

https://dspace.org/

Medicine Magic And Religion Of The Lovedu

Krige, Elleen Jensen

2015-05-18
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/17792

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Each gəma has a meaning attached, which is a great secret never to be divulged. Most gəma are traditional, having been handed down from time immemorial, but very often new ones are invented, especially for semi-public dancing displays, and since different age-groups on areas may bring with them their own digəma, there may be a mildly competitive element in these displays.

A good example of the gəma as a dramatic enactment with a meaning or lesson attached is the mime-show of two girls in the khəba (puberty) initiation, one with a cloth passed between the legs like the lóin covering of a man, the other representing a woman. They dance on their haunches facing each other, the 'man' with a lighted firebrand held between the legs, the woman with a cloth over the stomach which makes her look pregnant. This clearly illustrates the consequences of the sex act. Another dance consists of movements in which the thighs are kept close together and legs sometimes crossed, symbolic of the manner in which male advances can be prevented from becoming dangerous.

Some digəma in the vyali fertility cult consists of play-acting in which the value to society of certain foods is emphasized. Khiagwa is a gəma in which the men build a platform or nest in a murula tree. In this is secreted a man with a large supply of the unripe fruit. At a given signal the women and initiates come slowly advancing towards the tree singing musevetho songs. As the women dance in a circle around the tree, murula fruits which they pick up, rain down upon them. Later the initiates are made also to dance around the tree. Another gəma consists in taking the initiates to a certain kind of termite heap on which a hole has been made and ash and coals inserted. Each one is

required to put her hands into the hole while the song 'Ants are taken out and collected for the chief initiate', is sung. These termites are considered a great delicacy, form an important source of relish during the rainy season and must be 'bitten' by the queen or district head before others may partake of them.

Digoma thus vary from laws and secret objects to mummeries and dramatic enactments. Some are less important than others, one of their functions being that of providing entertainment, as, for example, the dancing of vakwera men in elaborate grass costumes, all over the countryside during the vyali-vukwera. Others are great secrets never to be witnessed by the uninitiated. But a goma may be more than this; it can also be a god. The greatest of all digoma are the gomana drums which, as we have seen, are looked upon as gods and are thought to be pleasing to the ancestors. Zwidajane are also digoma and the knowledge that their part is played by old men initiated into the cult does not appear to detract one whit from their importance in the eyes of those that are in the secret. A goma that rules the whole country while it is in evidence is khiudogane, referred to also as the great Bird, ruling spirit of the vyali-vukwera, which like nearly all digoma is thought of as coming from a pool.

Digoma of women have to be respected by the men who may not approach anywhere near them. A man, who in a bout of drunkeness entered when some women were displaying dancing digoma of the girls' puberty initiation while we were in the field, was fined a head of cattle by the queen. Similarly, if a woman approaches too near boys in their gomana initiation she will be beaten severely and any uniniated man or woman approaching the circumcision lodge

may be killed. Digoma mummeries are the beginnings of drama among the Lovedu. But they also provide that element of awe in approaching gods so conspiciously absent from Lovedu ancestor worship, to which their secrecy to a great extent contributes.

THE VYALI FERTILITY RITES:

The vyali-vuhwera is as much an initiation into full adult status as it is a fertility cult. Yet interesting as its details and ramifications as a "school" may be, the educational aspects of this institution can not be entered upon here. All we can attempt is briefly to indicate its general nature and its functions as a fertility cult. The vyali is of such great importance that during the year that it lasts, it overshadows everything else. All man's attention, all men's energies are taken up by the vyali to which everything else becomes subsidiary. Even in the khoro, the forum of the men, only essential cases are dealt with. All marriages are held up. Anyone having the temerity to take home a bride during the vyali-vuhwera must pay a fine of one head of cattle and a goat. To such an extent are the attention and interest of the whole country focussed on the vyali that no rival ceremonial is tolerated. There may be no girls' puberty rites, no dancing other than vyali dancing, no singing of songs other than those sung in the vyali. Even the dancing of possessed people is prohibited, a taboo communicated in 1938 to the various possessing spirits at a large farewell dance of all the possessed in each area just prior to the opening of the vyali, when they were ordered not to manifest themselves and told that none of the usual taboos of the cult would be observed for the next year. It is customary too, for each district head to

to bring a farewell gəsha dance to the queen before the opening of the vyali but this was omitted in 1938 owing to the length of the time it would require. Even the spirits are bound by these rules for no zwidajane may come to the harvest offering during the year of the vyali-vukwera.

The vyali, held simultaneously by various district heads is preceded by a months or six week's period of preparation in which initiates gather at the village of the headman every evening to be taught some of the songs they are to sing later on. The official opening consists of a religious ceremony, in which the ancestors of the district head are asked to bless the vyali, and a 'strengthening' of the initiates. This takes the form of beating the office bearers with a medicated stick and smearing the body of each initiate with the stomach contents and sometimes also the tail fat of a head of cattle or a sheep specially slaughtered for the purpose. From now on the initiation lasts for a full year. Except for a few special occasions its activities are, however, confined to the evening and early morning so that it does not interfere with the daily activities of the girls. Furthermore, married initiates become pregnant and have their babies even though they are in the vyali.

The most important activity of the vyali consists in singing and drumming in the courtyard of the district head every evening and again at dawn during the whole period of the initiation. Some of the songs are related to the stage of the initiation, different stages being characterised by different songs, others are praises of the queen and well-known district heads; there

is a cluster of songs associated with the winding up of the singing each evening when the courtyard has to be closed and again in the early morning when the gate is opened, and there are songs of derision if anyone of the unmarried initiates is seduced during the uyali period. Most important of all, are, however, musguatho songs begun in about December, but forming the main feature of the singing after the arrival of the great bird. They are similar to lesugu songs. On special occasions, throughout the year, initiates are taken out into the bush where they are shown digoma and beaten and quite often there is dancing with digoma throughout the night.

The ruling spirit of the uyali is, Khaudogane or the great Bird which arrives in about April, - it is a goma of the men, secreted in a special enclosure and seen by women only on moon-light nights when it comes dancing into the girls' courtyard; but its black colour makes it difficult to discern clearly. It consists of a light, semi-circular frame -work, about four feet high, so that a man may easily crouch inside it. Over this are put strings of the muga thorn tree (Acacia rehmanniana), which have been placed in wate to become bhack, and surmounting the whole is a small head crowned with an ostrich or other feather. It speaks from its enclosure by whistling through an instrument similar to but larger than that used by the Zwidajane and made of the leg bone of cattle.

This Bird rules the whole Uyali. It has many praises used by the girls in its honour. Coming when it does when the green foods of summer are being eaten and the grass is long, it is the embodiment of plenty and has daily to receive beer and summer

fruits from each initiate. All the time it is there everyone in the area who makes beer has to bring one calabash to its enclosure or else be liable to be fined a goat. All this food is consumed by old men who spend much of their time in the enclosure. Once the Bird has arrived it regulates the whole procedure of the uvali. It orders which songs have to be sung, tells the girls when to dance, when to stop singing, what to do. At times it gets angry and then may stamp out the courtyard fires when it dances. Any infringement of the rules of the uvali are referred to as breaking the ribs (hu roba letagori)of the Bird. In 1939 one man was fined a goat for beating his wife. 'You've beaten my mutagani (married initiate), the Bird said. Another, an important official in the uvali was fined for swearing at an initiate who had made a mistake in her answers to the Bird. From the time of its arrival, the women of the village may not begin stamping in the early morning before the Bird has made itself heard, and it is even said that Rhiudogane does not like cocks near the village because they disregard his precedence by crowing before he has begun to whistle.

The arrival of the Bird in April is preceded by long and elaborate preparations. For months before its arrival, men have been erecting various enclosures beside the village - one enclosure and hut to house the Bird itself, leading into a large courtyard in which the singing and drumming of the initiates is to take place once the Bird has arrived. At the far end of the courtyard is a row of de-barked poles set up in a specially medicated furrow, backing a carefully prepared platform on and around which the initiates stand when singing in the mornings and evenings.

It is looked upon by the initiates as a kind of refuge from the Bird should he come to near. Before this lenalelo stands the khulunoni shrine of the vyali, a long medicated pole of mususo (Terminalia sericea) forking at the top end into a circlet of branches. Round this pole a circular mound has been built, containing a river stone like many religious shrines. Here it is that the initiates have to stand when conversing with the Bird. Besides the enclosure, there are other preparations for the arrival of the Bird. From February and March, when the grass is long enough, bandoliers of (Mariscus sp.) letate rush to be worn by the initiates once the Bird has arrived, are woven, dancing skirts of a special kind of reed strung together in pieces about an inch long are made, and pointed flat pieces of wood, two for each girl, are prepared for use while singing. No significance is attached to their manufacture.

