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SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT IN FLORES/INDONESIA AND GOD'S HEALING POWER IN SACRAMENTAL HOLY WATER

This paper aims to present that sorcery and witchcraft are still widely practiced by people in Flores Island, Indonesia. Its practice is still one of the thorniest problems that injure social life of people whether living in a village or in towns. The sorcerers and witches who are caught red-handed doing sorcery practice have been severely tortured and even publically killed by the villagers at their ancestral homes after a long indictment and prosecution according to their customary laws, yet it seems these means still cannot stop the sorcery and witchcraft practices. Secondly, this paper aims to present that sorcery and witchcraft practices do exist and their existence can be observed by various means including scientifically by a multimeter. The sorcery media emanate some kind of toxins believed to cause harm to their victims and the toxins can be neutralized only by sprinkling them with sacramental holy water.

Introduction

This paper aims to present sorcery and witchcraft practices in Flores. Like in any other society in the world, be it in primitive societies, in Greco-Roman antiquity, in Medieval and Renaissance Europe,¹ or

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¹ As succinctly synthesized by Donald R. Hill, *Magic in Primitive Societies*; Hans Dieter Betz, *Magic in Greco-Roman Antiquity*; and Ion Petru Culianu, *Magic in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*; all in: Mircea Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 9, New York: Macmillan Publishers 1986, 89-92, 93-97, 97-101.

in contemporary African and Asian traditional societies,² sorcery and witchcraft, considered as two main types of black magic, are still widely practiced by people in Flores Island. The practices of sorcery and witchcraft in the island have been condemned by local authorities as well as by the church. Those suspected of performing sorcery and witchcraft practices have been punished in various ways. They have been, for instance, shunned in social relationships or even excommunicated. Yet these means have not successfully terminated the practices. Today, despite the dislikes toward or even enmities between people and the suspected sorcerers or witches, people find it difficult to go after and confront them and feel reluctant to use violent means against them due to the presence of strong positive modern state laws inspired by today's concept of universal human rights. Under such a legal standard, it is quite difficult to bring charges against a sorcerer or a witch.

In the last 15 years or so, however, Catholic Christians popularly known as *para pendoa*³ have been scrutinizing some of the practices of sorcery and witchcraft in Flores. These *para pendoa* (some kind of paranormal) claim—and are believed—to have a special charisma to identify and even tame the invisible supernatural power of evil spirits manipulated through the practices of sorcery and witchcraft using certain media. They can find the hidden media secretly put by the sorcerers at the houses of the intended victims. The common materials used as media are various, for instance, some strands of hair, a piece of a match, an old rusty pin or hairpin, an old rusty zipper and so forth. All *para pendoa* at different places and regions in the island of Flores reveal that these media emit some kind of strong energy that causes heat radiation in the vicinity believed to cause sickness and even death for their intended victims. The *para pendoa* can feel the heat of these media and, interestingly, the heat radiation of these media subsides or disappears only by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. Then the health of the victims slowly improves.

² Some of the best examples would be those in Papua New Guinea, well researched by the Melanesian Institute and published by Franco Zocca (ed.), *Sanguma in Paradise: Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Papua New Guinea*, Goroka: Melanesian Institute 2009.

³ Literally *para pendoa* are those who can pray to invoke God's favor and protection for others who are in need of it. Like some kind of a sixth sense, they have an ability to know the cause of sickness, especially the ones caused by sorcery and witchcraft, by manipulating the evil spirits. *Para pendoa* can be either lay Catholics or the followers of other religions such as Protestants, Muslims or Hindus.

The aforementioned facts will be the focal points presented in this paper. The author aims to bring to light how these phenomena should be widely understood including from the Catholic theological perspective. Prior to presenting these main points, however, the view of people in Flores regarding spirit classifications will be briefly laid out.

Methodology

The research for this paper was mainly conducted through a field research project and studies of available literature. The field research was carried out by the author between December 2016 and March 2018. The size of Flores Island is 13.540 km². According to various reliable data, out of its population of more than 2.000.000 people (2016), 96% are Catholics,⁴ a demographic fact which makes Flores known as the only region that is predominantly Catholic in Indonesia. Ethnically Flores has seven major groups—Manggarai in the western part of the island, Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka in its central part and Lamaholot in its eastern part, each uniquely enriched by its own distinct language and culture.

The one-year field research was conducted mainly in a number of villages in Manggarai, which is the author's district of origin, and in a number of villages and in the city (town) of Maumere in Sikka district where the author dedicates himself as a lecturer at the Institute of Catholic Philosophy of Ledalero that belongs to the Society of the Divine Word. The main goal of the field study was to retrieve the data of actual cases regarding the practices of sorcery and witchcraft. The data collected served as examples of sorcery and witchcraft practices in the island.

Among the main findings are the following: First, sorcery and witchcraft are still widely practiced by the present-day people of Flores. Second, sorcery and witchcraft practices remain as a thorn injuring the lives of the people of the island, both those living in remote villages often considered less educated as well as still primitive in many ways; and those living in the cities considered more educated, having adopted a more modern lifestyle and understanding of life. Third, sorcery and witchcraft practices are one of the main sources of social conflicts among people in almost every village and even in towns or cities of the island. There have been hot-witch-hunts. As will be seen later, in one region of the district of Manggarai, the western part of Flores Island, more than 20 witches/sorcerers were killed.

⁴ See for instance, "Ekaristi Dot Org" (online) <http://www.ekaristi.org/index.php> (accessed February 17, 2017, virtual page no version).

Some were tortured and stoned to death publicly in the middle of a village (which took place between the years 2000 and 2014), excluding a number of those who only faced attempted murder and were punished. Fourth, the good news is that in the last 15 years or so there has been a group of lay Catholics or religious men who claim and are believed to have a charisma to detect the power of the sorcery and witchcraft practices and free the victims from their power by relying on the power of the Christian Triune God through prayer and sacramental holy water. With all this in mind, a big question that needs to be dealt with is this: How should all of these phenomena be appropriately and correctly understood?

1. The View of the People of Flores on the World Spirits

Like in any other ethnic group anywhere in the world, the people of Flores have their own religious belief system. Since long before the arrival of Christianity, each ethnic group of the island has believed in the existence of the Supreme Being and various world spirits both good and bad as well as the spirits of the dead as seen in the following Figure 1.

Figure 1: Various names of the Supreme Being, good spirits and evil spirits in Flores Island

Ethnic Groups	Supreme Being	World Spirits	
		Good Spirits	Evil Spirits
Manggarai	<i>Mori Kraeng, Ame Eta Ine Wa</i>	<i>naga (naga golo, naga tana, naga beo), darat or kakartana</i>	<i>ineweu, potiwolo</i>
Ngada, Nagekeo	<i>Dewa Zeta Ga'e Zale, Dewa Meze</i>	<i>ngébu, nitu (kazu, watu, mata wae, mbaru sao, tana watu)</i>	<i>inengiu, noa, wera-polo</i>
Ende, Lio	<i>Du'a Nggae</i>	<i>nitu (lowo, pu'u kaju, watu), lima bua</i>	<i>dua hela, painoa, ineleke, laihoa, mataria, polo</i>
Sikka	<i>Ama Lero Wulan Reta</i>	<i>naga (ahu, laka, tobong, sawaria, nagalautahi), nitu</i>	<i>dua helang, dua toe robong, dua ha wu'ang</i>
Lamaholot	<i>Rera Wulan Tana Ekan</i>	<i>nitung (kayo, wato, haring botang)</i>	<i>beo pone</i>

Good Spirits

The Supreme Being under its various names—*Mori Kraeng* or *Ame Eta Ine Wa* (Manggarai), *Dewa Zeta Ga'e Zale* or *Dewa Zeta Nitu Zale* or *Dewa Meze* (Ngada and Nagekeo), *Du'a Nggae* (Ende and Lio), *Ama Lero Wulan Reta* (Sikka) and *Rera Wulan Tana Ekan* (Lamaholot)⁵—is the Duumvirate God which consists of the Great Father Sky-God and the Great Mother Earth-God. This Duumvirate God is believed to be the single origin of all life. He is the creator of all things, both visible and invisible, both good spirits and bad spirits. Since this God is the Creator, He is omnipotent and therefore humans will go to look for refuge in Him when threatened with any danger including those coming from evil spirits.

Good spirits addressed with similar alternative names—*naga*, *darat*, *nitu* or *nitung* by the people of Flores—are believed to be God's messengers to guard human beings and other creatures. In Manggarai, for instance, the good spirits are identified in two major groups, *naga* and *darat* or *kakartana*. *Naga* are good spirits believed to be the guardians and protectors of human beings such as a village and then they are commonly named according to the place where they perform their tasks: *naga beo* or *naga golo* (the spirits that guard and protect a village). Every village is believed to have at least one *naga golo* or *naga beo* (*naga* = spirit, *beo* or *golo* = village).

