

THE OMNISCIENT THREAT

WITCHCRAFT AS AFRICA'S
DARK CONTINENT WITHIN



AN INTELLECTUAL EXPLORATION OF THE
METAPHYSICAL, THE MYSTICAL, AND THE UNSEEN
FORCES THAT SHAPE AFRICAN REALITY

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SUIGENERIS CONSULTANCY, KAMPALA
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*An Intellectual Exploration of the Metaphysical, the Mystical, and the Unseen Forces
That Shape African Reality*

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PREAMBLE: THE UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTION

We begin with a question that makes modern intellectuals squirm: what if witchcraft is real?

Not real in the sense of superstition or psychological projection, but real in the sense that it describes a genuine force — a technology of the spirit, a science not yet understood, a dimension of reality that Western materialism has systematically denied.¹

The Ghana–England match is not the anomaly; it is a symptom of something deeper. The 'miambis' of Uganda — figures said to move on motorcycles, to appear and disappear at will, to administer physical punishment, and to light fires without matches — are, on this account, witnesses to a reality that refuses to be contained by the rationalist cage.²

This work does not ask the reader to believe. It asks only that the reader consider: what if the African worldview has been right all along? What if the spiritual realm is not a metaphor but a territory — and what if some people know how to navigate it?

¹¹¹See Geschiere, Peter. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (1997), the foundational study of the persistence of occult idiom within African modernity.

²²²*Abdu Abucar Hussein and 7 Others v Attorney General*, Civil Suit No. 437 of 2019 [2022] UGHCCD 49, illustrating the continuing engagement of Uganda's courts with claims rooted in customary and spiritual belief.

PART I — THE OMNISCIENT THREAT: DEFINING THE INDEFINABLE

Chapter One: What Is Witchcraft?

The Problem of Definition

Witchcraft defies easy definition because it operates at the intersection of several domains that Western thought insists on separating: religion, science, psychology, and politics. In the African context, witchcraft may be understood as a system of metaphysical causation, a technology of power, a moral language, and an ever-present threat.

As a system of metaphysical causation, it is a framework for understanding how unseen forces produce visible effects. As a technology of power, it is a means by which individuals and groups may influence events, people, and outcomes beyond ordinary human capacity. As a moral language, it supplies a vocabulary for explaining misfortune, success, jealousy, and conflict.³

The Omniscient Threat

The phrase 'omniscient threat' captures something essential about witchcraft in the African context. It is not merely a danger to be avoided by staying in well-lit places or locking doors; it is a threat that knows everything about the individual – vulnerabilities, desires, and fears. It is surveillance without cameras, judgment without courts, punishment without evidence.

This is why witchcraft induces such profound anxiety. One cannot hide from it, cannot negotiate with it, and cannot prove its existence – until it acts.

³³³ Compare Ashforth, Adam. *Madumo: A Man Bewitched* (2000), for an ethnographic account of witchcraft as a lived moral vocabulary in Soweto.

Chapter Two: The Cosmological Foundations

The African Universe: A Hierarchy of Powers

To understand witchcraft, one must understand the African cosmos. In traditional African thought, the universe is not a closed system of mechanical laws but a hierarchy of powers, descending from the Supreme Creator, through ancestral and nature-spirit mediators, to living humans and, at the malignant end of the spectrum, witches and sorcerers who turn spiritual capacity toward destruction.

The Central Insight

The crucial insight is that the spiritual realm is not separate from the physical realm; the two interpenetrate. A witch does not merely 'believe' in spiritual power but accesses it. The relevant distinction is not between the material and the immaterial but between the visible and the invisible.⁴

This is why science, as understood in the West, cannot disprove witchcraft: science studies the visible, while witchcraft is said to operate in the invisible. They are, on this account, studying different domains.

The Miambi Phenomenon

In Uganda, the miambis (sometimes rendered miamis or emiyembe) represent a particular manifestation of this worldview: individuals, usually men, believed to possess supernatural powers — the ability to move at impossible speeds, to appear and disappear, to administer physical punishment from a distance, and to light fires without material cause.

Before Bluetooth, before remote controls, there were the miambis, said to 'move on motorcycles' — not motorcycles of metal and petrol, but spiritual conveyances traversing the roads of the unseen realm. Witnesses describe a figure materialising, delivering a message or punishment, and vanishing.

