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THE TRIANGLE OF *GHORA* KILLING IN RIGO INLAND IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A BIBLICAL RESPONSE

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Abstract

Ghora killing in the Rigo inland of the Central Province of Papua New Guinea is a deeply rooted spiritual problem. Out of hatred or jealousy people engage the services of a *ghora* to kill people through supernatural means. A person must go through vigorous physical and ritualistic training to become a *ghora*. Others train to become *babaraus* to bring justice to those who suffer from *ghora* killing. But, whether they bring harm or justice, the Bible is clear that both *ghoras* and *babaraus* are empowered by the same source – satanic demons – with whom they share many characteristics. Three case studies discuss the various community responses (*wui-ita*, *karva-ghabi*, and *toe-yawa*) to the problem of *ghora* killing from the 1930s to the early 2000s. Two of these solutions were condemned by early and later Seventh-day Adventist missionaries as satanic in nature because the sources used to counter *ghora* killing were the same sources the *ghoras* used. However, the latest practice, *toe-yawa*, has not been condemned. God-fearing Christians in the Rigo inland are challenged to rekindle the strong advocacy of the early and later Seventh-day Adventist missionaries against all uses of satanic power.

Keywords

Sorcery, Rigo inland, *ghora*, *babarau*, *wui-ita*, *karva-ghabi*, *toe-yawa*, biblical response, Satan, demons

INTRODUCTION

I suspect that more has been written about sorcery in Papua New Guinea (PNG) than any other topic. But all of this attention has only reinforced a general ambivalence towards sorcery killing. The present article seeks to address this ambivalence by arguing that the source from which sorcerers attain their extraordinary powers to kill people through various forms of ritual

is Satan and his demons. To seek after, listen to, or engage with these satanic sources is contrary to Christianity. Sorcerers are ordinary people who possess extraordinary powers because Satan and his demons control and empower them. Thus, sorcery practices are dangerous and undermine the authority of the God of heaven. This inquiry uses the term *ghora* in place of “sorcery” because the use of the word *ghora* emphasizes the real source of sorcery powers and helps to avoid preconceived misconceptions about sorcery killing.

The article is divided into four parts. The first part is a non-exhaustive review of previous works on sorcery in PNG. The second discusses the nature of *ghora* practice in the Rigo inland and how the *ghoras* and *babaraus* become major players in *ghora* killing. The third part uses biblical comparisons to discuss *ghoras* and *babaraus* in relation to satanic demons. Finally, the conclusion makes several recommendations.

PREVIOUS WORKS

Since “*ghora* killing” is related to “sorcery killing,” a brief survey of general works on sorcery will be helpful. There has been an increase in attempts to discuss sorcery in PNG over the last 20 years. The following is not an exhaustive list, but a survey of a few selected works.

John Baker correctly observes that sorcery still “remains a living reality” in PNG and that early missionaries have shaped people’s thinking toward sorcery.¹ Although his focus is the Maisin people, Baker’s observations are applicable to all of the cultures of PNG.

According to Naomi M. McPherson, sorcery is defined as a form of “esoteric knowledge bestowing personal power.”² McPherson acknowledges that people become sorcerers because they obtain mysterious supernatural powers. But what is not mentioned is the fact that sorcerers get assistance from powers beyond themselves. What these powers are and from where they come will be a matter for discussion in this article.

Andrew Lattas does not individualise sorcery by treating it as an “illness specific to individual circumstances.” Rather he explores the way “colonialism and development in themselves are being criticised through

¹ J. Baker, “Encounters with Evil: Christianity and the Response to Sorcery Among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea,” *Oceania* 6 (1990): 152 (139-155).

² N.M. McPherson, “A Question of Morality: Sorcery and Concepts of Deviance among the Kabana, West New Britain,” *Anthropologica* 33 (1991): 132 (127-143).

sorcery accusations.”³ In other words, Lattas says that sorcery reflects the “inequalities and conflicts which the white man’s institutions,” such as education, cash cropping, government, and missions bring.

Bruce Kapferer proposes that sorcery is the “magical additional force that unites with the intentional direction of human beings into their realities – a creative destructive directionality.”⁴ Again, where this additional force comes from is overlooked.