A great deal of the ceremonial of the vyali centres on the Bird and, in the ritual conversations that take place morning and evening between woman and the Bird, special terms peculiar to the vyali, are employed: mealies are 'teeth of Shangana-Tonga; beer is 'fat of the crocodile'; native potatoes are 'fingers of the baboob'; fire-wood is 'bones of the giraffe'. Every day some girls and women are detailed to carry drums at about four o'clock in the afternoon to the enclosure, there to await the pleasure of the Bird. Sooner or later the Bird whistles out 'muluve a Khidigwe' - the opening phrase of the praise of the head of the initiates, whereupon one of the girls (any one, not necessarily the chief girl herself) mounts the shrine and replies, in a loud

voice, "I've been waiting here a long while, Bird of Kubale", adding one of its many praises. "Whose myali (initiate) are you?" asks the bird. "I am the myali of so-and-so", (giving the name of her father). The Bird will then, whistling metaphorical phrases, order the drums to be beaten, indicating what song is to be sung. The sounding of the drums is the signal for all the initiates to come to the enclosure, which gradually fills as they arrive in twos and threes. After much singing and drumming the Bird may ask, "What have you brought me?" to which the initiate replying answers, "Crocodiles' fat" or whatever she has brought. In the 1938-9 uyali there was at the royal village an arrangement whereby a certain number of the girls brought beer every evening (six to eight calabashes) while in the mornings each initiate came with green mealies, nuts or any appetising dish. These are put down at a certain spot from where the lumati and lumatyana, men who act as go-betweens when the Bird is crying, interpreting if necessary what he says, carry it all into the Bird's enclosure where it is consumed by old men. During the uyali these old men sleep in that enclosure if they like and greatly enjoy the good foods brought for the Bird. Sometimes when too much for them has accumulated, they may send some to the queen or district head. Later the Bird orders the girls to eat their supper, which they have brought with them, and after a long time gives the order to stop (kwagga). After a while the Bird asks for his wood. Each initiate has brought one piece of wood, with bark removed, lest, it is said, scorpions which are apt to be found in the bark bite the Bird, and at the order of the Bird, all proceed to a spot near the

entrance to the Bird's enclosure. Here at a given signal they throw down their wood with a great noise and rush back to their platform of safety. If the moon is bright, the girls will be told to don their dancing skirts and do their whirling dance and, if it likes, the Bird itself will come dancing in, keeping to the shadows, and with one or two men always near to act as guides. They are given the order to stop by the Bird at about 10 or 11 o'clock at night or 8 o'clock in the morning.

Towards the end of the vyali when musavetho songs are sung, the older men come and dance before the women, waving ox tails in the hands. They would, in the vyali of old, wave the tail over the head of a woman they liked and, if she acknowledged it by bowing the head and clapping with hollowed hands, she was giving her consent to be his lover during the initiation. For a remarkable feature of the vyali was promiscuous sex intercourse between men and women in which initiates could take part only at the end. In the 1938-9 vyali there was no such sex intercourse: it was thought that the young married men were too 'wild' (owing to modern conditions) to tolerate a position in which the older men could have free access to their wives in the initiation, and it was said that the great preponderance of women over men might lead to great jealousies and conflicts between the women for the favours of the old men.

At the time when the initiates make preparations for the arrival of the Bird (February-March) the boys in those areas that have the Vahwera as well are taken out into the bush every day to learn how to weave the elaborate costumes associated with this initiation. These are of two types: a light one said to

be for hunting and a heavy one. Both costumes have skirts of loose hanging grass, flung out in a circle by the gyrations of the dancer, as well as comely waist, arm and leg-bands and under-skirts of woven grass. The light costume has in addition broad shoulder bands crossing over chest and back and a mask resting upon the shoulders, veiling the face and open at the top. The heavy costume is far more imposing. Besides a woven waistcoat, there is an immense covering for head and shoulders, rising to a crested summit, flanked by what gives the impression of scales arranged in rows or projecting wings, and fronted by a snout like that of a crocodile. The dance reminds one now of the prancings of a male bird courting its mate, now of a lizard convulsively shaking its whole body as it rests upon a rock. The lizard-bird suggests a weird dragon-like mythical monster, but its appearance belies its functions and qualities, though perhaps not the mystical meaning of the digoma of the 'school'.

Besides the usual vahwera costumes the Ravoihaia section have two magɔr ɔ bya rather more elaborate costumes. The skirt instead of being short consists of many long strips of woven grass trailing on to the ground. From the shoulders are three triangular pieces with three outjutting points. The face and head are completely hidden in a headpiece surrounded in ne case by the stuffed head and shoulders of a buck stretching its neck for leaves which it has in its mouth, - in the other by the upper portion of a baboon holding a mealie cob to its mouth.

The enclosure for vahwera boys is made beside that for the Bird. Here, after having been beaten with medicated sticks,

the boys spend their time except when out hunting or dancing, their food being brought to the vyali courtyard by their sisters. They are taught a few 'laws' or formulae associated with the vuhwera but their main activities are learning to make the elaborately woven costumes and later to dance in the vyali courtyard. Towards the end of the initiation they spend most of their time going about to dance, accepting invitations from other district heads and paying their respects at the royal village. They do beautiful movements to the drumming of their own vyali girls. Only two dance at a time and while they dance, attendants (medabi) stand near by supervising. The masked boys may whistle out the tune to which they wish to dance or may beg snuff by means of whistling (for this is their only means of conversation during their initiation). When they dance well, women and girls come to give them gifts of leg- or arm-rings. The vuhwera is a kind of finishing school, an initiation into the secret of what the Bird is and how the costumes are made. It is almost as though this is an esoteric art, the preservation of which has become the main function of the vuhwera. A person who enters the vuhwera enclosure may be required to display his skill at weaving and in 1939 a man who was unable to weave (and thus showed himself to be uninitiated) was heavily fined. The fact that there is no vuhwera held at the royal kraal, whose boys used in the old days, to go for this initiation to Khada or to the Tzaneni, a section of the Khaha, suggests that the institution is a more recent adoption than the vyali.

It is not easy for a European to appreciate the meaning

and value of such institutions as the vyali-vuhwera. Many of its features cannot be explained by the Lovedu themselves. They are the result of a long historical development which in the absence of all written record can not easily be unravelled. The vyali-vuhwera has many aspects, - one is that of an initiation or crossing for which medical strengthening and ancestral blessing are essential. Though each vyali is given a regimental name, the ages of initiates very greatly.

But intermingled with and overshadowing the vyali-vuhwera as an initiation is the vyali-vuhwera as a fertility cult. It lasts a year, a full agricultural cycle, some of its stages being associated with the seasons; and the Bird arrives only when food is plentiful. Stress is laid on grass and vegetation. The plaited bandoliers of grass, the typical vyali dress of the girls, said to render them fertile, cannot be worn until the grass has grown long; the remarkable vuhwera costumes are made of various grasses; the digoma are almost all made of reeds, grasses or leaves and at one of the most important excursions made by the girl initiates and called Maedini (at the locusts), they are made to collect bark of various kinds of trees. Emphasis is laid on murula fruits and termites as a source of food supply, and the mealie cob and leaves in the mouths of baboon and buck in the magogobya costumes appears to symbolise the plenty of summer. The vyali-vuhwera as a fertility cult, is further stressed in the promiscuous sex intercourse which is indulged in at the order of the Bird towards the end of the year. on the approach of Spring and the scattering of seeds of all kinds on the initiates on the

last night of the vyali when the Butterfly goma of the woman chases away the Bird.

The singing of vyali songs, like the beating of the sacred drums is believed to bring rain. Even before the summer rains of the year 1938-9 had begun, it was said by the Lovedu that the year would be one of plenty on account of the vyali. These expectations were more than realized for, not only was the summer a rainy one but even the winter which is normally dry was exceptionally wet.

The true meaning of the Bird on which so much of the ritual centres is difficult to determine. Nor can the Lovedu themselves throw any light on it. It is associated with moonlight, for on dark nights it is said to return to the pool and does not whistle out its orders. This is interesting in view of the fact that the mother-goddess and life-giving powers of women are frequently identified with the moon in ancient practice as e.g., in the case of Diana who under this guise, gave abundant harvests and fertility to barren women. On its departure the Bird declares that it will leave mists behind it, which seems to associate it with rain. In one of its praises it is referred to as vadaja, ancestral spirits 'I have heard you, Bird of ours and Rahufa of Muhale. The father of giving has gone, O vadaja, there remain only things for which one must pay' (Ge hu pulaphuḍe noni yesu le Vo-Rahufa a Muhale ra hu ʃa khi ile, vaḍaja, hu saḍa kha muthego ʃela). It seems, however, to be the personification of summer and of plenty, perhaps a kind of Lovedu Demeter which comes to be entertained upon the abundance which it has helped to bring forth, ruling the whole

country while it is present.

The vyali-vuhwera-gomana complex is analagous to the mysteries of the ancients with their dramatic performances, the showing of secret objects, their purifications and their appeal to the mystic and emotional. But the Lovedu mysteries have no mythological background, and no fastings or asceticism. They are not a death and resurrection ritual and have no connection with immortality or the life hereafter. Nor are they interpreted in terms of the destiny of the soul after death which was the central feature of Egyptian and late Greek mysteries.

The vyali-vuhwera-gomana complex appears to have been borrowed by the Lovedu from an older Sotho substratum of people. Old men often say the gomana cult comes from Phalaborwa and the emphasis in the vyali on murula fruits and termites which are of greater importance in Phalaborwa diet than among the Lovedu lends some support to the idea that it comes from there. These facts are of interest because the sacred drum cult appears to detract to some extent from the queen's own rainmaking powers and because the Lovedu royal rain-cult which we shall examine in the next chapter has been successfully and independently carried out throughout the reign of the present queen without reference to gomana.