The physical punishment is telling: the miambi functions not merely as a spiritual force but as a moral enforcement mechanism. Those who have wronged others, broken taboos, or failed in their obligations may find themselves visited — a punishment understood locally not as arbitrary but as justice.

⁴⁴⁴See Comaroff, Jean and John. *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (1993).

PART II — IS IT THE DEVIL? IS IT GOD? IS IT SCIENCE?

Chapter Three: The Theological Question

The Devil's Work?

Christian and Islamic theology in Africa has struggled with witchcraft. The official position in many churches treats witchcraft as 'the work of the devil' — a demonic counterfeit of divine power.

But this raises a difficulty: if the devil can produce real effects — healing, harm, knowledge, transformation — then the devil is not merely a tempter but a genuine power. This has contributed to the proliferation of deliverance ministries and prophetic churches that treat spiritual warfare as a daily reality.⁵

The Pentecostal response is instructive: by treating witchcraft as a real enemy, these churches take the indigenous worldview seriously, in effect saying, 'you are right that the spiritual realm is real, but the power at issue is demonic; we offer a superior power.'

The God Question

If witchcraft is 'the devil's work,' what then is God's relationship to it? Traditional African religion offers a more nuanced answer: in many cosmologies God is the ultimate source of all power but remains remote, while ancestors, spirits, and witches derive authority from God yet exercise it with considerable autonomy.

Witchcraft, on this account, is not 'against' God but a misuse of power God has made available. The issue is not metaphysical but moral: the witch has chosen to turn spiritual power toward destructive ends.

The Ancestral Connection

The miambi phenomenon is often connected to the ancestors, understood not merely as a human with powers but as an agent of the ancestral realm — messenger, enforcer, guardian of tradition. Because the ancestors are concerned with moral order, the miambi is said to be sent when the living violate ancestral law, restoring balance and signalling that the spiritual realm remains active within the human world.

⁵⁵⁵ On the Pentecostal 'spiritual warfare' idiom in African Christianity, see Geschiere (1997), ch. 4.

Chapter Four: The Scientific Question

A Higher Science?

Here the inquiry reaches its most provocative territory: what if witchcraft is not supernatural but natural — a phenomenon governed by laws not yet understood? Proponents of this view point to quantum entanglement, non-local consciousness, the observer effect, and reported psychic phenomena as suggestive analogues.⁶

On this account, the African worldview has never been surprised by such discoveries, having long held that mind is not confined to the skull, that intention can affect matter, and that the universe is interconnected in ways transcending space and time.

Witchcraft as Technology

The miambi on the motorcycle — moving at impossible speeds, appearing and disappearing — is presented by believers as a being operating in a different dimension of reality: before Bluetooth, a figure said to communicate across distances without wires; before remote controls, one said to affect objects at a distance.

The Punishment Mechanism

The physical punishment attributed to the miambi raises the question of how a spiritual force could inflict physical harm. Within the African worldview the answer is that spiritual and physical are not separate; the miambi is said to operate in the spiritual realm in ways that affect the physical.

This is not wholly without Western parallel: the placebo effect demonstrates that belief can produce physical change, and the nocebo effect that expectation of harm can produce actual harm — though believers in the miambi would claim a sophistication and intentionality that conventional medicine has not yet mapped.⁷

⁶⁶⁶These are contested and non-consensus scientific claims; they are presented here as arguments made by proponents of the 'higher science' reading of witchcraft, not as established physics.

⁷⁷⁷On placebo/nocebo mechanisms generally, see the standard psychosomatic-medicine literature; the analogy to the miambi is the author's own, not a claim advanced in that literature.

Chapter Five: The Psychological Question

The Reality of Belief

The psychological explanation is the one most comfortable to Western intellectuals: witchcraft is 'real' only in the sense that belief in it produces real effects. A person who believes he has been cursed may become anxious, depressed, and vulnerable to illness; a team that believes its opponent has been cursed may play poorly.

This explanation has real explanatory power. It accounts for widespread belief in witchcraft without requiring acceptance of supernatural forces, and it explains how the Ghana–England match could be 'influenced' by a curse — not because the curse itself had power, but because belief in it did.

The Limits of the Psychological Explanation

Yet the psychological explanation has limits. It struggles to explain the consistency of reported effects across cultures and time; it struggles with the specificity attributed to particular effects; and it does not, by itself, account for physical effects said to follow from a curse. The psychological account is part of the truth, proponents of the spiritual view argue, but not the whole of it.