Darat or *kakartana* are the second major type of good spirits. *Darat* are believed to live in the forests, mountain tops, big rocks, rivers, ponds or lakes and serve as their guardians. Since they inhabit and guard the wild life they are also commonly called *kakartana*—from *kaka de tana* which means “creatures of the land.” They are generally friendly to humans. They will be upset only when humans disturb their places of residence. For instance, if humans cut down trees for farming without acknowledging their presence, they would come and mysteriously abduct a child and hide it in the forest for days. The kid will be found alive again after humans perform a rite of

⁵ For a sufficient report on the Supreme Being of Manggarai ethnic groups see for instance Jilis A. J. Verheijen SVD, *Manggaraidan Wujud Tertinggi*, Jakarta: LIPI-RUL 1991; of Ngada and Nagekeo ethnic groups see Paul Arndt SVD, *Agama Orang Ngada: Dewa, Roh-roh Manusia dan Dunia*, Maumere: Candraditya 2015; of Ende and Lio ethnic groups see Paul Arndt SVD, *Du'a Nggae: Wujud Tertinggi dan Upacara Keagamaan di Wilayah Lio Flores Tengah*, Maumere: Puslit Candraditya 2002; and of the Sikka ethnic group see Paul Arndt, *Mythologie, Religion und Magie im Sikagebiet (östl. Mittelflores)*, Ende: Arnoldus Druckerei [1932] (the year is not written).

reconciliation with the *kakartana* whose residence has been trespassed.⁶

Likewise *nitu* or *ngebu* of the Ngada and Nagekeo, *nitu* of Ende and Lio, *naga* and *nitu* of the Sikka or *nitung* of the Lamaholot are also believed to have the same role. They are God's messengers to guard humans and other creatures and are named in accordance with the tasks they perform. In Ngada and Nagekeo, for instance, *nitu kazu* are the spirits that guard the trees of the forests; *nitu mbaru sao* are the spirits that guard houses; and *nitu mata wae* are the spirits that guard springs.⁷ In Lamaholot, in addition to their role as God's messengers to protect humans and other creatures, *nitung* are regarded as part of the human family and therefore often addressed as *kaka ari* (brothers and sisters) of human beings. Like *kakartana* or *darat* in Manggarai, however, *nitung* will be upset if humans disturb their habitat.⁸

Evil Spirits

People of Flores believe in the existence of countless evil spirits. Only a few of them are identified with certain names. For instance, they are known as *potiwolo* and *ineweu* by the Manggaraians; *ebungiu*, *noa*, *ula* and *wera-polo* by people in Ngada and Nagekeo; *duahe-la*, *painoa*, *ineleke*, *laihoa* by people in Ende and Lio; and *dua helang*, *dua toe robong*, *dua ha wu'ang* by people in Sikka.⁹ People in Flores believe that these evil spirits are not friendly to humans. They are very mean. They are in constant search of various possible ways to harm human beings or their belongings such as their homes, crops or cattle. *Ineweu*, for instance, is described by the people of Manggarai

⁶ For further information, see Verheijen, *Manggaraidan Wujud Tertinggi*, 225-226.

⁷ Arndt, *Agama Orang Ngada*, 17-19. See also Marselinus Koka, "Konsep Suanggi pada Masyarakat Rio-Minsi [Ngada] dan Pengaruhnya bagi Penghayatan Iman Kristen" (manuscript), Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Katolik Ledalero, Maumere, Indonesia 2012, 28.

⁸ Marselinus Narek Untung, "Suanggi dalam Katamata Masyarakat Ile Pati dan Dampaknya bagi Karya Pastoral serta Jawaban Atasnya" (manuscript), Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Katolik Ledalero, Maumere, Indonesia 2016, 17-19.

⁹ For more detailed reports on these evil spirits, see Verheijen, *Manggaraidan Wujud Tertinggi*, 234; Arndt, *Agama Orang Ngada*, 20-23; Rondo Rafael, "Fenomen Suanggi Menurut Orang Nae dan Dampaknya bagi Iman Mereka" (manuscript), STFK Ledalero, Flores, Indonesia, 16-20; Arndt, *Mythologie, Religion und Magie*, 141-151.

as a very malevolent long-breasted female spirit-being who uses her long breasts to capture humans.¹⁰

People of Flores believe that, no matter how mean they are, however, evil spirits are less powerful compared to their Duumvirate God. The Duumvirate God who is known with His/Her various names—*Ame Eta Ine Wa, Dewa Zeta Ga'e Zale, Du'a Nggae, Ama Lero Wulan Reta, Rera Wulan Tana Ekan*—is superior to all evil spirits—*potiwolo, ineweu, ebungiu, noa, ula, wera-polo, duahela, painoa, in-eleke, laihoa, dua helang, dua toe robong and dua ha wu'ang*. Yet people believe that this superior and omnipotent God will not directly help human beings who are in any danger including those coming from the attacks of evil spirits but through His/Her messengers—good spirits—communicating through various diviners.

2. The Facts of Sorcery/Witchcraft and Witch-Hunt

As stated in the introduction, sorcery and witchcraft, like in any other society, are still widely practiced by people in Flores Island. People, both those living in cities and those living in remote villages, talk about it very often. People are in constant fear of it. It is one of the major sources of social conflicts in almost every village in Flores.

From December 12, 2016 to January 2017 I focused my field research at my home village, Rego, and its neighboring villages. When my family and relatives knew that I was researching sorcery and witchcraft they had mixed feelings. They were all, on the one hand, very surprised as to why and what it is for. On the other hand, they were also very happy that as a scholarly priest I finally gave special academic attention to *janto* (sorcery or witchcraft)—a supernatural thing which is still a nightmare to them. It is very real yet difficult to understand. When asked if *janto* does exist, all people in my village and the neighboring villages spontaneously replied that it does. They said that even though it is difficult to know how *janto* operates, yet its existence can be observed.

First, those who practice sorcery or witchcraft or *ata janto* can be revealed by word of mouth. The suspected sorcerers or witches or *ata janto* are prone to not recognizing the special charism of the so-called

¹⁰ Verheijen, *Manggaraidan Wujud Tertinggi*, 234. See also Gregory Forth, *Images of the Wildman in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective*, London & New York: Routledge 2008, 60.

para pendoa.¹¹ They are also indifferent to their Christian faith. Going to church or not going to church, for instance, makes no difference to them. They can be repeatedly seen in *ure* or a dream state in half-consciousness. Sometimes they are caught red-handed, sitting and doing a weird ritual on a tomb of a newly dead person who is not related to the suspected sorcerer.

Second, the high suspicion of sorcery and witchcraft practices at my home parish in the years from 2002 to 2007 spurred the parish to tackle the problem pastorally. After consulting the members of the Parish Pastoral Council and the wise elders of every village in the parish, Fr. Andy Latu handled the problem by setting up a pastoral program that he called *cebong beo* or village purification. Part of the program, in addition to public discussion of sorcery, taking an oath to publicly renounce sorcery or witchcraft, was a voluntary individual confession of sins. When asked if people went to him for confession, Fr. Andy Latu said: "Oh yes, many did. Most of those coming to me for confession were those practicing sorcery or witchcraft. The way they stared at me was very sharp. Their eyes were very red."¹² It was frightening. To protect myself, I kept the Blessed Sacrament with me in a pyx and put it inside of my alb. To my surprise, they even confessed to me the total number of victims harmed or killed by their sorcery or witchcraft practices. I told them to stop it and renounce the practice all at once or the Lord Himself will bring them to justice."¹³

Third, according to my memory, the only event that I still vividly remember was a sorcerer at my own village, Rego, who was severely punished in 1969 when I was 2 years old. A man caught red-handed practicing sorcery that harmed others was punished by a local village elder who was also my grandparent. He was punished by being forced to consume pig-shit in public while being watched by all people in the village of Rego. Yet when I started doing field research on sorcery

¹¹ *Para pendoa* are Catholics or Muslims who are believed to have the charisma to detect the media used by sorcerers to harm others. I will come back to this subject later.

¹² Interestingly, Philip Mayer's seven major elements that seem common to witchcraft nearly occur everywhere at so many different times and cultural levels in the societies of the world. One of them is that sorcerers or witches bear external physical stigmata such as having red eyes. For further information, see Philip Mayer, Witches, in: Max Marwick, *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Education 1970, 47-48.

¹³ Fr. Andy Latu, who is now pastoring another parish in my home diocese, revealed his experience to me in Ruteng on the 28th of December 2016. He revealed to me many other things but not the names of those coming to him for confession.

practices in December 2016, to my surprise, punishments given to sorcerers and witches are not bygone things and events. Even though addressing it with a somewhat caustic tone, sorcery was mentioned by the participants in the pastoral synod of the Catholic Diocese of Ruteng held in 2013–2015 as one of the pastoral problems faced by the diocese. They said that people in their diocese still have a tendency to simply blame sorcery practices as the cause of their state of ill-being.¹⁴ The reality is that sorcery practices and conflicts caused by sorcery practices take place in almost every village. Sorcerers and witches have been under watch and hunted. From the 1990s onward sorcerers and witches who have been caught red-handed practicing sorcery and witchcraft were victims of attempted murder, were punished and even publically tortured to death at a number of villages in seven regions of Manggarai as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Cases of witch-hunts in a number of villages in a couple of regions in Manggarai-Western Flores that took place in the 2000s

No	Village	Sub-district	Sorcerers/witches	Age	Treatment	Year
1	Pogol	Rego	Frans Mada	55	Publicly killed	1992
2	Rego	Rego	Ende Fi	70	Attempted murder	2001
3	Wontong	Rego	Mus Itong	67	Attempted murder	2014
4	Kengko	Rego	Arnold Embo	75	Attempted murder	2012
5	Rego	Rego	Edu Lodo	58	Attempted murder	2010

¹⁴ Panitia Sidone Keuskupan Ruteng, *Pastoral Pendidikan dan Pastoral Sosial Ekonomi: Sinode III Sesi II Keuskupan Ruteng 28.04.–01.05.2015*, Ruteng: Sekretariat Sinode III Keuskupan Ruteng 2014, 129. By stating that Catholics in the Diocese of Ruteng are still prone to blaming sorcery and witchcraft as the cause of their state of ill-being, the participants in the pastoral synod of the Diocese of Ruteng doubt the existence of sorcery and witchcraft practices. They regard the phenomena merely as superstitions or an unfounded system of belief. With this in mind, I guess, the best pastoral solution is, according to the participants of the synod, to convince their Catholic faithful to stop believing in such nonsensical ideas. If this is really the pastoral solution of the diocese, I dare say that it is a wrong solution. My argument is that, as facts presented in research papers and other research elsewhere, the sorcery and witchcraft problems experienced by the people are not as simple as they think.