Chapter 7.

THE RAIN CULT.

The Lovedu rain cult is a whole complex of institutions ramifying many aspects of tribal life; it is not confined to measures taken to secure rain in time of drought; its observances must be kept at all times. The chief actor in this rain cult is the queen. She is primarily not a ruler but a rain maker and men rely for their security, not on regimentation, armies and organization but on the queen's power to make rain for her tribe and to withhold it when necessary, from her enemies. Even Albasini, the Portuguese adventurer and chief of the Knobnose Shangana-Tonga, was stricken with drought because he had attacked and burned the royal Lovedu village and had to beg humbly for rain with gifts for the defeated queen.

During life the queen is not only the Transformer of the Clouds but is conceived of as the change of the seasons and guarantor of their cyclic regularity; when she dies, the seasons are out of joint and drought is inevitable. The drought of 1894-5, the worst in recent memory, followed the death of the last chief, Mujaji II (Masalanawe). People lived on roots, many fled the country and the Boer Government was forced to step in and supply mealies for their sustenance. Hence the saying on the death of a chief <u>leshago le file le munye wa lona</u> (the country has died with its owner) and the euphemism "the earth is hot" or " has dried up" (<u>mavu a fesa</u> or <u>a pyile</u>) for the death of a chief.

The very emotions of the queen affect the rain; if she is dissatisfied, angry or sad she cannot work well, and in 1934-5 when the first rains.....

did not come till December, the drought was attributed to her being upset at her daughter's liaison with a commoner. Her rain-making is not confined to dramatic ceremonies in time of severe drought; it is conceived of as continuous care throughout the summer. Furthermore, the Lovedu do not attribute every fall of rain to some special activity or volition on the part of their queen, but rather believe that the queen exercises some general control or care which ensures a good season.

Such being the powers of the queen, she is the person to be approached when there is no rain, not only at the beginning of the season, but any time during the summer months in this country in which three weeks drought might ruin the maize crop. There are various ways of doing this. Great councillors and important relatives may approach the queen in person, saying "The people are crying", and asking her to help them. When there is no rain, Matani, related to the queen through his mother, used to walk near the queen's hut complaining, in a voice calculated to reach the royal ears, that it was a bad thing for a chief to kill her people by withholding rain. When the first summer storm of 1937 opened with much lightning and thunder, the two chief councillors mentioned informally to the queen at beer that they hoped she would ward off wind and thunder and give them a good year. Earlier in the year when the phenomenal rains of February had been followed by a very dry March the chief councillor had complained, "This month is normally rainy yet winter is now coming and there is no rain". Others joined in saying, " The queen wants to kill her children", but the queen remained silent wkth an enigmatic smile.

Heads of districts approach the queen (hulowa) with a gift, usually nowadays of £1. or £1. 10/- saying, "Why do you kill us?

When you see us in this state we have come to beg water because we can't plough when there is no rain. (Le re vulaalane? Hɛ le khi re vɔna re e vyale re dile hũ hobela maazi ga hore a re khonez hu lema bula e khis na). Often they bring with them in addition dancing performers(gosha) to please her and evoke her pity at the sorrowful sight of people dancing in summer when they ought to be ploughing. The movements of this dancing do not differ from those of ordinary dancing, but the music consists of lesugu songs, sung also at the annual harvest ceremony, on the death of important royal people and at the girls' vyali initiation.

The most renowned of all dancing for rain is the legobathele, a special kind of gosha, the mourning dance of a section of Thovele people living under one of the district heads, Ma~vulana. It is more dignified, its movements lighter and its drumming more subdued than in an ordinary gosha. So lightly are the drums struck that the clear, silvery, varied tones of the reed pipes ring out like the peal of bells . Only two drums are used, no one but those who have lost one parent at least may perform, and it is begun in the gloam of the dawn before sunrise when, after a short spell, it stops and is resumed late in the day.

When some one person has greatly angered the queen and drought is believed to be due to her displeasure on this account, the married women from all the villages in the royal neighbourhood assemble every morning after cooking to dance, singing, "We are being killed on account of a bogey-man in skins! (re vulaiswa gi Madikadyana di velevadana). Grandmothers nurse the babies and encourage the younger women with their trillings and dancing movements. The dust rises high and by sunset

they are black with dirt and sweat; but next day and the next they come again, sometimes for as long as a week, till rain falls or continued drought makes it clear that some other cause is operating as well. The great hardship this dancing entails (for nursing mothers who perform have no time to feed their babies) is thought to melt the heart of the queen. Too much rain, as well as too little, is laid at the door of the queen. On one occasion when it had rained almost incessantly for six weeks, the chief councillor said in the presence of the queen"Fat does not fill the pot" (makhura a a dale bija), meaning that there can be too much of a good thing, a hint to the queen to regulate things better.

There is no belief that is stronger in the tribe even today than that in the power of the queen to transform the clouds. This does not, however, mean that they do not recognise the regularity of the seasons. People know that the month of February is generally the rainiest in the year; that the month murenane (October), when the Southern Cross sets just before bed-time, is the time when the first rains are approaching, and no one would love rain in winter any more than Europeans would organise a day of prayer for rain in that season. Yet if rain does not come at its proper time or the season is generally bad it may be said, "The queen has not changed the hoeing season (the year) nicely" (a va fedula ledzema ha votse); for if the cycle of seasons is considered inevitable, whether the new year is brought in propitiously or otherwise is in the hands of the queen.

Relation of Rain-doctor to Queen

Though renowned as the greatest rainmaker in South Africa, Mujaji never works alone. She always has a rain doctor, of whom there are many in the tribe, to work with her.

She chooses any renowned doctor, but may change him for another, if people complain that the rain is bad, that is, insufficient or accompanied by too many thunderstorms. For these deficiencies the queen is never blamed. The chief function of the doctor is to co-operate with the queen in some of the things she cannot do; he devines the cause of drought and discovers which forces are hindering the queen's power from taking effect; and, using his own medicines, he aids her in removing the causes and setting right what is wrong. The relation between rain-doctors and the queen is interesting. They are specialists in their art which they have inherited from their fathers, and are even consulted independently by outside tribes. Khishidwa, the queen's own rain-doctor, is often called by Nwamitwa, the Shangana-Tonga chief, in time of drought and Tshivulane, a Venda chief, comes, not to lova Mujaji, but to call Levea, a rain-doctor on a farm within her jurisdiction. Any payments they receive are their own. Yet these doctors themselves unreservedly state that in the last resort they are dependant on the queen: if she stays their hands their powers will avail them nothing. It is said, "if the chief holds the rain from falling the doctor cannot cause rain" (he khosi a ga tswara bula hore e khi ne, nanga e ga se nese). A rain-doctor sent by the queen to make rain for a Venda chief who came to lova, once in our presence urged the chief councillor "Tell the queen not to hold my hands (hore va khi ntswere zwiada). The relationship is somewhat similar to that prevailing between the queen and the ancestors, as we shall see. In addition to the queen's right-hand man in rain activities there are certain lesser rain-doctors whom she employs as her messengers when outside tribes lova rain, for she would never dream of giving a suppliant medicine to take back with him. These

messengers, though sent by the queen are, strange as it seems to us, not given any medicine or charm to use in their rain-making. It is considered enough that they come from her, and their payment is the entertainment they receive at the foreign court.

The Rain charms and their care.

What the queen does to transform the clouds and the exact nature of the objects and medicines associated with her work are enshrouded in the greatest secrecy. It is doubtful whether anyone other than the queen herself is in possession of this secret for it is bound up with the title and power to succeed to the throne. The secrets are always imparted to the successor just prior to the death of the chief, and on occasion in Lovedu traditional history the would-be usurper, to whom the secrets had not been entrusted, has been deposed in favour of the 'chosen' heir. The queen's rain medicines are kept in rough earthern pots (mehago) in a part of the village to which few have access. Some of their power is said to derive from a human skull in the rain pot and there are horns which are kept in a hut. When these rain horns (dinaga ja bula) are placed on the ground, rain falls; when they are hung up, it clears up and is dry. The medicine in the rain horns is said, when burnt, to produce smoke which rises up in the air to draw and to produce the clouds. The technique is not unlike leshwaba, luck medicine, which when burnt draws customers to traders and touts. Associated with the rain cult are the gomana drums, the beating of which in former times was believed to bring rain, but the true gomana ceremonies have not been held for about thirty years. The rain cult today is largely confined to observances connected with the queen and her medicines or charms (dithugula).