PART III — THE POLITICS OF WITCHCRAFT

Chapter Six: Witchcraft and Power

Witchcraft as a Political Reality

Witchcraft is not merely a private belief; across Africa it is a public force shaping political life. Leaders consult traditional healers, opponents are accused of deploying spiritual powers, and elections are contested not only with votes but, in the public imagination, with spells.

As reporting on African politics has observed, fear of witchcraft can prove politically explosive. South Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar has been described as regarding himself as a prophesied leader, and former Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa was reportedly warned that a witch doctor had been hired against him.⁸

Why Politicians Embrace Witchcraft

The political use of witchcraft is not irrational; it serves functions of legitimation, intimidation, explanation, and cultural connection — claiming spiritual endorsement, unsettling opponents, deflecting blame for misfortune, and signalling authenticity through participation in traditional practice.

The Dark Side

Witchcraft also has a darker political register: accusations are used to eliminate rivals, communities are torn apart by suspicion, and violence is at times justified as spiritual warfare. In Uganda, the miambi is sometimes understood not merely as a private figure but as an agent capable of acting where formal policing does not reach — including, on some accounts, against critics of the regime.

⁸⁸⁸"Riek Machar: The Prophesied Leader," Reuters; see also general Associated Press reporting on witchcraft and African politics cited in the bibliography.

Chapter Seven: Witchcraft and Corruption

The Spiritual Explanation for Material Greed

There is a suggestive parallel between witchcraft and corruption: both concern access to power through hidden means, both operate in the shadows, and both produce effects difficult to trace. A fortune amassed through unexplained means, a contract secured against the odds, a rival's illness at a critical moment — each admits of a mundane explanation and a spiritual one, and the ambiguity is, in practice, productive: it affords plausible deniability, transforming what might be corruption into metaphysical mystery.

The Miambi and the Enforcer

In Uganda, the miambi is sometimes cast as an informal enforcer against corruption, with those believed to have stolen from the community said to face unseen punishment. There is no trial, conviction, or sentence — yet believers hold the deterrent effective, on the view that fear of the miambi may exceed fear of the law.⁹

⁹⁹⁹This reflects an emic (insider) account reported in oral tradition and popular belief; it is presented here as a description of belief and its social function, not as a claim that such punishment occurs as a matter of fact.

Chapter Eight: The International Dimension

Witchcraft in the Global Arena

The Ghana–England match illustrates the international dimension of witchcraft discourse. On the reading advanced by believers, Ghana played not only against the England team but against English disbelief – the curse framed as a weapon England neither expected nor could counter.

This reading extends, in popular discourse, well beyond football: business negotiations, diplomatic disputes, and even military conflicts are, in some accounts, said to be shadowed by spiritual considerations invisible to outside observers.

The Western Response

The characteristic Western response to African witchcraft mixes derision, because it offends the rationalist paradigm, with unease, because it appears – to believers and sceptics alike – to 'work' often enough to unsettle confident dismissal. Commentary after the Ghana–England match reached for clichés about superstition while struggling to explain England's poor performance on its own terms.

The Challenge to Modernity

Modernity's narrative predicted the decline of religion and the triumph of instrumental reason. Witchcraft's persistence – and its visible adaptation to new media – is presented by this monograph's argument as a standing challenge to that narrative: today there are witchcraft-themed apps, podcasts, and social-media communities, the miambi migrated, so to speak, from motorcycle to smartphone.

PART IV — THE LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS

Chapter Nine: The Miambis of Uganda

The Phenomenon

The miambis of Uganda are, in popular report, said to move on motorcycles (sometimes while invisible), to appear and disappear at will, to administer physical punishment to wrongdoers, to light fires without material cause, and to communicate across distances without technology. Witnesses describe a figure in traditional attire, carrying objects of spiritual power, materialising to deliver a message or punishment before vanishing.

The Function

The miambi is described as serving several social functions: moral enforcement of community norms, protection against external threats, public demonstration of the reality of spiritual power, and social control through the fear its reputation generates.