6	<i>Paurundang</i> ¹⁵	Rego	Kornel Krandus, Herasmus Atut, Alex Muda	67 55 59	Punished by being forced to eat the shit of pigs in public	2005
7	<i>Mawe</i>	Pacar	Dami Nabu	70	Publically tortured to death in a <i>rumah adat</i> (ancestral home)	2004
8	<i>Sasa</i>	Pacar	Emad Lalong	67	Attempted murder and the sorcerer's house was burned down by villagers	2014
9	Sae	Pacar	Domi Dandur		Attempted murder	1992
10	<i>Raja</i>	Ndoso	Petrus Nggut	67	Killed by his own children and relatives	2001
11	Rewas	Ndoso	Donatus Halal		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
12	Metang	Ndoso	Thomas Tahi		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
13	Kalo	Ndoso	Aloysius Talu		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
14	Raka	Ndoso	—		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
15	Puntu	Ndoso	—		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
16	Rawuk	Ndoso	—		Killed at cemetery (tomb)	2000s

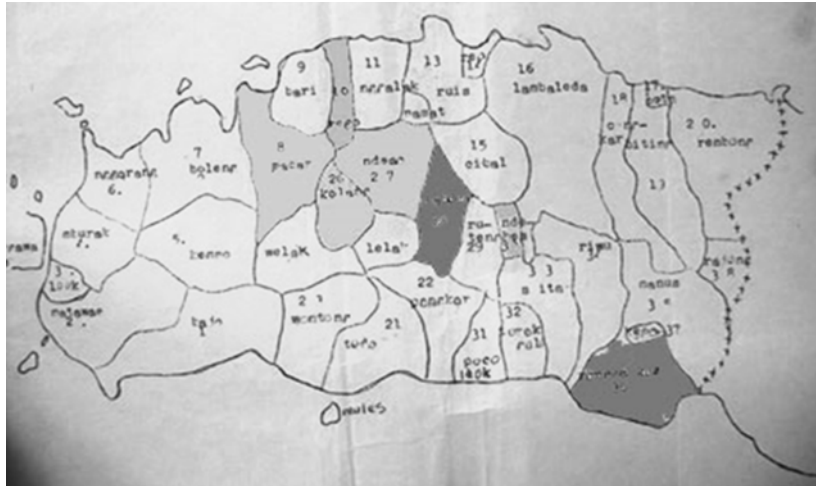
¹⁵ The villages in italic are four cases of witch-hunt that I was able to investigate during my three-month field research.

17	Kotok	Kolang	—		Killed (not known yet public or in secret)	2000s
18	Suka	Kolang	—		Killed	2000s
19	Pata	Kolang	—		Killed	2000s
20	Ranggu	Kolang	—		Killed	2000s
21	Monsok	Kolang	—		Killed	2000s
22	Dimpong	Rahong	—		Publically stoned to death	2000s
23	Lawi	Rahong	—		Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
24	Waese-pang	Rongga	—		Attempted murder and the sorcerer's house stoned by villagers	2013
25	Ling	Ndehes	—		Punished by being forced to drink the urine of the elders of his village in public	2016

Western Flores that today is divided into three districts—Eastern Manggarai District, Central Manggarai District, and Western Manggarai District—was traditionally divided into 39 regions as seen in Figure 3 (map). Yet from my short field research in order to get sample data on sorcery and witchcraft practices among the people of Manggarai as seen in Figure 2, I encountered four major findings.

First, during this very short field research I was able to collect data only from seven regions: Rego, with seven cases; Pacar, with three cases; Kolang, with five cases; Ndosso, with seven cases; Rahong, with two cases; Rongga and Ndehes with one case each. This means that the number of witch-hunts in the other 32 regions of Manggarai is still unknown.

Second, from the 1990s to 2016 at least, there were 25 witch-hunt cases just in seven regions of Manggarai: seven cases of attempted murder of witches or sorcerers; two cases in which the sorcerers or witches were only severely punished; and sixteen cases in which sorcerers or witches were publically killed, tortured or stoned to death.

Figure 3: 39 Regions of Manggarai

Out of these 25 witch-hunt cases, I was able to investigate only four, namely the one at the village of Paurundang in the region of Rego, at Mawe and Sasa in the region of Pacar, and at Raja in the region of Ndosu. The detailed stories regarding other cases, other than those in these four villages, are still in need of completion by future research.

Third, the trial of a witch or sorcerer normally goes through a long process. Usually it begins by observing weird events and signs in a community village. For instance, people get sick massively and when they go to hospitals the doctors would say that they have no problem with their health while in reality they feel very sick. Or doctors would simply say that they are not able to identify the problem. People, then, come back home and their sickness continues and often ends in death. The village community holds a public meeting to look for a solution.

In the case of Mawe in the region of Pacar, for instance, the community invited a diviner to help them find who were the witches or sorcerers among them. To make a long story short, the invited diviner asked all members of the village to shake hands with him one by one. For those who do not have black magic, nothing happens when shaking hands with the diviner. Yet one of them that owned black magic felt like he was caught by an electric power. That was the sign. Even so he denied that he had black magic. The members of the community, then, asked him to vow under oath that he did not have black magic while killing a black chicken as the symbol of the darkness of wrongdoing (sin). If he had had black magic, he and his family would

die and be extinct like the black chicken being slaughtered. Then he was asked to drink the fresh blood of the chicken. Seconds after drinking the fresh blood of that chicken, he was like a person in a state of being drunk and started revealing all evil deeds that he had done. The total number of victims harmed by his black magic was 38 persons in the last 15 years and two of them were still alive but very sick. People demanded he heal those two but he said that he could not. He said that he was only able to harm people but not to recover their health. People, then, went nuts and began torturing him to death in their *rumah adat gendang* or ancestral house.¹⁶

Fourth, out of the four cases I was able to investigate—Paurundang, Mawe, Sasa and Raja—the witch-hunt cases at Mawe and Sasa ended up in a state court. In the case of Sasa, for instance, the *ata janto* (the witch, sorcerer) ran away. He left his village of Sasa for another village when the villagers set up a plan to kill him. As a result, the angry village mob set his home on fire. The relatives of the *ata janto* brought the case to court. However, the subject of the case was no longer sorcery or witchcraft practices but the act of arson. To make a long story short, black magic as the reason for the arson was not acceptable to the court. The court convicted six men representing the villagers of Sasa and they were imprisoned for one year.¹⁷ In the case of Mawe, sorcery or witchcraft practices as the reason for the murder of an *ata janto*, even though the *ata janto* himself confessed his wrongdoing, also were not acceptable to the court. As a result, a man of Mawe, who had been democratically chosen to represent the villagers of Mawe, was jailed for 5 to 7 years.¹⁸

3. The Nature of Janto (Sorcery/Witchcraft) Practices

Terms Used

An inquiry into the nature of sorcery or witchcraft according to the experience of people in Flores can be done by observing the terms used to name the phenomena. Each of the five major ethnic groups in Flores has a proper term to name sorcery or witchcraft and sorcerer or witch as seen in Figure 4.

¹⁶ The story was reported by a group of villagers and their village headman on January 2, 2017.

¹⁷ The story was reported by the headman of Sasa Village on December 20, 2016.

¹⁸ The story was reported by a group of villagers and their village headman on January 2, 2017.

Figure 4: Terms used to name sorcery/witchcraft and sorcerer/witch among the people of Flores Island

Ethnic Group	Sorcery/ Witchcraft	Sorcerer/ Witch
Manggarai	<i>janto</i>	<i>ata janto</i>
Ngada, Nagekeo	<i>polo</i>	<i>ata polo</i>
Ende, Lio	<i>polo</i>	<i>ata polo</i>
Sikka	<i>u'en</i>	<i>ata u'en</i>
Lamaholot	<i>menaka'ang</i>	<i>ata menaka'ang</i>
Indonesian	<i>suanggi</i>	<i>orang bersuanggi</i>

As demonstrated in Figure 3, among the people of Manggarai the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is *janto* which literally means poison. Or, a more common complete term is *mbeko janto* (*mbeko* = science or knowledge) which means the science of poison. The term used for sorcerer or witch is *ata janto* (*ata* = person) or *ata mbeko janto* which means a person who owns a science of poison to harm or to poison his/her neighbors. But the poison (*janto*) meant here is not an ordinary poison like DDT or any other poisonous herb or material. Rather it is the poison of an attack by evil spirits, either directly or indirectly by using various media, commissioned by an evil person, *ata janto*. *Ata janto* or *ata mbeko janto* (sorcerer or witch) is a person who owns and collaborates with evil spirits in order to harm or to poison (*janto*) his/her neighbors. The people of Manggarai, therefore, name sorcery and witchcraft by emphasizing its effect on its intended victim, that is, poison that harms.

Among the people of Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka, the term used is somewhat different. The term they use is *polo* or *u'en* which simply means evil spirit. While the term used for sorcerer or witch is *ata polo* or *ata u'en* (*ata* = person) which means a person who owns evil spirits that he commissions or collaborates with in order to harm other human beings. Compared to the people of Manggarai, the people of Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka, then, name sorcery and witchcraft by underscoring the principal agent used by sorcerers and witches to harm others, that is, an evil spirit.

