

On Witchcraft

Witchcraft, uchawi or uramali, call it whatever you like, is the most believed-in and most-feared in East Africa. But it has no power, except the power of suggestion. All its power depends upon creating a psychological impression of fear etc., in the mind of the victim. So, ultimately, the victim himself accomplishes his own undoing. Such an impressionable person is his own enemy.

Be it sickness of a child, or discord between husband and wife, or failure in the business – everything here is attributed to some kind of witchcraft. Even if you point out that the parties concerned are themselves responsible for, say, the discord in marriage, they would still say that their objectionable behavior towards each other was the result of their ‘being be-witched’.

I have seen people of every color and creed shifting the responsibility of their trouble to some imaginary ‘enemy who is be –witching me.’ And so deep-rooted is this superstition that when you tell them that they were mistaken in that belief, they will go out to find “someone who has real ‘elimu’.” Such people are happiest when they are exploited by some unscrupulous ‘wise-man’. When they provide him with goat of a particular color and pieces or clothes of specific designs to counter-act the supposed witchcraft, they think they would now be relieved of their worries. Actually, they are relieved of their money only.