confidential life where they share their killing with other witches and show off their slyness.