Among the people of Lamaholot the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is *menaka'ang*. It comes from two words, I was told by an informant: *mena* which literally means female genitals but is often uttered either by women or men in a rude manner to belittle or mock women (somewhat like “fuck you”) and *ka'ang* which means crows—

birds whose color is naturally black and which are commonly associated with evil spirits. While *ata menaka'ang* (sorcerer or witch) is a person who owns and collaborates with evil spirits in order to harm other people. Compared to the previous ethnic groups of Flores, it is clear that the people of Lamaholot give a name to sorcery or witchcraft by belittling or mocking it and at the same time identifying it with a black thing like a crow or with evil-doers that are believed to live in darkness.

Lastly, in Indonesian, as the national language of the country, the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is *suanggi* or *ilmu hitam*. The term *suanggi* means the evil spirit that has been manipulated by humans to harm other human beings. The person who manipulates or collaborates with the evil spirits is called *orang bersuanggi* which literally means someone who owns an evil spirit used or commissioned to harm fellow human beings. In Indonesian, the other term commonly used for sorcery or witchcraft is *ilmu hitam* which literally means black science. I assume that it is an Indonesian translation for black magic. The use of these two terms, *suanggi* (evil spirit) and *ilmu hitam* (black science, black magic), indicates that sorcery or witchcraft in the view of the peoples of Indonesia is a system of science or of knowledge commonly used to harm other people by collaborating with and commissioning evil spirits as its principal agents to execute the harmful mission.

In conclusion, despite the different terms used to name these monstrous phenomena, sorcery or witchcraft are, in the view of the people in Flores, evil practices carried out by a person to harm his/her fellow human beings or their property such as crops or cattle by mysteriously collaborating with and then commissioning or sending an evil spirit as its principal agent to execute the evil mission.

Evans-Pritchard's Categories

Many world scholars, however, following the categories defined by Edward Evans-Pritchard based on his research among the Azande people in Africa in 1937, claim that there are two major types of black magic: *sorcery* and *witchcraft*. A. D. J. Macfarlane, for instance, summarizes Evans-Pritchard's finding laying out the distinct difference as well as the similarity between the two as follows:

The distinction here is between different types of means: the end is similar. Both witches and sorcerers injure people. Among the Azande a person *is* a witch. Witchcraft is an inherent quality, whereas sorcerers *act* in a certain way. Sorcerers are conscious of their activities, whereas

witches, whose power is internal, may not be aware that they are witches until they are accused. While the witch is the vehicle of the power greater than himself, often the unwilling agent of vast evil forces, the sorcerer controls the power inherent in certain “medicines” or other objects [italic and other marks are originally from the author]. Although both are driven by antisocial feelings, the witch is permanently malicious, having inherited her power or been taught it very early in life, while the sorcerer is only dangerous at specific times and acquires the power of evil later in life by a more self-conscious transmission.¹⁹

In his own words, Evans-Pritchard describes the uniqueness of witchcraft by comparing it with other types of magic (*ngwa*) among the Azande as follows:

We are taking several distinct Zande ideas and are using for them a distinguishing symbol in English. To the Zande *mangu* (witchcraft) and *ngwa* (medicine or magic) are quite different things. *Mangu* is a hereditary trait which can be discovered in the stomach of a witch (*ira mangu*, possessor of *mangu*). It is a physiological fact and its functioning needs no use of the concreta of magic, the material substance of medicine, the spell, and the rite. *Ngwa* on the other hand is characterized by the special attribute of magic all over the world, the material element, the spell, the rite, the condition of the performer [all italics are originally from the author].²⁰

Some nocturnal birds and animals are very definitely associated with witchcraft and are thought to be the servants of human witches, and to be in league with them. Such are bats, which are universally feared for their evil attributes, and owls, which hoot forebodings of misfortune in the night. These nocturnal creatures are associated with witches because witchcraft is especially active at night The witch is asleep during the period of his activity on his bed in his hut, but he has dispatched the spirit of his *mangu* ... to accomplish his ends. The spirit of *mangu* removes parts of the spirit of the victim's flesh ... and devours it. The whole act of vampirism is a spir-

¹⁹ A. D. J. Macfarland, Definition of Witchcraft, in: Max Marwick, *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, 41.

²⁰ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Sorcery and Native Opinion, in: *ibid.*, 24-25.

itual one; the spirit of *mangu* removes and devours the spirit of the body.²¹

Echoing Evans-Pritchard's categories of black magic, sorcery and witchcraft, Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern succinctly define "witchcraft as the expression of a malignant power in a person's body and sorcery as the use of a magical craft or knowledge. Especially, what is labeled witchcraft is often seen as a consuming force. The witch eats the life power of the victim."²²

Looking at the definition of Evans-Pritchard of two main types of black magic, sorcery and witchcraft, it seems that the people of Flores do not distinguish the phenomena of black magic practices into these categories. They simply call the practices of black magic *janto* (Manggarai), *polo* (Ngada, Nagakeo, Ende and Lio), *u'en* (Sikka) and *menaka'ang* (Lamaholot), and the person who practices black magic is *ata janto* (Manggarai), *ata polo* (Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende and Lio), *ata u'en* (Sikka) and *ata menaka'ang* (Lamaholot). In a word, people in Flores do not have a category of black magic that parallels the black magic categories defined by Evans-Pritchard.

Looking at the detailed practice, however, what Evans-Pritchard categorizes as witchcraft and sorcery also exists among the people of Flores. When I interviewed various people at my home village at Rego, for instance, they said that those who practice black magic to harm others would do it in various ways. They can simply blow their spiritual power from a distance to harm their intended victims. They also can simply touch the intended victims such as babies or toddlers and they would get sick instantly. They would also go out at night in the forms of animals such as cats or big dogs or horses. Sometimes their spirits would go out in the middle of the night and appear as naked persons who, among the people of Manggarai, are called *poti laco* or *poti mbolang* which literally means naked devil or naked evil spirit or *poti ngeping* with his *mata mbere* or red eye for the people of Rego in West Manggarai which means the devil that sneaks in to harm people, normally at night,²³ or among the people of Lio in central Flores they are called *polo mburi mera* and among the people of Sikka in eastern-central Flores they are called *u'en ube merak*, which all mean naked and red evil spirits that come out of the asses of the witches.

²¹ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft among the Azande*, in: *ibid.*, 28-29.

²² Pamela J. Stewart/Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2004, 1-2.

²³ Focus Group Discussion at Rego, December 18, 2016.

Other than that, people at my home village, Rego, believe that the evil spirit with whom the person who practices black magic collaborates to harm his/her neighbors resides or lives inside the body of the person. The relationship between the two is so intimate—like the relationship between husband and wife—that the evil spirit is called *wina wa* which literally means second-hidden wife (if the person that practices black magic is a man) or *rona wa* which literally means second-hidden husband (if the person that practices black magic is a woman). In this way, the person and the evil spirit become one. When the person sleeps at night, this *wina wa* or *rona wa* (the evil spirit) leaves the body and goes out searching for victims.²⁴ According to Gregory L. Forth, the evil spirit that is called *wina wa* or *rona wa* by the people of Manggarai, is identified as *wa* by the Nage people in central Flores. At night the *wa* is believed to leave the body and in human or animal form goes out in search of victims. During this time, Forth reports, the mundane body of the person remains asleep and is able to awaken only once the *wa* has reentered it.²⁵ The persons that practice black magic in this way can fall under Evans-Pritchard's category of witches. The rest of the group of people that practice black magic use various media to harm their intended victims, both humans and properties such as crops and cattle. Under Evan-Pritchard's category, they can be identified as sorcerers.

The Motives of Janto

Like in other societies, witches or sorcerers bewitch others out of jealousy, be it due to social status, economic status, being successful in career or business or because of friction over everyday family matters. During the Focus Group discussions in my home village, people told me that the reason to be bewitched is quite often very insignificant and not serious. They simply have no mercy when it comes to deciding to bewitch others. They simply no longer have any rational or moral consideration. In regard to this, an interviewee at my home village said, "Fr. Alex, if we who have no black magic and get angry with our neighbors, no matter how serious the problem is and how angry we are with our neighbors, we still at the end have mercy and have room to forgive our neighbors. We will not kill our neighbors no matter how angry we are. But those who have black magic, *ata janto*,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gregory L. Forth, *Beneath the Volcano: Cosmology, Religion and the Classifications of Spirits among the Nage* (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Serie 177), Leiden: KITLV Press 1998, 57.

even though the reason to get angry with their opponent is very insignificant or not very serious, they will have no mercy and bewitch the person to death. Why? The answer is because their actions are totally under the control of evil spirits.”²⁶

The victims are normally their neighbors or their own relatives such as uncles, aunts, nieces, cousins, the in-laws—sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, etc. The 38 victims of the *ata janto* who confessed his evil practices of sorcery at Mawe, for instance, all were related to him and lived in the same small village as their brother *ata janto*. Each of the victims also had friction with their brother *ata janto* ranging from small ones to serious ones. At my own village Rego, I was told by my relatives on December 18, 2016, that a female *ata janto*, popularly known as *Ended Kosmas* who is 70 years old, was rumored to have even bewitched her own daughter-in-law to death. Two days later, on December 20, 2016, I went to a diviner, Patronela, at Munting village, about 8 km away from Rego, to dig out her experience regarding the phenomena of *janto* and *ata janto*.

