

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON GIKUYU BELIEFS IN
AND PRACTICES OF WITCHCRAFT, SORCERY AND
DIVINATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study on the influence of Christianity on Gikuyu beliefs in and practices of witchcraft, sorcery and divination is based on the relationship between three variables. These are (a) the attitude of the early Missionaries towards Gikuyu culture with particular reference to witchcraft, sorcery and divination, (b) the social significance of witchcraft, sorcery and divination, and (c) the ignorance of Christians on both Biblical teaching and the teachings of the Church on the subject of evil resulting in sustained beliefs in and practices of witchcraft, sorcery and divination among Christians. It is hypothesized that the long presence of the Church in Gikuyuland, the mass population it has amassed over the years and its strong stand against witchcraft, sorcery and divination have not eradicated beliefs in and practices of the same, since Christians from different denominations have continued to accuse one another of the practices. Those Christians who do not accuse others of the practices, however, maintain that witches, sorcerers and diviners are still present in Gikuyu society.

This study is descriptive as well as analytical. We have described the social institutions and the religious beliefs of the pre-Christian Gikuyu society. The analytical approach has been adopted in analysing the data collected from the field. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample population of 400 Christians from eight churches in the study region. In addition to questionnaires, oral interviews were conducted on the available diviners, members of the clergy and scholars.

The major findings of this research indicate that witchcraft, sorcery and divination are still present in Gikuyu society. 33% of the respondents indicated awareness that witches are still present in the post-Christian society while 73% indicated that the practice of sorcery is still going on among Christians in Tetu Division. We had no problem in finding out whether divination is still present in Gikuyu society since we found diviners that we interviewed. This study also found that the Church is aware of the presence of witchcraft, sorcery and divination since some of the people who had been accused of the practices and those who had confessed of the practice are Christians. Christians are aware that the Church has not eliminated the problem of witchcraft and sorcery in the society. 62.% of the Christians interviewed confirmed this reality.

This study recommends that the Church should undertake a serious study of the subject of witchcraft, sorcery and divination. It should attempt to find out why the practices have persisted. This should be aimed at finding out whether these cultural aspects have any social value. The Church should, for example, attempt to learn from the diviners and if possible inculturate those aspects of divination which are useful to the Christian community.