Allen Jones, in his findings on sorcery among the Mekeo people, observes that the act of sorcery is “ruthless” and “deliberate” in destroying others.⁵ Finally, Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart relate Papua New Guinean sorcery to sickness, death and sister-exchanges in marriage.⁶

What is lacking in these works is that, although most of the authors acknowledge that sorcery is a magical force, not one of them goes on to explore the *source* of these powers. In addition, this brief review shows that the term “sorcery” can have various meanings attached to it which do not address the core issue of the source of sorcery powers.

THE NATURE OF *GHORA* PRACTICE IN RIGO INLAND

Ghora in the Rigo language is a noun which refers to a group of demon-possessed men who are hired to kill people in a supernatural way. It also functions as a verb to describe the practice of supernatural killing. The *ghoras* attain their knowledge and power through ritualistic training at very isolated places in the jungle. There are four stages in which *ghora* power is attained.

- The first stage is *ghani-gabu*. At this stage trainees eat special leaves with ginger and burnt bananas for two months without drinking or washing. During this first stage they also memorise magical words received from the dead ancestors through their instructors.

³ A. Lattas, “Sorcery and Colonialism: Illness, Dreams, and Death as Political Languages in West New Britain,” *Man* 28 (1993): 53 (51-77).

⁴ B. Kapferer, “Sorcery, Modernity and the Constitutive Imagery: Hybridising Continuities,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 46 (2002): 105 (105-128).

⁵ A.A. Jones, “Mekeo Chiefs and Sorcerers: Metaphor, Ideology, and Practice,” *Oceania* 77 (2007): 294 (286-312).

⁶ A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart, “Sorcery and Sister Exchange: Comparative Comments,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 23 (2009): 61-63.

- If the trainees pass the first stage, the instructor then takes them to a place filled with black carpenter ants. It is believed that the ancestral powers are inherited through these ants. The more the ants bite the trainees, the more the ancestral powers they receive. Giving up in this second stage is seen as disrespectful to the ancestral spirits. The consequence of backing away at this stage is expulsion and the trainee will be haunted by the ancestral spirits.
- After two weeks of recovery, the instructors then take the trainees to beehives where they are bitten as a test of endurance. They are told that they have come too far to give up.
- The final stage is the most challenging. The trainee *ghoras* have to play a leading role in having a family member killed in order to graduate at the highest level. Most trainees fail at this stage. Only a few strong-hearted ones get through.

Some people, for reasons known only to themselves, but usually out of hatred, jealousy, greed, or to pay someone back, plan to have other people killed. To avoid legal prosecution, imprisonment, or possible physical retaliation, *ghoras* are engaged to do the job because there will be no physical evidence to verify their actions.

Ghora killing in Rigo inland⁷ operates in a triangular mode which involves ordinary human beings and the *ghoras*. Engaging the services of *ghoras* requires a cash payment along with the name(s) of the victim(s). Upon receiving the cash and the name, the process of *nubo* begins. *Nubo* is a *ghora* ritual process of having the victim make himself or herself available to be killed. The process includes pulling special roots while chanting the name of the victim, the breaking of sacred stones, and placing the written name of the victim on the crushed stones and wrapping it with a special leaf (only known to *ghoras*). This ritual is done a couple of times over a month. It is the opposite of praying for someone over a month for God to work in his or her life. *Nubo* is a process of meditation and praying to the ancestors to make the victim ready for killing.

In the process of doing *nubo* the *ghoras* may also want to do *ghani-gabu* as an extra ritual from a recent grave(s) in preparation for the killing to take

⁷ The term “Rigo inland” refers to the Boku area which includes Orman River villages in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea.

place. *Ghani-gabu*, in the original sense, is the diet of the people undergoing *ghora* training. *Ghani* is “to eat” and *gabu* is “to burn.” So, *ghani-gabu* is eating burnt food from the fire without drinking water for the duration of the *ghora* training which can take two to three months. However, the term also refers to the practice by graduated and practising *ghoras* to get more *power* by digging up coffins from recent grave(s), opening them, rubbing food items over the corpse, and eating the food. They then rebury the corpse. By doing that they believe that the ancestral spirits provide them with extra power to carry out the task.

After a month of doing *nubo* the victim is now ready and becomes *mage* or “ripe”. This period is indicated in the following ways: (1) the targeted victim becomes unsettled, always wandering about alone; (2) a “death smell” comes from their bodies, but only the *ghoras*, not ordinary people, can smell it; (3) there is a feeling like a magnetic pull, so that the victims always wants to be where the *ghoras* are.