Among many other things, Petronela told me that in 2008 all adults from Rego village, whether they were witches/sorcerers or not, including an *ata janto*—a female witch—came to her home to vow that they did not have black magic. If they had black magic they must renounce their black magic practices and voluntarily turn in all of the media they used to use—magic knives, oil or herbs—or else they would have faced torture and even the death penalty by their local authorities. Yet eight years later, exactly on December 11, 2016, this *ata janto* went to Petronela and stayed overnight at her home. All night she demanded that Petronela give all her magic media back to her because she was really in need of them. But Petronela refused to comply with her request. Petronela said, “Fr. Alex, this *ata janto* was here last week—on the 11th of December 2016. Unconsciously she revealed all her secret evil sorcery practices. Can you imagine, Fr. Alex? She said, ‘I have even bewitched my own daughter-in-law. She humiliated me all the time because she regretted that she had married a man from a very poor family. I just could no longer stand it. So I bewitched her and she died afterwards.’ I [*Pendoa* Petronela] said, ‘So you also want to bewitch me like that? No way, my Lord Jesus is more powerful than your evil spirit.’”

Other *ata janto* also bewitch others for economic gain. The people of Manggarai are quite familiar with the so-called *mbeko janto plambar*. It is a witchcraft practice that makes the intended victims get a deadly stomach ache followed by diarrhea. When a male *ata janto*

²⁶ Focus Group discussion with a group of people at Rego.

would set up a plan to visit his relatives at a neighboring village, he would send his evil spirit, his *wina wa*, in advance to go as a forerunner of the *ata janto* and randomly attack one or two persons at the intended village. Upon the arrival of the *ata janto*, people would naturally be busy helping their loved one who is suddenly sick. And the *ata janto* would calm them down, and without their request he would offer his help by giving a glass of water that he had silently put a spell upon. In a few seconds, the sick person would recover his/her health again. Then the *ata janto* would automatically be viewed as God's messenger and upon his departure he would get various material, economic things as kick-back for his favor. In fact, he would have been the one, through his *wina wa* (evil spirit), who bewitched the one or two persons in the village to get sick.

Ata janto also want people—especially their neighbors—to know that they have black magic. This would force their neighbors to always behave themselves when dealing with them—the *ata janto*. Their neighbors would, for instance, always avoid being rude with them. If an *ata janto* wanted to borrow some money, people would have no choice but to lend the money. In regard to this my own brother Vinsensius Jerhani said:

Dealing with *ata janto*, we lose all the battles. If you don't give it, then it would be a reason for the *ata janto* to bewitch you. And if you send a bill for the debts, it also can be a reason that the *ata janto* will bewitch you. You also cannot easily accuse *ata janto* of bewitching you because it is very difficult to have physical proof that they did it. Here in our village, we have a cousin who is well known for his *mbeko janto* [black magic, sorcery/witchcraft practices]. He has borrowed various things from his various neighbors—a number of buffalos, pigs, chickens and more than ten million Rupiahs of money. Up until today, nobody dares to send him a bill because they are afraid of his *mbeko janto*. A buffalo as the bride-price (dowry) of our oldest sister in 1986 was borrowed by this *ata janto* and up to this day [2016] our dad, the uncle of this *ata janto*, does not dare to even talk about it with that *ata janto*. Do you want to get that bride-price buffalo, or do you want to save your life?²⁷

In conclusion, *ata janto* quite often use their state of being *ata janto* as a weapon to bully their neighbors for economic gain. They

²⁷ Reported by my brother, Vinsensius Jerhani, and witnessed by my dad, Yohanes Kerung, at Rego on December 15, 2016.

are social oppressors. However, no matter how oppressive they are, in general they are economically poor. Their family life is not very good, not happy and they are generally not successful in any business. Their children fail at school and so forth.

4. Para Pendoa and Their Charism

No matter how real the phenomena of *janto* or sorcery/witchcraft, black magic are, not all people, either in European modern society or in poor villages in Flores, believe in the existence of sorcery and witchcraft practices. In regard to this Max Marwick, writing an “Introduction” for a book he edited in 1970, *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings*, says that in the modern European world of the 1970s, witches and sorcerers are often presented as myths and fairytales. This made modern Europeans believe that sorcery and witchcraft practices are not real but merely a fantasy. Yet in contrast to this notion the accounts regarding esoteric practices of witches prove that sorcery and witchcraft have never died out in European modern society.²⁸ I would say the same is true all over Indonesia, particularly in Flores.

As already described in the introduction of this study, the phenomena of sorcery and witchcraft practices take place in almost every village and pose a real threat to people in Flores. It is a life-threatening invisible monster. In spite of this, however, many people in Flores doubt its existence and its evil practices. Educated people such as doctors and nurses are prone to not believing that sorcery and witchcraft practices are possible causes of sickness. Even some of the villagers themselves also have doubts about it. They, for instance, say, “Is it possible that human beings—the sorcerers—collaborate with the invisible evil spirits to harm others? How can that happen? How is it possible that Satan makes you sick, makes your head ache or stomach ache?” In regard to this a doctor told me once, “Father Alex, I checked up on a patient once at our hospital here in Ruteng and the person positively had a liver-problem—acute hepatitis. Yet three days later he passed away and all people at his village claimed that a sorcery practice caused his death. The whole family, then, went after a man suspected to be a sorcerer. For me, that is nonsense and wrong. The man who died was my patient and he had acute hepatitis.”²⁹ Contrary to this stand, the experiences of the so-called *para pendoa* in Flores show that *janto*, *polo*, *u'en* or *menaka'ang* (black

²⁸ Max Marwick, Introduction, in: id., *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, 11.

²⁹ Doctor Ica spoke with me in Ruteng on January 3, 2017.

magic, sorcery/witchcraft) truly exist; how it works can be detected and its deadly power can be defeated by the superpower of the Christian Triune God.

As briefly stated in the introduction of this study, in the last 15 years or so, Catholic Christians as well as followers of other religions, particularly Muslims, popularly known as *para pendoa*, have been hunting down the practices of sorcery and witchcraft in Flores. These *para pendoa* are believed to have a special charism to identify and even tame the invisible supernatural power of evil spirits manipulated through the practices of black magic, especially those using certain media. Following the category made by Evans-Pritchard, the ones they hunt are sorcery practices. The *para pendoa* claim to be able to detect the hidden locations of media secretly put by the sorcerers at the houses of the intended victims. The common materials used as media are various, for instance, some strands of hair, a piece of a match, an old rusty pin or hairpin, an old rusty zipper, rocks, broken glasses, sharp pieces of bamboo, roots of weird trees mixed with certain strange oils, and so forth.

All *para pendoa* at different places and regions in the Island of Flores reveal that these media emit some kind of strong energy that causes heat radiation in the vicinity and that is believed to cause sickness and even death to its intended victims or their property—crops or cattle. The *para pendoa* can feel the deadly heat power of these media and marvelously their radiation will subside or disappear by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. Then the health of its victims slowly improves.

During my field research, I was able to meet and interview five *pendoa*—four are in the ethnic group of Manggarai and one is in Sikka. Among those who are in Manggarai, two *pendoa* are lay Catholics from my village, Rego, in the Western Manggarai District—Vinsensius Nadjo and John Tarni; one *pendoa* is Fr. Aloysius Gamur, the Parish Priest of Cancar in Central Manggarai District; the fourth Fr. Antonius Pea, SVD, who is working as a spiritual director in an SVD Retreat Center in the Eastern Manggarai District. The *pendoa* I interviewed in the Sikka District is Br. Hilarius Embu, SVD, living at St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero—known as the biggest SVD formation house in the world today in terms of the significant number of its seminarians.

Pendoas Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni

Pendoas Vincent Nadjo (60) and John Tarni (40) embarked on this ministry in 2002 after listening to a special call through a vision and

dream. Each of them was mysteriously asked in a number of dreams to pray for eight months. Then, to make a long story short, they ended up having this special capability to detect media of sorcery practices. The media are usually buried underground in places where people usually pass through such as at the entrance of a house, on a clothes-line, near furnaces or near animal cages. *Pendoas* Vincent and John said that they can detect or sniff out the presence of these media from 200 meters away. The media also have heat radiation and therefore they must be removed carefully. In their own words, Vincent and John explained it this way:

Fr. Alex, the media taken are hot and if touched with bare hands we will feel as if we had an electric shock. Therefore we always remove them very carefully after sprinkling the spots where they are located with the sacramental holy water which neutralizes some kind of toxic gas of the media. Then we pry them out by using machetes or crowbars. Many people here do not believe in what we have been doing. They say that we are the ones who bury the media and then retrieve them again. The reason, they argue, is that we always remove the media at night. In reality, we do so simply because the media emanate some sort of gas or vapor or smoke which can be easily seen only in the evening with the help of the light of a flashlight.³⁰

It is believed that the toxic gas of these media is what makes their intended victims get sick. The power of the gas emanating from these media also has a certain radius because the victims would feel sick or do not feel good only when they stay at the locations where the media are placed. Once they go away from those places, they would feel okay again. In regard to this, I interviewed various people in the village. A lady whose home is next to my parents' home said:

Fr. Alex, I do believe the evilness of *janto*. In 2007, I was very sick. I had a problem with my stomach. I felt scared and insecure all the time with no clear reason. But this occurred only when I was at my house. If I went away from home—to our garden at Libo (3 km away from home), for instance, I was okay. I felt fresh, safe, happy, and had no abdominal pain. I was sick only when I came back home. I went to the hospital, yet all doctors found no problem with my overall health. My husband, then,

³⁰ Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni, interviewed at Rego on December 18, 2016.

called *Pendoas* Vincent and Tarni. To our surprise, they detected sorcery media placed at three spots at our house. After the removal of all these media by these two *pendoas*, I have been okay up to this day. I feel no more abdominal pain or insecurity when I am home.³¹