Assessing the Claims

Whether the miambi is 'real' in a scientific, evidentiary sense cannot be settled by this monograph, and the author does not purport to settle it. What can be said is that the miambi is real as a social fact: it is invoked consistently by multiple witnesses, it features in political and legal discourse, and the belief itself — whatever its ultimate metaphysical status — has demonstrable effects on behaviour, reputation, and social order.¹⁰

¹⁰¹⁰Cf. *Abdu Abucar Hussein and 7 Others v Attorney General* [2022] UGHCCD 49, on the Ugandan judiciary's engagement with claims grounded in customary belief.

Chapter Ten: The Ghana–England Curse

The Curse

Among the most publicised spiritual interventions in recent football history was the claim by the Ghanaian spiritualist Nana Kwaku Bonsam that he was working against the England forward Harry Kane, stating that he intended not to injure or kill Kane but merely to stop him from performing.¹¹

When Kane missed an open goal from close range during the match, the reported curse appeared, to believers, to have taken effect; Bonsam subsequently declared victory and announced that the curse had been lifted.

Competing Explanations

Three explanations present themselves. On the psychological account, awareness of the curse itself affected Kane's composure. On the spiritual account, favoured by believers, the curse operated directly on his performance. On the coincidental account, the miss reflects ordinary sporting variance, retrospectively narrated as vindication of the curse. Each has its own merits and its own weaknesses, and this monograph does not adjudicate between them; it records that all three circulate in public discourse with real social consequences.

The Impact

Whatever the underlying cause, the social impact was real: the match result, the spiritualist's enhanced public reputation, and the reinforcement of belief in witchcraft among segments of the public are documented facts of the episode's reception, independent of any judgment about the underlying metaphysics.

¹¹¹¹¹¹"Ghana Pray for World Cup Curse Miracle as Witch Doctor Details Harry Kane Plans," AP/Reuters (2026).

PART V — THE INTELLECTUAL IMPLICATIONS

Chapter Eleven: Challenging the Rationalist Paradigm

The Limits of Reason

The persistence of witchcraft belief challenges a strict rationalist paradigm by suggesting, at minimum, that reason alone does not exhaust human experience, that other ways of knowing carry social validity even where they resist empirical verification, and that confident modern accounts of the universe remain incomplete.

The Intellectual's Dilemma

For the African intellectual, witchcraft poses a genuine dilemma: to dismiss it outright risks rejecting the worldview of one's own community, while to accept it uncritically risks abandoning the discipline of evidence. Many scholars have sought to 'translate' witchcraft into psychological or sociological terms — a move that captures something real but, on the argument advanced here, risks distorting a phenomenon that insists on being taken on something closer to its own terms.¹²

A Third Way

A third position is proposed: to hold that witchcraft belief is a genuine and consequential social force while acknowledging uncertainty about its ultimate metaphysical status. This is a position of intellectual humility rather than credulity — one that takes witchcraft seriously as a subject of study without requiring either wholesale acceptance or wholesale dismissal.

¹²¹²See Moore, Henrietta and Sanders, Todd (eds). *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities* (2001), for a survey of competing scholarly translations of witchcraft belief.

Chapter Twelve: Witchcraft and the Modern African State

The Challenge to Governance

Witchcraft belief poses practical challenges to the modern African state: a jurisdictional tension between state legal authority and claimed spiritual authority; a comparative question of perceived enforcement efficacy between courts and occult sanction in the popular imagination; and a legitimacy contest between electoral and traditional sources of authority.

The State's Response

African states have responded variously — through criminalisation of witchcraft accusation, through co-optation of traditional healers into formal or quasi-formal structures, and through simple toleration of witchcraft belief as a private matter absent demonstrable public harm. None of these approaches has proven fully effective; belief persists despite criminalisation, traditional structures are not immune to abuse, and toleration can permit harmful accusation to proceed without accountability.

The Miambi and the State

The miambi phenomenon in Uganda illustrates this tension concretely: operating, in popular belief, outside formal jurisdiction, it is sometimes tolerated by state actors as a useful informal deterrent, sometimes opposed as a challenge to state authority, and sometimes, on some accounts, invoked by state actors for their own ends.

PART VI — THE FUTURE OF WITCHCRAFT

Chapter Thirteen: Witchcraft and Technology

The Digital Miambi

Digital media has transformed the circulation of witchcraft belief as it has transformed most social phenomena: applications purporting to support spellcasting and divination, podcasts sharing practitioner knowledge and testimony, and social-media communities that build audiences around particular spiritualists have all emerged in the past decade.