The chief ingredient of the rain pots is the skin of the

deceased chief and of important councillors who are her closest relatives. It is probable that the a. .h-bed conversion of Mulog-wane, the queen's uterine brother, in 1935 was designed to prevent such use of his body for he had, throughout his life, been the greatest enemy to Christianity. When a chief dies, the body is left for some days in the hut so that, when it is rubbed in a certain way hu forolwa), the skin easily comes away. Other ingredients are fat of the scaly anteater (khwara), a royal animal which when found has always to be brought alive to the royal village, and parts of the kudu (tholo). The queen's rain doctor told us that essential ingredients were sea water because it foams and froths (hu pukula), feathers of the lightning bird, white and black sea shells , and various roots and barks, chief among which is the stem of the Khadi Adenia gumnifera), a tough forest creeper that contains much water. Khadi stems are also used for sprinkling 'cooling' medicines and for tying the bodies of dead people. Whether the queen uses these ingredients, we cannot say. From time to time a black sheep is killed to give strength to the queen's rain medicines; it has to be washed with water which is afterwards poured into the rain pots, but it is said that such sheep is merely a present-day substitute for a human being, usually a child, whose brains were used. Important district heads related to the chief also have their rain-pots. Every year in about August at the command of the queen such a district head collects certain roots and barks, knowledge of which he has received from his father, places them in his rain-pot, mixed with water that has been drawn by girls under puberty, and stirs them up so that rain may be good for that year. Rain-pots are great secrets and only after years of friendship were we privileged to see one: it was well hidden in the cleft of a rock and partly

buried at the foot of a tree on the upper slopes of a hill where the owner's father had dwelt. The rain-pots of the queen we have not seen and what regular measures she takes are not known for certain; but since it is said, when there are goods rains, that the queen has firmly laid the foundations (hu thea) of the year, it is not unlikely that she also stirs her medicines.

Great care has to be taken lest the rain pots 'weaken' (hu figehela). They have to be given (hu lumiswa, to cause to be bitten) the first green foods (mutshatsha) every year, kaffirwatermelon (legwadai) mixed with other green foods being used for the purpose, and at the royal village no one cooks and eats the new summer relishes before this has been done. On this day possessed people or people who have epilepsy also eat medicine with the first-fruits but ordinary people do not luma and there is nothing of the public festivities of a semi-military character associated with the eating of the first-fruits among Swazi and Zulu. It is very important too that the first termites (dinntwa), which appear usually in December just after the first good rains, should be given to the rain-pots. Termites are closely associated with rain: they always fly out of their nests just after the rain; in a dry year there are very few; and it is believed that sprinkling the antheap with rain medicine (mufugo) makes the ants come in great numbers. Termites for the rain-pots may not be gathered by married women or girls over puberty and in 1937, when some young girls carried the first termites to the queen, she gave the termites to the dogs, refusing to use ants that had thus been defiled. The giving of the first termites to the rain-pots is called bulane. An interesting case arose out of this practice in January,1938, when

certain people in Vuthudi area ate termites before the bulane of the head. An enquiry was held by the district head and four men were fined two goats each. They were told that, if their case had come before the queen herself, they would have had to pay a head of cattle. Only the few sub-areas under the immediate jurisdiction of the queen herself send termites to the queen; in other areas they send to their own head and there is no rule that the queen's own rain-charms should be given before others.

Things preventing rain and How they are set right.

The powers of the queen to make rain are not absolute. The queen can control rain only 'in agreement with her ancestors' who are able, if they wish, to stay her hand just as she herself is able to stay the hands of rain-doctors. Hence these words in a prayer of the queen to the ancestors, "Do not hold my hands; leave me so that when I work my charms (do my things) rain will fall and people get corn"(Le khi voye la ntswara mazoho; le letshe ro ya ga diya zwilo zwesu bula e ne vatho va khumane mavele). There are also certain things that, by causing the rain charms to becems'weak' (figehela or Khuma), have power to stop the rain unless proper measures are taken. It has already been shown how heat is associated with illness and things being wrong. If a person has been burned to death or struck by lightning, he must be buried in a wet place near the river or his grave 'cooled' with special medicine obtained from the chief lest drought ensues. This was done even in the case of Papadi's mother who, just before her death fell into the fire in an epileptic fit and was slightly burnt. She was buried just inside the village fence but the district head sent to the queen for cooling (rain) medicine or Mufogo.As the pall-bearers came out of the hut he entered with Mufogo horn and

brush of Khadi stem to sprinkle the hut. Both spots on which the bearers laid the corpse when resting on their way to the grave were sprinkled, as was the body when placed in the grave. When the grave was half filled in, Mifogo was again sprinkled in it and when all was finished the rest of the contents of the horn were poured on the grave, the horn being left there. In addition to these precautions a whole letate reed (cyperaceae mariscus sp) and some losale (river grass) were placed at the head and foot of the corpse to keep it cool. Similarly abortions or miscarriages, women dying in pregnancy or childbirth, twins killed at birth, babies dying before cutting their teeth or cutting the upper teeth before the lower, initiates dying in the circumcision lodge all must be buried in a wet place. Burial in a 'wet place' must not be taker to. literally. The grave should be dug near the river and it is made deep in order to reach wet soil. But in one burial we witnessed no wet soil was reached though the hole dug was shoulder deep. It was, however near the river, in a cool place and they said in summer it would be wet. If bodies are buried too near the water they are liable to be washed out in the summer floods.

Since an electrical storm often means little or no rain, it is believed that 'sending' lightning to kill one's enemies, a common practice of witches, spoils the country by preventing rain. Hence at a tribal gathering (khivije), held in the spring of 1937-8, the people were told among other things that the chief does not want to see 'lightning of people' (as opposed to natural lightning); any district head hearing of anything like this among his people was to report at once to the queen. A common phenomenon in time of drought is the banking up of

heavy rain clouds with all the promise of a soaking rain only to be dispersed by wind. Anything associated with winds is thus thought to prevent rain. That is why witches by hanging lefalaia-maru, literally 'disperser of the clouds' (Asparagus plumosis), or an ordinary broom on a branch where it will sway in the air, can disperse the clouds; and anyone dying of a coughing disease such as dere or consumption must be buried in wet soil or soil that has been sprinkled with mufugo medicine. If abortions or people dying of a coughing disease are buried without these precautions the grave is called pukudi (from hu pukula which perhaps is the opposite of hu fuga, to blow upon a cool breeze, to sprinkle with cooling medicine). Pukudi contains the conception of wind issuing upwards or hot air quivering above a heated surface. As soon as th vapour-laden air reaches the grave, it stops or dissolves in the wind and it is even conceived that the corpse, thrusting an arm, waves it about to cause the wind that drives away the rain.

How dangerous wind is considered to be in setting at nought the efforts of the queen was well illustrated on November 15th, 1937. On that day after propitious black clouds had been disperse by a gale that lifted the thatch off many a hut, it was proclaimed that the following day had to be a holiday. People said 'gi khume la' (it is a'turning back'before the goal has been reached), and we were told that in the old days men of importance used to come and condole with (hu emela) the chief on such a day as though to sympathize with her in the frustration of her efforts. There are other holidays associated with rain. On the day after the first rain of the season has fallen no hoeing or fieldwork is to be done. Such a holiday is called le- khi - nteme (do not cut me) as if the earth, conceived still to be hot, dislikes

being broken up by the hoeing. Such a holiday is also observed after the rain charms have 'bitten' the new termites and first-fruits of the year; and when, any time during the summer, rain falls after two or three weeks drought, it is called muene (guest or stranger) and the next day observed as a holiday, for one honours a guest.

Wrong burials which stop the rain are righted by the use of mufugo medicine and the water obtained by squeezing the undigested stomach contents (muswane) of a sheep down a hole made in the grave with a stick and reaching the body. This is thought to disperse the 'wind' and cool the grave. The conception is thus of a grave agitated by ghostly heat and wind, which may be 'laid' by 'cooling' or, as we might say, calming in the treble sense of pacifying (the ghost), mollifying (the heat) and causing (the wind) to subside. The flesh of the sheep is eaten without salt. Mufugo, the medicine so important in the removal of impediments to rain, has to be obtained from the queen and a specially appointed person is responsible for doling it out in bottles when needed. The office is not conceived to be hereditary, but it has been held by the Mudiga family for some time, being handed by father to son. When the last official in charge of mufugo died, his son was an unmarried man too young for the responsibility of office. Some five years later (1938), when the queen decided that he should assume charge, he protested his youth though he then had two children, fearing that after contact with the medicine he might forget to wash his hands before eating and thus be rendered impotent. In this he had the full support of his mother who prevailed upon the queen to allow an older relative provisionally to undertake the work; but the present position is that, should

this old man be away the heir to the office will have to act. Whether mufugo is identical with the rain medicine of the rain pots is not quite clear; but, whatever its ingredients may be, it is considered extremely dangerous, liable to rob men and women of their fertility and great care is thus necessary when working with it.

Sometimes it is said that the 'country is not right' (usha a s loge) and then there is a special ceremony in which all the fires in the country are put out with mufugo. No generally recognized set of circumstances lead up to such a line of action nor is there any idea that the fires are defiled in any way. It is simply looked upon as a method of getting rain when there is drought, resorted to when the divining bones of the doctor declare it to be necessary. People sometimes say, 'fires are put out to usher in a new year', but this does not mean that putting out the fires is an annual ceremony, as it is for instance among the Pedi. The word 'year' must not be taken literally, just as it does not refer to an abstrac period of time in the phrase 'The year has been infected by hu khuma' when what is meant is that the rain charms have 'weakened' (hu khuma In this ceremony girls under puberty are sent to draw water for the mufugo which the queen's rain doctor prepares for the occasion and after a day or two when the medicine froths up (hu pukula), boys are sent with a horn of mufugo and a brush of khadi creeper (Adenia gummifera) to every village in the land. First they beat medicine on the fire of the men's courtyard and thereafter on the threshold and hearth of every hut. The ashes are cleared away by an old woman; for so dangerous is the medicine used that any man, woman or child entering the hut before it has been smeared with dung will khuma and be unable to have children. A new fire is kindled in the

men's courtyard whence each woman fetches a brand for her own hut, for it is taboo to kindly a fire from any other. In return for her firebrand each woman gives the men stamped mealies or groundnuts which they eat in the khoro. Each married man in turn must give something to the boys who have brought mufugo, usually a shilling or a fowl (in the old days an arrow or mealies); but often also tobacco or other gifts for, as 'mufugo does not choose' (mufugo a u khetha) anything may be given. Each boy must give a shilling or fowl to the keeper of mufugo, keeping the rest as a reward for his labours. It is taboo to work in the fields on the day after mufugo. In 1927 some boys, too lazy to fetch the medicine, took matters into their own hands and made a mixture of ash and water, which they used in their rounds. They were discovered and made to pay five head of cattle each and the ceremony had to be performed again.