Who places these media? Are they placed by sorcerers or by evil spirits as the principal agent commissioned by a sorcerer? Most likely the second possibility is the answer. The media detected by the *para pendoa* are found in various places including under tiles or cement or under stones that have sat there for ages. Once *Pendoas* Vincent and John sniffed out a medium and finally they found it under a rock. They had to take it out using a crowbar. To the surprise of many, they found a package the size of a fist, wrapped in a red cloth. Inside the bundle, they found broken glass, one coin, ash from the kitchen and a blade-sharpened piece of bamboo. Of course, we find it difficult to believe that these items were placed under that natural rock/stone by an ordinary human being or even by a sorcerer himself/herself. People believe that it is the work of an evil spirit commissioned by an *ata janto*—a sorcerer. All people I interviewed claimed the same mysterious phenomena.³²

Pendoas Fr. Aloysius Gamur and Fr. Antonius Pea, SVD

Fr. Aloysius Gamur (47), a diocesan parish priest of Cancar in Central Manggarai District, and Fr. Anton Pea, SVD (45),³³ currently working at an SVD retreat center in Eastern Manggarai District, also have had similar experiences. They are believed to have a charism to detect sorcery media. In separate interviews, they said that the sorcery media have some kind of toxic gas yet it can be neutralized only by calling God's power in prayer and sprinkling the toxic sorcery media with sacramental holy water. Both Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius claim that actually many people fall sick not because of a natural medical illness but quite often because they are attacked by the so-called negative energy. This negative energy can be improper home construction, gas in the ground inside their homes, ground water flow under their homes or evil spirits sent by *ata janto*—sorcerers.

³¹ Ende Rio, interviewed at Rego on December 14, 2016.

³² On January 2, 2017, I witnessed how John and Vincent removed two media found in a house of a family at Rego.

³³ I interviewed Fr. Aloysius Gamur at his rectory at Cancar on January 6, 2017, and Fr. Antonius Pea, SVD, at the SVD Retreat Center, Kisol, on January 7, 2017.

As for evil spirits that possess people, those spirits are generally sent by sorcerers because of, for example, jealousy toward their intended victims. The victims could be humans or property such as crops or cattle in the form of sudden attacks of rats, locusts or wild boars in their farms. Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius are able to sniff out the presence of the media placed at the homes of people coming to them for help. They can distinguish if people are sick due to natural disease or due to gas or ground water flow under their homes or because of sorcery practices.

According to Fr. Aloysius, the media that are commonly used by sorcerers are hair, wood-chops, gravel, nails, charcoal, whiting, oil, yarn, ropes or perfumes, bracelets or even hand rings. Then these media are mysteriously placed at the homes of potential victims, in the door jambs, inside the walls, on the ceilings or on the driveways toward the main house. Fr. Aloysius testified that if these media can be retrieved and disposed of, the owners of the house, who often complain they suffer from an unclear source of sickness, will instantly feel fresh, healthy and safe.

Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius claimed that they are able to detect the types of the media used from a distance and the total number and locations where the media are placed at the homes of potential victims asking for their help. Like other *pendoa*, such as Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni, Fr. Aloysius said that the media have some sort of poisonous gas. Nonetheless the power of these toxic sorcery media can be eliminated by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. If the toxic sorcery media are placed under cement or tiles, the cement or tile must be destroyed to remove the toxic sorcery media. Otherwise, the sacramental holy water cannot penetrate the material to reach the medium.

When asked if *para pendoa* are able to know the sorcerers who place those toxic media that harm their neighbors, all *para pendoa*—Fr. Aloysius Gamur, Fr. Anton Pea, Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni—claimed that they are, but they keep it secret for fear of possible conflicts between the victims and sorcerers because more often than not the sorcerers are related to the victims.³⁴ In his own words, Fr. Aloysius Gamur said in this regard:

³⁴ *Pendoa* Br. Hilarius Embu, SVD, at St. Paul, Ledalero, refused to answer honestly whether he is able to identify the sorcerers or witches that bewitch their neighbors. He said, “I am not interested in knowing and going after the sorcerers or witches because you can end up in litigation with them in court!”

I can identify the sorcerers concerned [who placed the toxic media], even their age, their gender! I also know whether the sorcerers who placed the media are still alive or already dead. I can know the presence of the media from a great distance [even thousands of km away]. But I keep it secret from the victims to avoid open conflict between the victims and sorcerers. The sorcerers generally have a close relationship with their intended victims such as extended family members, relatives or acquaintances. Hardly ever is there no relationship between the victims and the perpetrators of sorcery practices. Usually the media have been placed at the intended spots for a long time. The longer a medium is placed, the higher the power of its venom. It rarely occurs that once the medium is placed at an intended spot, its intended victims fall sick instantly, unless the toxic media are placed in the food or drink consumed by its intended victim. But no matter how powerful the evil spirits manipulated by sorcerers, they are easily defeated by God's power. God is superior to evil spirits of every kind. My spiritual weapons are the Apostles' Creed and invocations of the Saints. Evil spirits will instantly leave the possessed and sick if in prayer I call for the help of heavenly armies—the angels and saints—if we believe in them.³⁵

Pendoa Br. Hilarius Embu, SVD

Br. Hilarius Embu, SVD, is a member of the community of St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero, Flores, that belongs to the Society of the Divine Word.³⁶ By looking at the facts of what he has been doing, Br. Hilarius is believed to have a kind of charism precisely like the aforementioned Catholic *pendoa*. By using his mission cross, he is

³⁵ Aloysius Gamur was interviewed at Cancar, on January 6, 2017.

³⁶ Br. Hilarius Embu, SVD, a native of Flores, is now in his sixties. As an SVD brother he once specialized in agriculture and needless to say he is knowledgeable in biology and chemistry among other subjects. In the last five years or so, however, he has not been able to manage to work as a gardener due to a light problem with his vision. He no longer can see as well as he once could. To make a long story short, he has been forbidden by his superiors to work as a gardener. Instead, he is to enjoy some kind of early retirement and just live in St. Paul Seminary at Ledalero without having many things to do. But to the surprise of many, Br. Hilarius has quietly become a *pendoa* like any other lay Catholic *pendoa*.

able to identify and find the media that are mysteriously placed strategically, sometimes in hidden places, by sorcerers to harm their intended victims. The media Br. Hilarius identified and found are precisely the same as those identified and found by other Catholic *pendoa*. The media were discovered in various places such as a door jamb, at the top of a window, within walls, under the tiles of a house floor, in the wardrobe, in a bolster pillow, in a closet, in human hair, or even inside the genitals (vagina) of a teenage girl. Br. Hilarius claims that the media emanate some kind of heat radiation believed to cause sickness and even death to victims.

Unlike other lay Catholic *pendoa*, however, Br. Hilarius uses an additional diagnostic technique. He has tested the media he found from the victims of the sorcerers with an analog multimeter.³⁷ If he tested a medium, say an old rusty zipper, the pointer of the multimeter would quickly go up to a number between 500-2000, which means that the medium has strong electrical radiation in it. The same thing happens if he tested a medium in the form of a piece of a used match. Conversely, the pointer of the multimeter would not move when he tested other ordinary zippers or other plain matches that have not been used as a medium by sorcerers or witches.

The heat and a sort of electric radiation of the media will subside and eventually disappear after being sprinkled with sacramental holy water (consisting of water and salt which has been blessed by a priest) while invoking the power of God the Holy Trinity. At first, Br. Hilarius thought that the electrical radiation of the media disappeared due to the salt factor contained in sacramental holy water. Then Br. Hilarius sprinkled the medium with plain water mixed with ordinary, unblessed salt. The result was that the electric radiation of the medium did not disappear. Br. Hilarius also tested it by sprinkling the medium with water that had been prayed over by *atambeko* (the maker of white magic or a diviner). The result was the same as the previous test. That is, the electric radiation of the medium did not disappear nor subside except by using the sacramental holy water.

The Procedures of Br. Hilarius' Special Ministry

Br. Hilarius said that he began to know of his special call in 1987 but he did not develop it due to his main career as a gardener of the SVD society. He started to develop it only in 2013 when a number of sick people came to him asking for his help. This call was increasing-

³⁷ A multimeter is a tool used to measure direct voltage, direct current and resistance, for example, the degree of electricity or electric material in batteries, radios and other electronics.

ly apparent in 2013 after he prayed the Hail Mary 350 times in his room. After completion of this long time of prayer, Br. Hilarius felt like he had a vitamin tablet in his throat and was trying to swallow it. He tried to remove it with an artificial cough, as people usually do to clear up the esophagus, but he could not remove the thing that tasted like a vitamin tablet from his throat. When he started serving people who were in need of help, he then slowly began to understand that this is a special ministry entrusted to him by the Lord.

To make a long story short, according to Br. Hilarius, the means he uses in this special ministry are: 1) his Mission Cross,³⁸ 2) sacramental holy water, 3) the liver, heart and gall of fish (cf. Tobit 6:1-9.17; Acts 19:13-20) for fumigation and the burning of toxic media and 4) the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. The procedure of his ministry is as follows:

In the first phase, usually those who are sick or their family members would come to Br. Hilarius at his residence at St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero. They would narrate the types of complaints regarding their health. Then Br. Hilarius usually would ask, "Has he/she (have you) gone for a medical checkup? What did the doctor say? What were the results of the laboratory tests?" Normally the sick or their family members would say, "Yes we/he/she did! But the doctors said that I am okay. Or the doctors could not identify what is wrong with me. The results of the laboratory examination were also okay."