When the time comes for the killing, the *ghoras* may attack at a convenient time and place. When the victim is ambushed, the *ghoras* who are specialised in killing attack the victim with the *apeta*. *Apeta* is a special weapon made of strong wood shaped like a canoe paddle used by the ancestors when at war with tribal enemies. This *apeta* is used by the *ghoras* to kill victims by bashing them to death.

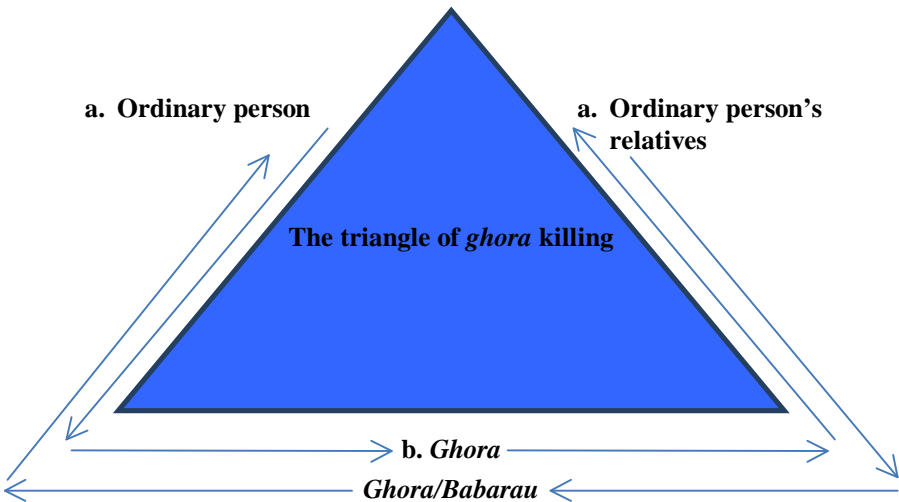
A second group of *ghoras* who are specialised in resuscitation then follow a process of reviving the dead by rubbing special leaves and roots over the body and speaking the unconscious victim back into consciousness. After that, the *ghoras* direct the victim to die in a certain way, at a certain time and location, and they send the victim away. For example, *ghoras* tell the victim to fall from a coconut tree, to drown, to be attacked and eaten by a crocodile, or to die through a car accident, etc. When the victim dies, days or weeks later, according to the directions of the *ghoras*, another turn in the triangular mode of *ghora* killing takes place.

The relatives of the victim seek answers for the cause of death. The answer lies in the *babarau*. *Babarau* is a word in Motu (a common language among Papuans) which describes a person who has a supernatural ability to: (1) save victims who are in the “ripe” period; (2) reveal the identities of *ghoras* and those who hired them (traitors); (3) provide answers for the cause of death or sickness; (4) heal people from sickness; (5) provide security from

threat. In the case of relatives seeking answers for the cause of death, the *babaraus* provide clues and disclose identities.

Upon learning the identities of the killers, the relatives hire other *ghoras* to provide payback. However, these newly-hired *ghoras* cannot kill other *ghoras* because they have the same powers and they do things together. Instead they go after the traitor(s) who had earlier planned for the death of the person. If the hired *ghoras* are unable to kill the traitor(s), they turn on the traitor's innocent family members.

This triangular mode of *ghora* killing sets the *ghoras* and *babaraus* on centre stage where they become main players, while the common people, who use their services, hide behind them. However, they are rivals because the *babaraus* reveal the identities and the actions of the *ghoras*. Both *ghoras* and *babaraus* become the most powerful, respected, and feared people in the community. Below is an illustration of the triangular nature of *ghora* killing.



BIBLICAL COMPARISONS AND RESPONSES

Compared to God, human beings are limited in all aspects of life. This is because humans are part of the material world created by God (Gen 1, 2). Humans are seen as a little lower than the angels, but crowned with glory and

honour (Ps 8). This means that humans, though uniquely created in God's image, cannot function like angels or God. Although humans are God's agents ruling over and caring for the earth (Gen 1:27), they do not possess godly powers.⁸

However, like Eve in the garden (Gen 3), some people desire to possess secret knowledge and power. In the case of *ghoras* and *babaraus*, their attainment of secret knowledge and power is very satanic in nature. Therefore, they are rivals to God and become hostile to ordinary people. They are human beings endowed with more than human knowledge. In other words, *ghoras* who kill others have some form of higher knowledge, since they are possessed or controlled by powers other than God. It is not hard to find such examples in scripture: the daughter of the Phoenician woman possessed by demons (Mark 7:24-30); and a mute boy who was also possessed by demons (Mark 9:17-29). According to Merrill Unger, sorcerers (*ghoras* included) recklessly flirt with demonism.⁹

Both the *ghoras* who kill and *babaraus* who heal and reveal are under Satan's rule and control. The demons, as subjects and helpers of Satan (Matt 24:26), empower the *ghoras* to kill. Likewise, the demons empower the *babaraus* to heal, reveal, and to protect. The demons with whom the *ghoras* and *babaraus* liaise are also well organised and able to interact with people's culture and the modern world of science (see Matt 12:24).