When the divining bones diagnose drought as due to ancestors, steps have to be taken for a sacrifice at an ancestral grave. Any one of the close relatives of the queen can cause drought; sometime it is the queen's mother, Leakhali, buried at Khada; sometimes it is Mugodo's sister buried at Mudzinoni; in 1925-6 it was Mulogwane, the queen's brother, who complained that he was buried in the Christian cemetery instead of in the shade of the forest. A sacrifice for rain will take place only after it has become clear that, in spite of steps taken to lovha the queen by means of money or dancing she fails by her ordinary methods to cause the rain to fall.

January, 1938 was hot and dry. Several headmen had been to lovha but no rain fell. Important district heads and councillors thus began to travel about, having the bones thrown to discover the cause, while the queen herself also sent messengers to various

well-known diviners. The reply came, 'Seek ye a black sheep, go ye with it to show your care for the spirits and ye shall see that it will rain nicely'. As is so often the case, no indication was given of the cause of their complaint; the suggestion as to the practical measures to be taken and the identity of the troublesome spirits were quite sufficient. The chief, however, remained inactive; it was not for her to take the initiative till her people humbly begged her to do so. On the 11th February three of the most important men at the capital approached her, saying,'People are crying. Help us.' Thereupon she impatiently replied,'People tire me. The year was well established but they have weakened' (hu figehela) it. They want me to be troubled'. (Vatho va lapisa Mvaha o ve o theile ga vova vyala va o figesiije. Va nyaga hona hore ge ve nkhi thapoliva ge vatho). She implied that she had safeguarded the year but that the people themselves by breaking rain taboos and by their evil works and witchcraft had undermined that safeguard. When the councillors continued pleading, she relented and said, 'Find me a black sheep without blemish (colour)' The first messenger they sent returned without success but two others were despatched to scour the country and on the 17th one was found. Kheshidwa, the rain doctor, was now called. Four days passed but he did not come. Then the queen, angry at the delay, suggested that she proceed with the ceremony alone. But this the councillors would not hear of; 'You might deviate from the procedure the bones indicate to be essential,' they said. On the fifth day, however, Khishidwa arived, explaining his delay as due to all the medicines he had to find and at dawn on the 23rd February the ceremony took place.

A calabash— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

containing mufugo was placed in a basket for the chief wife of the queen's brother to carry and a procession of most of the inmates of the royal village set out with the sheep. They stopped first at a clump of trees near the village where lies Moyavudupi, a female relative by marriage to the queen on the mother's brother's side. When the queen ordered her chief councillor as direct representative of the mother's brother's side to begin, he uncorked the calabash and poured some of its contents over the grave, saying, 'Stop for us these winds and tribulations that it may rain nicely. They say it is you people whose murmurings are impeding the rain' (Re re re thivelane diphefo je le mathupa bula e ne ga voya. Ba re ge volena le reraho ha bula e khia ne). His younger sister next took the calabash, praying in almost identical words, followed by the queen herself who said, 'Aye, we say, stop for us all these pukudi (winds from wrong burials) that rain may fall and people find corn'. The people now respectfully greeted (hu losha), repeating the praise of Muhale, the king of old, and during the trillings that followed the rain doctor said, 'The frogs do not cry, Sire, I do not hear them'; he may have meant that it was so dry that even the frogs were silent, but we do not know for certain.

The procession now proceeded to Maulwi, the sacred grove where are buried members of the royal family and the two last queens. At the grave of Mathekha, mother's brother to the queen and father of the chief councillor, they all sat down while the same procedure was gone through as at the other grave. When it was the queen's turn to pray, she took a small horn wrapped up in rags and placed it on the grave. Then, pouring from the calabash, she prayed, 'Do not continue to hold my arms; leave me to do my

things, that rain may fall and people have corn. Tell one another, tell every single one, also the old woman (meaning Leakhali, her mother), and Mujaji, 'huckster in the hut', who 'casts away some and shares others with the vultures (Mujaji 1). Do not continue leaving us to be burnt by the sun. As for our health, we are reasonably well, we are merely troubled by the poverty you have left us'. (Le Khi voye la ntswara madzoho le letshe re re ge diya zwilo zwesu bula e ne vatho va khumane mavele. Le no tsevisa lote lu e mukhegulu le Mujaji mushava ndoni. Mujaji vamye va lata vamye o habela manoni. Le khi voye la letsha re khi swa ge lejaji. He e'e hu phela nyana re ve re kha no phela re di'o tswenya ge yona thsiu le re siedeho yona). She poured out all the mufugo, turning the calabash upside down beside the horn, while the assembled company did obeisance and ululated. The sheep was slaughtered and skinned and small pieces, cut from various parts of the body, were placed in an earthen bowl while the doctor, sitting some distance away, began squeezing the stomach contents to separate the liquid from the more solid part. When he had finished, the chief councillor his sister and the queen placed the meat on the grave telling the gods, 'We approach (hu suma) you with this sheep'. The solid stomach contents were placed on the grave, the assembled people greeted and trilled as before, the queen took away her little horn from the grave, and they all departed, carrying the sheep to an open spot some distance from the grave. Here they kindled a large fire and began cooking the meat in two large pots, one containing the internal organs (mala) and head which, on this occasion, are not to be eaten by women of childbearing age. Normally mala of a slaughtered animal are the portion par excellence of the women. While the meat was cooking the doctor took a potsherd containing the 'water'

of the stomach contents, his medicine bags and a stick of khadi creeper, and proceeded alone to the grave. It is surmised that he must have made a hole in the grave to pour down the water and medicine.

Meanwhile the clouds that had been in the sky at dawn had thickened and, while the pots were still cooking, rain fell and extinguished the fires which had to be rekindled. The meat was eaten on the spot by all present and just before they all departed the bones were collected, wrapped in the skin and placed on the grave. Prior to this, however, the doctor had spoken seriously to the councillors to approach the chief about the pukudi in the valley below where a woman who had died in childbirth had been buried 'in the open' without mufugo. Ten days later the doctor was called to set the matter right.

This sacrifice is exceedingly rare but it well illustrates the significant and usual intermingling of religious with what we would call purely magical rites. Thus, as the prayer is offered, it is rain medicine, which works by magic, not beer, the food of the gods, that is poured. The royal grave is treated, not to propitiate the gods, but to constrain them, to keep them cool, so that they will be unable to stop the rain. The sheep is an offering to the gods, a tangible indication that men still 'care for' their ancestors, but the use of the stomach contents on the grave falls into the magical pattern. Another point worth mentioning is that the queen was only one of several officiators: even her divinity does not give her precedence over the nearest living descendants in approaching the complaining spirits.

Measures for Rain unremitting throughout the Summer.

It has been shown that there is a great variety of steps

that can be taken to procure rain, their nature depending upon what is believed to be causing the drought. If the queen herself is thought responsible, and this is usually believed to be the case in the first instance, then her subjects will lova her with gifts or dances to excite her pity and to please her. If there have been wrong burials and rain taboos have been broken, these must be righted, while if the trouble comes from the ancestors, they must be placated. Sometimes one finds a combination of causes, but always it is the divining bones which decide what steps are to be taken. There are rain rites throughout the season, for not only may there be good rain in one area and not in another , but an inopportune period of drought in the best of seasons may have drastic effects on the crops. As an indication of the type of action in connection with the rain cult in any one season, the following has been taken from our diary for the season 1937-8, by no means a very bad year, but one in which the rainfall was below the average :-

12th November 1937	A rain doctor sent to make rain at Mtimkulu, a petty Shangana-Tonga chief to the north who had sent messengers to lova a few days before.
14th November	A thunderstorm, with very little rain but a very strong wind, broke in the afternoon.
15th November	Holiday observed to turn back the rain which had been scattered by the wind.
23rd November	Rain fell with much lightning which struck at Khiobene, one of the districts.
25th November	There was a thunderstorm in which lightning struck at Khidommamakheka , a sub-area of the capital. The place was treated with medicine and in the

	evening soft rain fell but not enough for ploughing.
2nd December	Real set-in rain fell till the 3rd.
4th December	Hoeing began.
8th December	First termites brought but given to dogs as carried by girls over puberty.
12th December	First termites given to rain charms.
13th December	Holiday.
January,1938	Period of drought.
23rd January	Mukupi, an important woman district head, came to speak to the queen as there had been no rain for three weeks. The sun beat down fiercely and the crops were beginning to shrivel up.
23rd January -11th February	Several other district heads came to Iova with money. People were consulting doctors about the drought. Bones declared a sacrifice necessary.
11th February	Councillors approached queen and messenger sent for a black sheep.
17th February	Kheshidwa, the rain doctor called.
19th February	District head at Muduveni (several farms but an old area of tribe) came with £1.10 to Iova.
22nd February	Sacrifice at Maulwi. Some rain fell but not very much.
1st-4th March	Legabathela dance for rain by the Thavolo.
2nd March	Kheshidwa called to put right a grave. This done on the 4th.
7th March	Levaga, a district head from the north, came to Iova with £2.
2nd April	Rain fell.