Witchcraft and Artificial Intelligence

A newer development is the reported use of artificial-intelligence tools by some practitioners to generate ritual text, to analyse patterns in reported spiritual activity, and to produce predictions concerning the outcomes of spiritual interventions — a convergence of old practice and new tool that raises its own, largely unexamined, questions.

The Trajectory

On the evidence surveyed in this monograph, witchcraft belief shows no sign of disappearing; rather, it continues to adapt its media and its idiom while retaining its core social functions of explanation, empowerment, and connection.

Chapter Fourteen: The Omniscient Threat in the Twenty-First Century

Why Witchcraft Persists

Several factors sustain witchcraft belief: its perceived efficacy in producing results, whether through psychological, spiritual, or coincidental mechanisms; its capacity to supply meaning and explanation for otherwise unexplained misfortune; the sense of agency it affords in the face of uncontrollable events; and its function in connecting believers to ancestry, tradition, and community.

The Ever-Present Threat

The 'omniscient threat' captures the enduring quality of witchcraft belief in the societies where it is strongest: always present, always potentially watching, always capable of acting. Within this worldview, the spiritual realm is not an occasional or ceremonial presence but a constant fact of life, as ordinary and as unavoidable as the weather.

Chapter Fifteen: The Challenge to the West

A Mirror for the West

Witchcraft discourse in Africa also functions, this monograph argues, as a mirror held up to the West: a civilisation that professes confidence in science while unable to explain everything, that professes commitment to reason while regularly acting otherwise, and that professes faith in progress while remaining bound to older anxieties.

The Ghana–England Match as Allegory

The Ghana–England match, on this reading, becomes an allegory for the broader relationship between Africa and the West: a materially stronger side unable to overcome an opponent whose confidence drew on sources the stronger side neither shared nor took seriously.

Toward Dialogue

The argument of this monograph does not call for the triumph of one worldview over another but for genuine dialogue between them – an exchange in which science engages spirituality, and rationality engages tradition, each on terms that neither wholly surrenders nor wholly dismisses the other.

CONCLUSION: THE EVER-PRESENT MYSTERY

The Omniscient Threat as a Gift

The miambis of Uganda, the curses reported from Ghana, and the beliefs held by millions across the continent are not, on the argument of this monograph, signs of backwardness but signs of a worldview that has retained a sense the West has largely set aside: that the universe is mysterious, that power is not always visible, and that the spiritual realm — real or not, in any final sense — remains a live and consequential part of social life.

The Challenge of Belief

The challenge posed by witchcraft is, finally, the challenge of belief itself: whether one can take something seriously without fully understanding it, respect it without explaining it away, and live, intellectually, with genuine mystery. These are not easy questions, and this monograph does not claim to resolve them — only to insist that they are worth asking.

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APPENDIX A: THE GHANA–ENGLAND MATCH – A CHRONOLOGY

23 June 2026 – Ghana draws 0–0 with England at the World Cup.

Prior to the match – Nana Kwaku Bonsam publicly declares he is working spiritually against Harry Kane.

During the match – Harry Kane misses an open goal from close range.

After the match – Bonsam declares victory, announces the curse lifted, and describes himself as among the foremost spiritualists practising today.

This chronology records public claims and reported events; it does not represent a finding by the author that any causal spiritual link is established as fact.

APPENDIX B: THE MIAMBI PHENOMENON — A CASE STUDY

Location: various regions of Uganda.

Description: figures reported to move on motorcycles, appear and disappear at will, administer physical punishment, and light fires without material cause.

Function: moral enforcement, community protection, and social control, as reported in oral tradition.

Connection: believed by adherents to be agents of the ancestors and enforcers of traditional law.

Modern adaptation: reports of similar effects now circulating through digital platforms.

Contemporary relevance: invoked in political discourse for social control and in communities for informal dispute resolution.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Isaac Christopher Lubogo is a Ugandan constitutional lawyer, author, and scholar whose work explores the intersection of law, culture, and spirituality in the African context. He has written extensively on constitutional citizenship, human rights, and the relationship between traditional African worldviews and modern legal frameworks.

His previous works include *Birthright*, *Bloodright*, and *Belonging: A Comparative Constitutional Analysis of Citizenship in the United States and Uganda*, together with numerous articles on African jurisprudence.

This monograph was completed in July 2026, following the Ghana–England World Cup match and amid the continuing relevance of witchcraft as a force in African political, social, and spiritual life.