Below is a table, which shows the similarity of demons to *ghoras* and *babaraus*. The basic lie of Satan through the serpent in the Garden of Eden – that humans could become like God in knowledge and yet not die – seems to be “validated” by the god-like characteristics of *ghora* and *babarau* in the Rigo inland today.¹⁰

⁸ R.L. Harris, *Man: God's Eternal Creation: Old Testament Teaching on Man and His Culture* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 7.

⁹ M.F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today: a Study of Occultism in the Light of God's Word* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971), 11.

¹⁰ D.E. Mansell, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1988), 65.

Demons	<i>Ghoras</i> and <i>babaraus</i>
Demons are powerful, supernatural beings (Rev 16:14).	<i>Ghoras</i> and <i>babaraus</i> have special powers.
The demons can inflict sickness (Matt 9:32-33).	<i>Ghoras</i> inflict sickness through <i>nubo</i> . <i>Babaraus</i> can inflict sickness on others.
Demons can control animals (Mark 5:13).	<i>Ghoras</i> can control and use animals, such as snakes and crocodiles, to kill victims.
Demons can possess or control human beings (Luke 8:2).	<i>Ghoras</i> control victims through <i>nubo</i> and direct their death. <i>Babaraus</i> lure people into believing them.
Demons can cause mental disorder (Mark 5:2-3, 5).	<i>Ghoras</i> themselves do not respect human life. They are disorderly in their thinking. They cause mental disorder through <i>nubo</i> .
Demons are afraid of God (Jas 2:19).	<i>Ghoras</i> and <i>babaraus</i> do not attend church. They are also afraid of religious people, especially pastors.
Demons oppose God's people (Eph 6:12)	<i>Ghoras</i> destroy people who have been created in the image of God.
Demons teach false doctrine (1 Tim 4:1).	<i>Ghoras</i> and <i>babaraus</i> lie to people.
God is going to judge demons at the last judgment (2 Pet 2:4).	God is going to judge <i>ghoras</i> and <i>babaraus</i> at the last judgment.

In the book of Exodus, for instance, Egyptian magicians imitated by magic the miracles of God. When Moses told Aaron to throw his staff down, it turned into a snake. Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerer's did the same thing and their staves also turned into snakes (Ex 7:8-12). From outside, they looked identical. The difference was that Moses acted at the command of God (v. 8), and the magicians acted in opposition to God through their secret arts (v. 11).

Likewise, the *babaraus* reveal, heal, and assist people in response to their needs, but at the commands of the demons. Similarly, the *ghoras* provide a service by killing people through the power of sources other than God. In both instances, *ghoras* and *babaraus* deal with the same forces, the demons. In the

triangular mode of *ghora* killing in Rigo inland, *ghoras* consult Satan through various rituals to provoke the demons into action. The *babaraus* consult the same demons to do “good” to people.

1. Community Solutions and Church Responses

Ghora killing and *babarau* responses in the Rigo inland are ongoing problems that require a response from men and women who fear God. Such godly men and women need to encounter *ghora* killing with the Word of God. For the scriptures show that God can directly intervene in any circumstance when his people suffer through subjection to demonic powers (see Dan 3, 6-12; Matt 24-27; Ezek 37-39). But before coming to the biblical data, this section looks at the various community solutions that have been applied to *ghora* killing in the Rigo inland.

(a) Case Study 1

Between the 1930s and the 1950s the method used to deal with *ghora* killing was *wui-ita* (hair proving). The community would go to the cemetery and call upon ancestors to come out and drop handfuls of human hair (similar to the *ghoras* and their agents). The relatives would watch from their hiding places as the spirits of the ancestors came out of their graves and dropped handfuls of human hair on certain locations. The relatives would then study the hair carefully and try to make links to people with a similar hair type. The leaders would have all the villagers come forward and they would compare their hair with the hair provided by the ancestral spirits. Someone in the crowd would eventually admit guilt.