Some beliefs associated with the cultivation of njugo beans are relevant to our present subject. Among the Lovedu this crop is not planted until the mealies, among which it grows, are a foot high, but this is regarded as a practical measure to prevent injury to the mealies rather than as dictated by the belief, firmly rooted and still put into practice by tribes to the south and south-east of Vulovedu, that njugo beans planted too early impede the rain. Only some Lovedu ~~some~~ ~~Lovedu~~ have this belief and no one, as far as we know, acts upon it; nor do the Lovedu pull up the young plants when there is no rain, which the Phalaborwa do, as one Lovedu suggested , because the beans look like hailstones. The Lovedu also say, but again as if it were a foreign conception, that no njugo beans should be planted during the year following the death of a chief. The association of rain and njugo beans seems to belong to a culture complex coming from the south.

The insistence nowadays is upon studying culture change as if it were a phenomenon important only in its relation to European contacts, but there has always been and there still is culture change of a different and, as far as the Lovedu are concerned, more vital nature. Even in the rain cult there have been changes. In the reign of Mujaji II when the father of Kheshidwa succeeded Ramafalo as rain-maker, he instituted hu runa, a new ceremony of medicating all hoes with mufugo before the hoeing of the queen's field of eleusine, a practice which has fallen into disuse with the recent abandonment of the queen's hillside field for one in the valley which can be ploughed. The breaking of taboos is not necessarily a reflection of the breakdown and decay of custom. Indeed, the technique of the rain cult was based on the assumption that taboos were broken.

Breaches account for drought and the countervailing efficacy of the queen's measures explains her reputation and the confidence people have in her. Wrong burials are known to prevent rain but, since people try to avoid the unpleasant publicity involved in getting mufugo for the burial of, say, an abortion or in burying it in a wet place, these wrong burials are always taking place.

Neither European contact nor Christianity has succeeded in breaking down the implicit belief of every member of the tribe in the power of the queen to make rain. True, no Christians take part in ceremonies for rain and some do not believe that such things as wrong burials affect rainfall; but they harmonize the new with the old faith by the rationalization that the queen makes rain with the help of God, for they have all seen and can cite corroborative evidence for the powers of the queen. That the queen herself is honest and genuinely believes not only in her powers but also in the outside influences that prevent her from achieving success, can be seen in the reply she gave to the messengers who came on the 19th February, 1938, with £1.10. from a one-time district head in her kingdom to beg for rain. 'Go', she said, 'and tell the master of Muduveni that we are trying but things will just not come right' (O ye o mo voje munye Muduveni rea re rea lega zwi dio sita).(arrangements were being made for a sacrifice to the ancestors for rain). The money, however, was kept.

CHAPTER 8.

WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

Vuləi, as the Lovedu use the word, comprises both witchcraft and sorcery, but the distinction between them, as accepted by many modern ethnographical writers, diverges considerably from the distinctions made by the Lovedu. In order, therefore, to preserve Lovedu conceptions and terminology, it is necessary, firstly, to use a single word, namely witchcraft (Vuləi), and secondly, to distinguish night witchcraft (vuləi vya vusiu) and day witchcraft (vuləi vya matsiare). Vuləi is distinguished from other forms of what we should call magic, not so much by the methods employed, though some of them are confined to witches, as by intent and results. Vuləi is anti-social; it is illegal and aims at harming people from motives of jealousy, revenge, frustration or anger. Though witches are believed to have a kind of compulsion to do evil - their fingers itch to bewitch - they are never unconscious of their own evil deeds and powers, as had been reported by Junod for Shangana-Tonga and Stayt for the Venda. The witch knows his own powers and uses them to obtain his own ends. Knowledge of witchcraft does not inevitably involve its practice; the child of a witch may refuse to kill people while using his powers to increase his crop, and it is even possible for w witch to protect someone he likes against the machinations of others

.....

There are important distinctions between night-witches or night witchcraft on the one hand and day-witches or day witchcraft on the other. The night-witch is a 'born' witch, taught in early infancy by his mother. He works chiefly by night but can also work by day. The day-witch is any ordinary individual who, by means of medicine obtained from some doctor or witch, tries to kill his enemies. He has no knowledge of witchcraft beyond the medicine obtained for some definite end. There is a certain amount of vagueness about the distinction between day and night witches, and in practice when anyone is accused of witchcraft there is never any inquiry into which type of witchcraft has been used. Nevertheless the distinction is essential for an understanding of Lovedu witchcraft.

NIGHT WITCHES.

The night-witch is able directly and without the aid of any medicine to effect his evil purposes. He can enter a hut through the smallest crevice. But his absence from home will never be missed because he will throw his slumbering companions into a deep sleep or even leave a hyena in his own image; but the soul is never sent out to do the work as among the Azande. When one wakes up from a dream in a sweat or fright, it is a sign that night-witches are near and in consultations with doctors such symptoms are often described by patients as very relevant to the diagnosis of their illness. Night-witches are not often seen by people but there is certain medicine

which can be put in the village fence to keep a night-witch rooted to the spot, unable to move till you come and find him. As soon as he is addressed he will scurry away. Khedinia told us how one night when sleeping alone on the site of a new village he was building, he felt something sliding along his body. He jumped up and saw a naked woman. But immediately he had said "You want to kill me, do you?" she went away. Those who have seen witches always describe them as naked, perhaps because people always sleep naked wrapped in their blankets. The most effective way of keeping witches at bay is the placing of medicine (diphaba) round the village fence which either makes them forget their errand or makes the village appear like water or a forest.

Night-witches cause all manner of illness in ways unknown to ordinary people. They may pour blood over you, then next day you are ill; your blood is not right and soon you die. They may cut off portion of your body to insert millet or sand which causes intense pain. If your bones ache and you feel tired without knowing why, it may be that a night-witch has made you hoe in his garden all night or beaten you all over your body with sticks. Sometimes he even makes you ride a bicycle all night. Besides killing, night-witches are fond of causing barrenness in their enemies. They are great destroyers of crops. After you have ploughed, they go into your field and pick up all the seeds so that nothing grows, or they rob your field of its fertility to increase that of their own fields. They also send their familiars at night, usually the thuri (polecat) to milk your

cows or let them out of their kraal to cause damage that may bring you to court.

Night-witches form a sort of fraternity: they all know one another and meet at night to drum and dance for amusement. They also fight one another: those of an area in which the crops have failed will send wind to break mealies and trees in another area or worms to destroy the crop. The destructiveness of such contests is a reality to some, for in one district in which many worms appeared in the mealies, so we heard, a public meeting was held and one man accused Shangana-Tonga witches whom he said he had seen the previous night. Often a real battle against foreign witches takes place in which wounds are received that the witch does his best to hide during the day. Witches have even been known to die from wounds received in battle at night, as sometimes admitted by themselves.

Night-witches employ familiars (dithomya) such as the hyena (thuri, the snake muishond – poecilogale albinucha) snakes, and, to a lesser extent, owls and the striped nakedi muishond (ictonyx capensis): both kinds of muishond are polecats or skunks. How the witch tames these animals is not known, but they become so intimate that they come at night to ask for food and call the witch their mother, but there is no sex relationship between witch and familiar as is reported for the Pondo. Two actual cases were reported to the queen while we were in the field in which 'sent' snakes had been killed; one of these had been found to contain porridge and relish, certain proof of its

association with a witch. The difference between an ordinary snake which also bites and a 'sent' snake appears from the circumstances: If, for example, others walk along a path before you and escape but you get bitten, then the snake must be 'sent'. For 'sent' snakes are real snakes; the Zulu practice of smearing medicine on sticks to turn them into snakes when your enemy passes is not known to the Lovedu. The most fearful of all familiars is, however, the Khidudwane, a human being that has been killed by a witch to be his slave. A case came before the queen's court while we were in the field, in which a man accused a woman of causing his wife to have a miscarriage in order that the child might be her slave. The diviner had stated that the child was not really dead but enslaved, and that it had even been given a name by its owner. The khidudwane is not an ordinary corpse, though witches do call corpses out of their graves in order to cut off portions of thsir body for medicine, a procedure which can be prevented by magical protection of the grave. Only a person specially killed for the purpose can be a Khidudwane; when they bury him it is only his shadow that goes into the grave; the real person has been enslaved and put into a large earthen pot or in a cave. At night he hoes for his master, cuts poles for building, or goes on nefarious errands. If you meet a khidudwane you faint at the sight and even after medical treatment, your body may feel dried up as though it has no blood.

That the fear of zwidudwane is very real to the native and backed by what is to him convincing evidence is shown in the case of Madume.

