AZANDE WITCHCRAFT

THE ORACLES

Three most common Azande oracles consulted. The poison oracles trumps all others.

The Termite Oracle
• Two sticks are placed on either end of a termite mound
• When left overnight, a question is answered by which stick was eaten the most by the termites

The Rubbing Board Oracle
• Coated with a mixture of oils and boiled roots
• When rubbed together, a question can be answered by whether or not the pieces of wood “stick” or “slide”

The Poison Oracle
• A traditional Azande poison is administered to a chicken
• The question is answered by whether the fowl lives or dies
• May be repeated to confirm the answer

WITCHCRAFT IS ALL AROUND

In many parts of Africa, witchcraft cannot exceed the bounds of a village, and therefore the accused almost always ends up being someone closely related

“Witchcraft is a form of aggression that is most dangerous because it comes from the inside”
- Peter Geschiere

“It is so intertwined with everyday happenings that it is part of a Zande’s ordinary world. There is nothing remarkable about a witch - you may be one yourself…”
- E. E. Evans-Prichard

I have only once seen witchcraft on its path… I was walking in the garden at the back of my hut, amongst banana trees, when I noticed a bright light passing at the back of my servants’ huts towards the homestead of a man called Tupoi… Shortly afterwards, on the same morning, an old relative of Tupoi and an inmate of his homestead died.
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard

THE REALITY OF WITCHCRAFT

The penal code of 162 in the Central African Republic states that witchcraft exists

80 to 90% of African societies believe in witchcraft

Witchcraft, enhanced by popular culture, has come to be seen as an objective demonic presence living on the outskirts of villages. Classic works in Azande culture, as well as more recent anthropological works focusing on modernization, have shown that witchcraft is in fact an integral part of many African societies. These studies show us that witchcraft is not only a type of religion, but a way of life.