Second: In the following stage, the family of the sick would pick up Br. Hilarius to go to their home. Then with his Mission Cross in hand, Br. Hilarius would begin detecting the possible presence of: 1) sorcery media, 2) gas or ground water flow beneath their home, 3) underground heavy metal and 5) radiation of phosphine (PH₃), that is, possible radiation from human bones buried beneath the home of the sick (for example, from an old grave).

Underground Phosphine (PH₃) and Its Antidote

According to Br. Hilarius, phosphine (PH₃) can be neutralized with aluminum hydroxide (Al(OH)₃) to become aluminum phosphine (AlPh₄).

³⁸ A Mission Cross is given to all Catholic religious missionaries when they are formally sent by their superiors to work in the mission field.

Underground Water Flow or Gas and Their Antidotes

Water or gas in the ground can be neutralized with calcium (Ca) + Water (H₂O) to become calcium hydroxide (Ca(OH)₂). For calcium, lime can be used, for example a white plaster or whiting (CaCO₃) or black fibers of palm trees. Br. Hilarius says that black fibers of palm trees contain six single chemical elements: 1) sodium (Na); 2) calcium (Ca); 3) potassium (K); 4) aluminum (Al); 5) magnesium (Mg); and 6) silicon (Si). The trick is that the black fibers of palm trees or limestone are buried, resulting in the cutting of the path of underground water flow or gas that enters the zone.

The existence of water or gas in the ground under a house can be detected by using a pendulum or Mission Cross. There are two possibilities: 1) If there is underground water flow in the zone, the rotary motion of a pendulum or Mission Cross will be clockwise (from left to right). 2) If there is underground gas in the zone, the rotary motion of the pendulum or Mission Cross will be counter-clockwise (from right to left). How is it properly done? The pendulum or Mission Cross is held by its rope or chain. The *pendoa* holds the pendulum or Mission Cross in the air without moving it. If there is water or gas in the zone, the pendulum or Mission Cross will automatically move and rotate, by itself, either in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, depending on whether or not there is water or gas in the ground.

Underground Heavy Metal and Its Antidote

In general, heavy metal can be neutralized by using coconut shell charcoal, tea leaves or tamarind seed flour. Iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), and silver (Ag) can be neutralized by using coconut shell charcoal, while copper (Cu) can be neutralized with tannin that exists in the leaves of tamarind or its seeds. Specifically for tamarind seeds, they must be fried dry, then pounded until they become soft. Then the tamarind powder is sprinkled on top of the place where there is heavy metal underground.

Sorcery Media and Their Antidotes

According to Br. Hilarius, in Indonesia there are three types of sorcery media, based on where they are placed. The first type is called *santet* when the media are placed in open places such as at a door jamb, in a bag, in a cabinet or in a pillow. The second type is called *tenung* when the media are placed underground. Among people from the East-central district of Sikka, they are called *doti*; and among people from the districts of Ngada, Nakekeo, Ende and Lio,

they are called *buru*. The third type is called *guna-guna* when the media are placed in favorite things of the intended victims such as clothing, food, drink or cosmetics. All these sorcery media believed to be mysteriously placed by evil spirits that are manipulated by sorcerers can be easily neutralized by the Divine power in sacramental holy water.

In the third and last phase, Br. Hilarius would pray for the sick or the possessed in the following ritual order:

- 1) The Sign of the Cross; 2) Act of Contrition; 3) Lord Have Mercy;
- 4) Spontaneous Opening Prayer; 5) Reading from the Book of Tobit 6:1-9.17; and Acts 19:13-20; 6) The Gospel of Lk 9:37-43 regarding Jesus who casts a demon out of a boy, or Mark 5:1-20 regarding the healing of a man on the Sabbath or the possessed at Gerasa; 7) A short reflection or comment on the bible readings; 8) If the person who is being prayed for is possessed by an evil spirit, sing *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come Holy Spirit). If not, skip this step and proceed to step 9; 9) Apostles' Creed; 10) Decontamination of the possessed by using the dried heart, gall and liver of fish; 11) Burning the sorcery media while reciting the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel; 12) The Laying of the Cross upon the sick or the possessed while reciting a prayer of liberation from the sickness or from the evil spirit; 13) the Sprinkling of Sacramental Holy Water upon the sick or the possessed; 14) Reciting the Our Father, Hail Mary (three times), and Glory Be to the Father; 15) Litany of the Saints (reciting only some of them); 16) Concluding Prayer; and 17) The Sign of the Cross.

Br. Hilarius said, "This is what I have been doing. It's very biblical and Christian. Where is the superstition in what I do, of which many accuse me?" Br. Hilarius said this because there are a number of SVD priests and brothers at St. Paul Seminary Community who water down what he has been doing by identifying him as a self-styled shaman and a person that believes in vain.³⁹

5. Theological Reflection of Sacramental Holy Water

There are a number of major questions regarding the existence of sorcery and witchcraft practices. How is it possible that evil spirits can be manipulated by humans known as sorcerers or witches? Is it possible that the power of evil spirits can enter and animate certain material things that will become their media to harm human beings?

³⁹ I formally interviewed Br. Hilarius at Ledalero, St. Paul Seminary, in Flores on January 29, 2017.

Why cannot the evil sorcery and witchcraft practices become bygone things after people have embraced the Christian faith and other rational modern culture? How can it be possible that sacramental holy water can neutralize the toxic power of sorcery media as experienced by *pendoa* that are reported here in this paper?

First of all, belief in the existence of Satan or evil spirits is part and parcel of the Judeo-Christian faith tradition. It is in the Bible. First, Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan (cf. Gen 3:1-7). Jesus Himself, the Second Adam, was tempted by Satan in the desert before He rock-and-rolled His public ministry (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). During His public ministry on earth, Jesus authoritatively dispelled demons or evil spirits that possessed humans (cf. Lk 9:49-50; Mark 5:1-20; Lk 6:17-19; Mt 4:23-25). It is a clear sign that God is superior to Satan and other evil spirits. According to Christian tradition, Satan and demons or other evil spirits were at first good angels created by God but, due to their envy, they became evil and were punished by being expelled from heaven;⁴⁰ and since then they have been looking for various opportunities to tempt humans to follow their steps to disobey God⁴¹ in all aspects of their lives.

Beside bad, disobedient angels, the Judeo-Christian faith also believes in the existence of good angels created by God. The Catholic Church teaches that by their nature they are spirits or invisible spiritual beings and by their office or by their role or by what they do they are the servants and messengers of God to convey His messages to humans; on behalf of God, they help and protect humans.⁴² The Catholic Church further teaches that the whole life of the church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels and even from infancy to death, humans are guided by their care and intercession.

This basic frame of the Judeo-Christian faith's belief is seen in Figure 5. That is, the omnipotent God—the Creator of all things, visible (world of creatures and cosmos) and invisible (world of spirits)—is on top and then the spirits are below. The spirits are divided in two. There are good spirits that are simply called angels and bad or evil spirits that are popularly called Satan, the devil or demons. The angels, among other things, serve to help human beings and human beings can turn to them for help and intercession. Bad spirits—the

⁴⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1994, article No. 391.

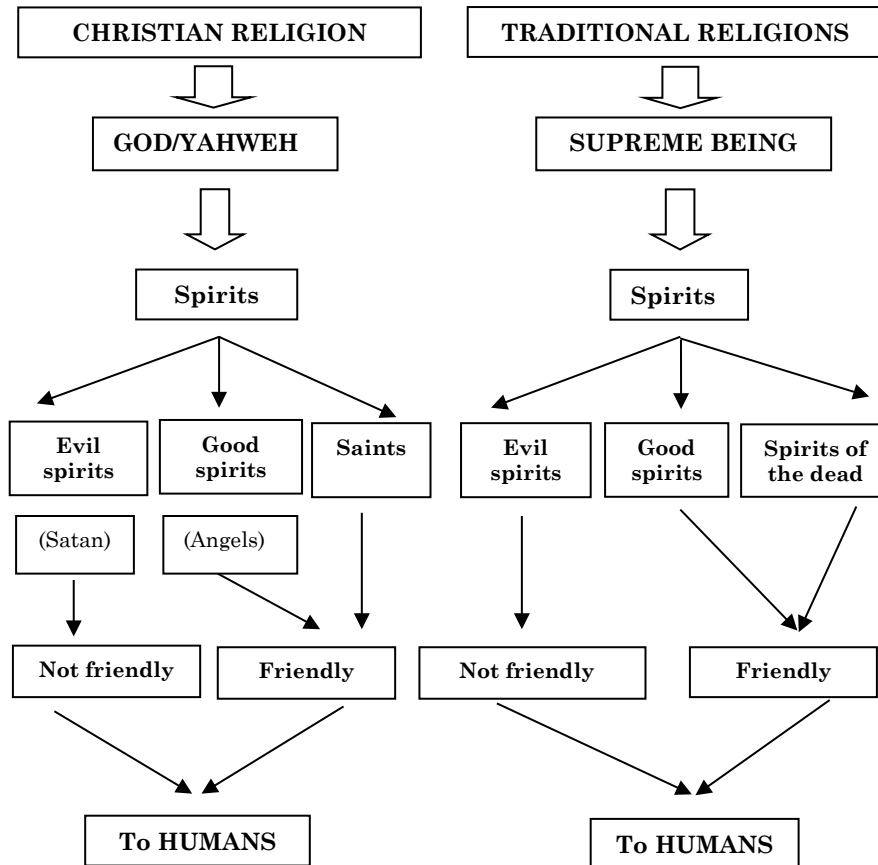
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, No. 394.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Nos. 329, 332.

fallen angels—on the other hand always look for opportunities to tempt and harm human beings.