In November, 1937, Madume, a man residing near us, died. Ever since his wife's death he had lived with (hu gaula) a woman whom he had never properly known, and, after his death, it was rumoured that he had been killed by the mother of his son's wife for the sake of her daughter, who was jealous that her husband's father should be fonder of, and show more favours to, a concubine than to his legitimate daughter-in-law. The mother of the girl had first, so it was said, wanted to kill Madume's wife, but her daughter had argued that it would be better to kill Madume himself since he might pick up some other woman and they would have the same trouble over again! How much of this story had actually been given by the diviner and how much was sheer surmise we were never able to discover, but a month after the death, people began to be afraid to go near the village at night as he had been seen standing at his gate. The concubine, afraid to remain at home at night, went to sleep with neighbours, whence she would return at dawn to do her household duties. One morning when it was just getting light, she rose to go home. On her way she suddenly ran shouting into the nearest village and fell in a faint at the entrance. People rushed to help her and called in Madume's sister to revive her in the manner usual in such circumstances, by holding smoking chips under the nose to cause sneezing (hu et semudisa). She told them she had seen three zwidudwana, a man called Khishweni who had died long ago in the neighbourhood, and two children, dancing and singing in the road. From this evidence, the conclusion was immediately come to, that Khishweni must have been killed by the same witch as Madume,

since both were walking about, and so great was the fear of going out at night that the woman of the neighbourhood could not be persuaded to attend a girl's initiation ceremony which had begun before this episode.

Associated with witches are zwivone. A khivone is not a familiar but a light seen at night and indicating the presence of witches. If you see one near home you usually take care to strengthen the charms (diphaba) of the village fence. Many people used to see a khivone in or near our hut, especially when we were not there (probably because they knew no charms had been used for its protection). Some say a khivone is a kind of torch, others aver that when a witch is being taught his mother gives him medicine which becomes a little bag in his stomach. This bag emits fire or light from his tail! Contact with Europeans has led to the conception of khipogo (spook) which must not be confused with khidudwane. A khipogo is the ghost of a dead person but the sight of a khipogo does not, like that of a khidudwane, make one faint or dry up; it only makes one's heart jump in fright. Such a ghost can be laid by means of medicine (diphaba) on the grave. Children often run to their mothers with scared faces and bated breath to say they have seen a khipogo, sometimes even in broad daylight.

Night-witches can be male or female but the great majority are female. There is nothing corresponding to witch-substance found in the stomachs of Zendi witches. A witch is said to imbibe witchcraft with its mother's milk yet it involves learning, a process begun on the second or third day after birth when its

mother throws it up against the wall to which it clings like a bat. On one occasion the anger of a grandmother that her grande.. child had been 'taken out' of the hut (hu thusa) without her presence or knowledge was construed as due to a sense of frustration because this had prevented her from teaching the child witch-craf.. The dullness at school of a certain girl whose mother was said to be a witch was ascribed to the difficulty of simultaneously learning two things: witchcraft and books. Since witchcraft is learnt from the mother (though one sometimes hears that the mother teaches her daughter, and the father his sons), brothers and sisters of one mother cannot accuse each other of witchcraft without involving themselves; that such accusations do occur shows how theory often gives way to practical considerations. In one such case where a woman brought her son to court for beating her and her daughters, the son accused his own mother and sister of killing his child. His sister asked, 'If I and my mother are witches, what about you?' When he replied, 'My mother stinted me, giving only you the knowledge' the court laughed saying, 'Boy, you're mad! When have you ever heard of a man accusing his own mother of witchcraft'. But the boy insisted on going to a Mugome, though the court warned him of the consequences of breaking his relati ship with his cattle-linked sister whose cattle, if called back because of the imputation, could no longer serve as a bond for future marriages. Night witchcraft is learnt, but unlike day witchcraft, it can neither be learnt from an outsider nor be bought. Yet one hears of such transactions more especially among Christians, who aver that payment consists of the blood of a close relative, usually your own child.

Jeremiah associated the beginnings of his step-mother's witch-craft with the death of her own child, followed shortly afterwards by that of her step-daughter.

THE DAY-WITCH AND HIS METHODS.

The day-witch is almost always a man since women cannot easily buy medicines. He is distinguished from the night-witch by his use of medicine and spells. Spells have no fixed phraseology but consist in telling the medicine what to do, mentioning the name of the person. Very often the medicine works as well without the spell as with it. The day witch employs no familiars, belongs to no fraternity, does not inherit his knowledge. He is called day-witch, not so much because he works by day, for he may work at night too, but because of the technique he uses. Whereas the night-witch himself goes out and steals your mealie seeds, the day-witch puts medicine on the soles of his feet and walks through your field; and while the day witch introduces substances into your body by means of medicine, the night-witch employs a stoat to take up its abode in you and eat all your food. Certain techniques are associated with day witchcraft though it is possible for any night-witch to use also all the methods of the day-witch, simply by getting the right medicine.

The day-witch can cause illness or death by hu lega. Hu lega means to try, to tempt and hence, by extension of meaning, to challenge or to send misfortune by means of medicine. The witch may mix your foot-print with medicine or put a medicated thorn in the path you usually take to cause pain in the leg, which gradually passes into the rest of the body and kills you.

He may cause your death by pointing a medicated finger at you or using water you have washed in or clothes you have worn. Hair and nails are, however, not much used in witchcraft and only a few people, more especially women are careful about their disposal. To point at a man in a menacing way, or to say the words, 'You will see' (u dɔ vɔna) suffices, should evil befall him, to ground an imputation of witchcraft. In a violent quarrel between a woman who had a child by her lover and the lover whom she had jilted because the liaison was causing trouble with her husband, the angry lover flung out the challenge, 'You've got my daughter who is my blood yet you love me no longer. You will see!' A few weeks later the daughter became ill and died. The mother overcome with grief and fury, carried her dead to the lover's house and threw it down, saying, 'Here is your meat. Cook it and eat it,' This phraseology suggests, though no one believes, that witches eat human flesh; it was construed merely as a dramatic accusation and created quite a stir; but it was considered justifiable in view of his threat. The mugɔmɛ, to whom the matter was taken, pointed out, not the lover but the woman's own husband as the culprit. When the latter, refusing to accept the verdict and to pay his bet, was required to leave the area, his wife, a staunch believer in his innocence, accompanied him. Use of malego by ordinary people is witchcraft, but its use by doctors against one another is legitimate. Doctors often 'try' their skill against one another: one doctor, we were told, turned himself into an elephant for the purpose of attacking his rival; not to be outdone, the latter became a bird and flew away!

Sending lightning, to cause lightning to strike (hu tlisa dadi), is a common means of harming one's enemies employed by day-witches. To say of a person, 'He knows lightning' is tantamount to calling him a witch, for unlike the Zulu, the Lovedu have no socially recognized lightning doctors. The Lovedu distinguish two kinds of lightning - natural or "lightning of the bird" and "sent" lightning. The former comes with rain and is caused by the lightning bird which has blue feathers and looks somewhat like a goose with large feet. These birds get no food unless there is lightning and then their food is the zuhululu, the blue-headed tree lizard. When the bird strikes a tree, it leaves its urine as a white substance at the root; then doctors come and take the soil into which it has soaked to be used as medicine to cause lightning or for curing burns. Natural lightning in theory and according to the diagnosis of the dice is conceived to strike only trees or rocks far from villages, never animals or people; but some say that it is dangerous to men in autumn when it follows the sweet sorghum spat out on the road. 'Sent' lightning, on the other hand, strikes near the village, killing cattle or people. It comes with little or no rain and is more terrifying than that of the lightning bird. Lightning is judged almost solely by its results: if it does no harm it is natural; if it strikes anyone or destroys anything in the village it is dadi ya vathu or khidadi muthwana, 'sent' by people.

Lightning very frequently strikes villages or people in Vulavedu and once a storage hut in the village beside us was burnt down. Consequently there are numerous accusations of 'sending'

lightning. In one case that came to court, the motive of the witch was stated to be theft. Complainant had £30 in a wallet in a suitcase in his hut. One night lightning struck his hut; it "burnt off the roof, broke part of the wall, knocked the owner about, especially on the head, broke various things including the suitcase and extracted the £30!" In another case in which a man's whole harvest was burnt by lightning, a neighbour was accused of doing this out of jealousy because he had reaped so little himself.

Doctors frequently 'try' one another by sending lightning. A lightning witch either may fly himself or may smear medicine on a dove or a red-winged locust which, when it thunders, is able to 'go' with the lightning' and strike where its owner wishes. Use of the lightning bird itself for this purpose is impossible. A man that himself strikes as lightning must be scarified with medicine containing some portion of the lightning bird, and when learning to strike may be taken to a high, desolate place where he is taught accuracy by being required to strike one of a number of aloes in a row. An informant once saw a man with black and white stripes allover his body and two branches tied to his hips; he concluded that this must be a lightning witch (c.f. the striped hyena with its mane of upright hair on neck or along back, or the striped polecat with bristles up its tail in anger). One who controls lightning is able to prevent it from striking him by cutting or piercing the flash with a medicated axe or spear, telling it to go elsewhere. Lightning frequently strikes villages and people in Vulovedu and in every instance, some

accusation is brought to court. Huts may be magically protected against lightning. If a witch strikes a protected village it is believed that he will 'fall', change into a person and can then be caught. There are no taboos against milking or working during lightning but the day after it has struck the whole district has a holiday.