This structure of Judeo-Christian belief is similar to the structure of belief of all traditional religions of the world including those of the five major ethnic groups of Flores, Indonesia. That is, the omnipotent Absolute Being—the Creator of all things visible (world of creatures and cosmos) and invisible (world of spirits)—are on top and then the spirits are below. The spirits are also divided in two: good spirits and evil spirits. People like the five major ethnic groups in Flores, Indonesia, who still cherish their traditional religions, believe that the good spirits are friendly to humans. They are the messengers of the Absolute Being to, among other things, protect human beings and other creatures. The evil spirits are believed to be unfriendly to humans and can be manipulated or collaborated with by humans to harm other human beings.

Figure 5: The basic structure of the belief of the Christian religion and Traditional religion



We are back to one of the questions in regard to the study of sorcery and witchcraft practices. How can it be possible that evil spirits can be manipulated, collaborated with and even commissioned by evil people—sorcerers and witches—to harm other human beings who are neighbors or relatives of the sorcerers and witches? The answer is, I would argue, that it is possible. Like we can turn to good spirits, either of Christianity (angels) or of the traditional religions, and collaborate with them for *constructive* goals, humans also—evil humans (sorcerers and witches)—can turn to evil spirits and collaborate with them for *destructive* goals, that is, to harm people and their property (homes, crops and cattle), or to make people sick or possessed. Even

though it is difficult to prove, physically, I argue that evil spirits always stand by waiting for evil humans to collaborate with them to disobey God, as believed in Christianity, by doing evil things.

Now let us turn to another question. Is it possible that the harmful power of Satan, of demons or of the evil spirits can enter sorcery media and then can emanate its toxic power to harm human beings? The answer is also an emphatic yes. The reason is, I would argue, that that is exactly part of the Catholic Church's belief system. That is, in accordance with sacramental theology, the Catholic Church believes that its ordained ministers—priests or bishops—can invoke God to convey His power to enter materials such as water and salt so that they may contain God's power which can protect human beings from any harm including that which comes from the attacks of evil spirits commissioned by sorcerers and witches. The sacramental holy water and salt, then, operate as media that, called by humans—Catholic priests—come or enter with divine power into water and salt. The result is that the water and salt are now no longer ordinary water and ordinary salt but water and salt that have been animated by divine power and these divine power-animated media—holy water and salt—are able to heal people or expel any evil spirit.

I would argue that the collaboration between sorcerers and evil spirits operates in the same way. Evil human beings, the sorcerers and witches, also can invoke the power of evil spirits, through their own ritual system to enter sorcery media that can harm their fellow human beings—their relatives or friends. But the good news is that, based on the actual experience of *para pendoa* in Flores, God's power that exists in sacramental holy water and salt is superior to the power of evil spirits in sorcery media. The toxic power of evil spirits in sorcery media can be easily neutralized by the Divine power of sacramental holy water. In regard to this, the Catholic Church fervently teaches, concerning the non-infinity of Satan and other evil spirits: "The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature."⁴³ The logic is that since Satan and all other evil spirits are only creatures, they can be easily defeated by their Creator—God.

Other than the sacramental holy water and salt that have been proven able to neutralize toxins of sorcery media, there also are a number of people's stories which revealed the superiority of divine power over Satan's and over evil spirits' power. It seems that magic items or sorcery media cannot survive if they are stored together with sacred Catholic objects such as a statue of Jesus, a statue of the Vir-

⁴³ Ibid., No. 395.

gin Mary or a Cross of Jesus. *Bapak* Biono, the headman of Rego village, for instance, revealed his weird experience in this regard: “In 2010 I had a guest staying at my house for a couple of days. He was a merchant. Later on I discovered that he is an *ata janto*—a sorcerer. One day, a bottle of this man’s talisman oil was accidentally left at my house when he went out to sell his wares. Without the slightest suspicion, I took the bottle and put it in a safe place together with holy Catholic artifacts such as a statue of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary, a Rosary and a Cross of Jesus. Soon after, this bottle exploded and its contents spilled all over the holy Catholic objects. When its owner became aware of what had occurred with his talisman oil, he was very nervous and asked to leave my home with an hour’s notice.”⁴⁴ Eduardus Ceo narrated a similar story. In 1992 he received a small bottle of talisman oil from someone that, later on, he discovered was a sorcerer. He stored the bottle near the statue of the Virgin Mary and the rosary and soon after the very meager amount of oil from that bottle leaked out into a large area in his house.⁴⁵

The last remaining question often asked by many is why have evil sorcery and witchcraft practices not become a bygone thing after people have embraced the Christian faith. Or why has Christianity failed to wipe out or suppress the evil practices of sorcery and witchcraft? Definitely sorcery and witchcraft have been widely practiced by various groups of people no matter what their ethnicity or religion are. Sorcery and witchcraft existed in ancient Europe and Egypt and still exist today in many modern societies around the world including among Asian Muslims, Hindus, Confucians, Buddhists and Christians. Flores is a predominantly Catholic island in Indonesia. The sorcerers and witches who were hunted, tortured to death or otherwise killed in a number of cases in seven regions of Manggarai in Flores were all Catholics. People I interviewed said that these people went to church on Sunday, prayed rosaries in May and October and yet, at the same time, they collaborated with evil spirits to harm their neighbors. Why?

There are a couple of possible answers. First, going to church and praying the rosary can be just camouflage. Second, their Christian faith has not been able to evangelize their way of life and way of thinking. Third, there is a dualism of religion—worshipping God and worshipping evil spirits at the same time. Lastly, sorcery and witch-

⁴⁴ This informant revealed his experience during a Focused Group Discussion at Rego on December 18, 2016.

⁴⁵ This informant revealed his experience during a Focused Group Discussion at Rego on December 18, 2016.

craft practices as a collaboration between evil humans and evil spirits to harm other human beings will not become a bygone thing as long as Satan and other evil spirits still exist. The free choice now is in the hands of humans. People are free to choose between two options. That is, either you choose God and collaborate with Him and His good messengers—angels and other good spirits—to pursue constructive goals or you choose to collaborate with evil spirits to pursue destructive goals.

Conclusion

One of the conclusions of this research is that the invisible power of the evil spirits does exist. It operates through sorcery and witchcraft practices. It is real. The power of Satan and other evil spirits can be manipulated by humans known as sorcerers or witches by invoking the power of invisible spirits into certain media to harm any intended victim, either directly (witchcraft practices) or indirectly through media (sorcery practices). Yet this invisible power of the manipulated evil spirits can be defeated by God's own power transferred into sacramental holy water. According to Catholic theology, ordained priests can invoke God's divine protective and healing power to enter into water and salt so that the water and salt become a material containing the power of God Himself. Then, through this blessed material, God Himself can dispel any evil force on behalf of those who believe and use it.

ABSTRACTS

Dieser Beitrag zeigt, dass Hexerei und Zauberei bei den Menschen auf der Insel Flores (Indonesien) immer noch weithin in Gebrauch sind. Ihre Praxis ist immer noch ein schwieriges Problem, das das Gemeinschaftsleben sowohl bei Bewohnern auf dem Land wie auch in den Städten gefährdet. Die Zauberer und Hexen, die man auf frischer Tat ertappt, werden nach langen Anklagen und Verfolgungen nach dem traditionellen Gesetz von den Dorfbewohnern in ihren angestammten Häusern oft gefoltert und sogar öffentlich ermordet, aber offenbar kann auch solche Verfolgung die Ausübung von Zauberei und Hexerei nicht beenden. An zweiter Stelle möchte dieser Beitrag die tatsächliche Existenz von Zauberei und Hexerei unterstreichen und darstellen, dass sie auch durch verschiedene wissenschaftliche Weisen wie ein Multimeter beobachtet werden können. Die Medien der Hexerei geben offenbar eine Art von Gift ab, das ihre Opfer schädigt. Solche Gifte können nur durch Besprengen mit Weihwasser neutralisiert werden.

Esta contribución se propone presentar que la hechicería y magia todavía están ampliamente difundidas entre la gente de la isla de Flores (Indonesia).

Su práctica es uno de los problemas más espinosos que hiera la vida social de la gente tanto en zonas rurales como en las ciudades. Los hechiceros y magos que se atrapan practicando la hechicería y magia, han sido torturados e inclusive ejecutados públicamente por la gente de los pueblos en sus casas, después de largos procesos de acusación y persecución de acuerdo con las leyes tradicionales, pero al parecer todo esto no ha podido acabar con las prácticas de hechicería y magia. En segundo lugar, esta contribución quiere mostrar que la hechicería y magia, de hecho, existen y su existencia puede ser observada también por medios científicos como un multimetro. Los medios emanan alguna suerte de tóxicos que se creen dañinos para sus víctimas. Estos tóxicos se pueden neutralizar solo por la aspersión de agua bendita.

Cet article veut montrer que la sorcellerie est encore largement pratiquée dans l'île de Flores, en Indonésie. Sa pratique est encore un des problèmes épineux qui affectent la vie sociale des gens, qu'ils soient au village ou en ville. Les sorciers et magiciens pris sur le fait de pratiquer la sorcellerie ont été horriblement torturés ou même tués par les villageois dans leurs demeures ancestrales, après une longue mise en jugement selon les lois coutumières; mais il semble que ces moyens n'arrivent pas à faire cesser ces pratiques de sorcellerie. Dans un second temps, l'article veut montrer que ces pratiques existent vraiment et qu'elles peuvent être observées par différents moyens y compris scientifiquement par un multimètre. Les ressources magiques émanent certaines toxines censées faire du mal à leurs victimes et ne pouvant être neutralisées qu'en les aspergeant d'eau bénite sacramentelle.