Day-witches use several other techniques. A very common form of day witchcraft is hu lesa (to cause to eat), the introduction of medicine into beer or food, which on being swallowed turns into an indigestible piece of meat or other object that makes one ill. Most people one meets have at some time or other suffered from khilesa. If a man has enemies, the first thing he does is to abstain from drinking beer at their place. Pekaia, a heavy drinker, whose position as district head made it necessary for him to be called to most beer-drinks in his area, abstained altogether from all beer some months before our departure, because told by a doctor to be careful. To pour real poison into food (hu shela Khitaba) is a modern though still very uncommon method of killing. Hu fahelela (hu fa, to die, hu elela, to cause to go for) is to cause a person to leave home, e.g., for European employment, and die far away. This is done chiefly by day witches but also sometimes by night-witches; it is however, neither common nor well-known. Modern conditions with increased tribal contacts in European towns have led to a tremendous increase in day witchcraft. New methods and medicines for hu lega, unknown in the tribe before, are being introduced. Some even go so far as to say that the sending of lightning is a relatively recent

thing from Nareni.

PRACTICES BORDERING ON WITCHCRAFT.

There are many practices bordering on witchcraft, indistinguishable from day witchcraft in technique and method of precedure but considered legitimate and therefore not witchcraft in the true sense. Some of these are so close to, that they are sometimes looked upon as, witchcraft. The deciding factor in such cases is always the result: if it causes death it is witchcraft; if it does not or is done with an object that is recognised as legitimate, it is not witchcraft. Hu dabeka is essentially legitimate. Its technique consists in changing the nature of things, making medicated pieces of the skin of an animal turn into the animal itself, changing a person's sex, and one of the best-known doctors in Loveduland is skilled in madabi. It is a technique confined to men, employed to make a woman marry you or to frighten her into coming back to you when she has run away. No one has every heard of a woman sending madabi. A woman ran away from her husband to live with another. Whenever she was cooking or doing her household duties at her new home, monkeys and other animals appeared at the village till, frightened out of her wits, she ran back to her first husband. Madabi are often sent in connection with childbirth. Sometimes the sending of madabi is looked upon as witchcraft. Malaji changed the sex of Muhale's daughter so as to make the birth difficult each time her child was about to be born, because the child was his but the girl no longer loved him. We were not allowed into the hut, but the midwives, whom we knew well, testified to a real change though probably because

certain types of difficult birth are conventionally so explained. Eventually the birth took place, but shortly afterwards the baby was dead. This was considered witchcraft, the case was brought to court and a large fine imposed. We were told of a case in which by means of madaɓi, a man changed a child into a buck while it was being born. The horns stuck into the woman's womb and made the birth impossible till medicine was obtained to counteract it. Only the doctor who used madabi can undo or reverse its power by hu dabekulla, but other doctors may, if there has been any injury, heal it with medicine.

A practice similar to madabi but differing from it in object is madilebɔ. At the time of the Swazi raids, Raŋwagu, instead of hiding in the forests, put his faith in madilebɔ. When the enemy came, his village turned into water and they could not find his cattle though they heard their lowing. Masia, who was wanted by the police during the whole period of our investigation was able, when chased by them, to disappear even in the open; he was able to hang like a bat on a plough to look just like a spanner. When eventually he was arrested, he aver[illegible], and many people accepted, that it was because he was tired.

Khidɔba is a technique used against thieves and it is both public and legitimate. Some kinds of Khidɔba are known as a home remedy, some are obtained from doctors. By means of medicine used on ledzigeri grass (Hyparrhenia Tamba) one can cause a severe and painful itching in the finger of the thief which may compel him to confess. Likewise, by hu dɔba a stolen goat may be made to cry out in the thief's belly as happened in a recent case, probably of

compulsion neurosis, in which bleating was taken as conclusive proof of his guilt. Another method of hu dɔba causes the eyes of the thief to protrude till they fall out on to his stomach; and if his mother then cries on seeing him, he may die. Khidɔba strikes the thief even when he hides or sells the stolen goods. Besides these measures, taken to bring a thief to book after the theft, one may by anticipation protect one's property by means of a piece of letate nish (Mariscus sp.) split at one end to resemble the mouth of a snake and smeared with coloured medicines. When placed at the hut entrance or on the border of your field, it turns into a snake and bars the entry or exit of a thief. A doctor we knew used to have serious talks with his son about the fortune he would make, if he knew this medicine, especially in Johannesburg where theft is common and victims pay high prices. The only recognised cure of the power and effect of hu dɔba is by asking for pardon, when the doctor who gave or used the khidɔba will be asked to dɔbulla i.e., reverse the effects of his medicine. He will usually charge a large fee (even an ox) which he shares with his client.

Use of medicine on a grave which causes the death not only of the witch who killed the deceased but also of other members of his family, is not considered to be witchcraft. This is called hu tsikɛla or hu dɛla levida (to work on the grave) and is done in various ways: the corpse may be smeared before burial or the seed of a certain plant from Rhodesia sown on the grave, and when it grows the witch will die; or medicine and the stomach contents of a goat may be poured down a hole in reach the body in its grave This is the usual sense in which hu tsikɛla is used, but sometimes

it is conceived of as a kind of hu dɔba against a thief with the purpose of wreaking vengeance not only on him but also on all those who have eaten of the thing stolen whether they are innocent strangers or guilty accomplices. It kills, unlike hu dɔba which merely injures. As in khidoba this form of hu tsikɛla is more or less public, for the villagers and neighbours must be previously informed so that they will have an opportunity to confess. The other and more usual form of hu tsikɛla is directed against witches who are murderers and for that reason it is not public, for it is conceived that the witch might take counter measures or bribe a bad doctor to call back the medicine. It may be sent to a definite person discovered by consultation with the bones, but the name of the person will not be mentioned in the spell lest the witch takes counter measures. The spell is not in set terms but it usually runs as follows, 'You Mufuba (the deceased in the grave whose death is to be avenged), we are today working on your grave. We call all those who killed you to follow you to the grave. We do not say only one of them - we mean all who are of them (the whole family). Do you also call them so that all of them should follow you'.

A death is sometimes ascribed by the bones to hu tsikɛla; and in one case the suicide of a girl, who was said to have bewitched her husband's people, was found to have been caused by such medicine. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is possible for a witch who gets a doctor to tsikɛla for him, to be struck down by the medicine intended for another. It is curious that, though he knows that the medicine seeks out the true witch, he will risk such a procedure, but the explanation is that, though a doctor

might be deceived - his bones confused by the witch's medicine (khivalhagaga) the medicine cannot be, and that the fatal effect of hu tsikala is diagnosed ex post facto. Thus in one case where a woman died, her sister went to a tsikala specialist; but subsequently the sister herself and some of her relatives died. When a great mugome was consulted, he said that the sister had sent mutsikala to people whom she hated and that, not finding the murderer there it returned and struck down the sender. Mutsikala will continue its deadly effects unless 'stopped' by the doctor who sent it, though there is a medicine (lesalo) which may be eaten by all those who think they are in danger of vengeance magic, to neutralize its effects. It is recognised that the witch may retaliate to vengeance magic, though this is considered unusual and almost always ineffectual.

Love medicine was not known to the Lovedu and its use is generally said by the older people to be witchcraft. The only legitimate practice was that of "doctoring' a boy who was unable to find a wife or whom the girls generally disliked by smearing his body with the stomach contents of a goat or letting him sit under a waterfall or by getting a cat to scratch his shoulder! Nevertheless, this magic, introduced from the towns where, especially among Zulu and Xhosa it is common, is used by many young men in Vulovedu today. One day a doctor quite openly accosted a man asking for payment, saying, 'You know full well you'd never have been able to marry your wife if it had not been for the medicine I gave you! It is generally believed that Andrew, whose first wife disliked him intensely at first, won her by love

medicines. And when Malatela was brought to court for causing the death of the child he had by a girl who would not marry him, he admitted having used love medicines and named the doctor from whom he had obtained them, though he denied responsibility for the death of the child. One method employed in love magic, scarification of the forehead or use of the medicine in your snuff, makes all the girls love you; blowing a medicated pipe of the mukhure shrub (Ricinus sp.) morning and evening, while calling the name of a certain girl, will make her come to you soon; and there are various other medicines. Love magic to cause hysteria in girls is known as a Zulu practice but is not used in Vulovedu. It would be looked upon as witchcraft.

These borderline methods, sometimes called witchcraft, sometimes not, and often referred to as 'good' vulɔi brings us to a consideration of what constitutes vulɔi: All witchcraft is socially disapproved, anti-social, but this criterion is not always sufficient to distinguish between witchcraft proper and practices bordering on witchcraft. Swearing at people, or scolding them violently, when the cause hardly justifies it, is liable to call down upon them forces which lead to death or misfortune to them or their family. It is called lesola and is reprehensible; but it is not vulɔi; nor is mahaba, illness caused by the ill-feeling of a father's sister or other relative. The conduct of a woman who, having had an abortion, causes her husband's death through neglecting to give him the medicine necessary to ward off such disaster, is strongly app disapproved of, but it is not witchcraft even though it causes death.

Author Krige E
Name of thesis Medicine Magic and Religion of the Lovedu 1940

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.