The *wui-ita* method was condemned as satanic by the early Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Rigo inland. The missionaries confronted this evil practice with the Bible teaching that the ancestors were long dead and their rising up and communicating with relatives was not possible because dead people are truly dead and, therefore, unable to appear or to communicate (2 Sam 12:23; Eccl 12:7). They concluded that it was the satanic demons that transformed themselves and communicated with the people. The villagers, upon receiving the Word of God from the missionaries, understood that the “ancestral spirits” were demons in the form of ancestors. *Wui-ita* eventually died out, but *ghora* killing continued.

(b) Case Study 2

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the *karva-ghabi* (holding the fire) practice emerged. This came about because *ghora* killing continued and resulted in people blaming each other and becoming suspicious toward one another. As a result, relationships within communities were destroyed. Therefore, *karva-ghabi* became a standard form of verifying evidence of *ghora* killing.

In *karva-ghabi*, a piece of burning wood would be placed in the palm of the corpse and certain people would mumble sacred words into the corpse's ears to identify the location of the *ghoras* and the traitors(s) by flying a light across the sky toward the direction of the traitor(s) village. People would watch with anticipation as the firelight would continuously sparkle toward the direction of the *ghoras* and the traitors. That would provide the needed evidence. So, the relatives of the deceased would try to bring payback through other means of magic.

This method was again condemned by later Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. In the *karva-ghabi* practice, the later missionaries preached and taught that the demons were the ones who flew the light across the sky. Because of the missionaries' strong advocacy against the practice, people began to realise that Satan was behind this. The more people accepted the Word of God, the less people engaged in this activity. As a result, the *karva-ghabi* practice died out, but *ghora* killing continued.

(c) Case Study 3

In the late 1990s and early 2000s more young people in the Rigo inland were drafted into *ghora* practice and *ghora* killing spiralled out of control. There were merciless killings with no regard for human life. This caused much frustration among the general public. As a result, a group of individuals invented *toe-yawa* with the help of the ancestral spirits. This form of magic was designed to have traitors and *ghoras* killed. Those who invented this magic spent months pleading with the dead ancestors to show them ways to eradicate traitors and *ghoras*.

Toe-yawa involves a special mixture of magical leaves and magical words given by the ancestors. These leaves are placed in the coffin box secretly before burial and words provided by the ancestral spirits are spoken. After burial and for some time the corpse decays. As decay takes place the traitors and the *ghoras* involved in the killing get sick and die immediately.

In the past ten years many *ghoras* have died through this mode of payback and the existing *ghoras* now see *toe-yawa* as a direct threat. That has minimised *ghora* activity for the past five years. Meanwhile, the people see it as a successful security measure and a mode of payback to get even with ruthless *ghoras* and traitors. People like it because the payback does not involve physical retaliation or confrontation. As a result, Seventh-day Adventist community leaders, church leaders, and church members support it. A few church leaders and many members use *toe-yawa* magic as a security measure.

There is no clear opposition to it because of frustration about what the *ghoras* are doing in causing pain, loss, failure, sickness, madness, and death. The *ghoras* deprive their fellow humans of achieving or attaining their full potential. Rigo inland people tend to use *toe-yawa* and *babarau* for retaliation and both are thought of as means of bringing justice to people.

Also, this is seen as a preventative measure for those people who hire *ghoras*, and as a way of minimising *ghora* activity in the Rigo inland area. But *ghora* killing still takes place since there are loopholes of which the *ghoras* can take advantage.

The three case studies have shown ways in which Rigo inland people have tried to bring solutions to the age-old practice of *ghora* killing and to stop oppression. The traditional intention to bring peace, security, and freedom from the *ghoras* was and is good. Unfortunately, the *source* of these solutions, which are intended to bring justice, is the same source the *ghoras* use: the satanic demons who are rivals to the God of heaven.

2. The Old Testament Response

A possible biblical solution comes into play when the sources of power acquired by *ghoras*, *babaraus*, and *toe-yawa* are questioned. Two questions need to be answered from a biblical solution perspective: (1) what does the Bible have to say about sorcery; and (2) who are the ancestral spirits and from where do they come?

In the Old Testament all magical arts were distinctly prohibited on penalty of death under Mosaic law. God's attitude toward sorcery is bluntly stated in Exodus 22:18, "You shall not suffer a witch to live." According to Leviticus 19:26-28 and 19:31, God's people were not allowed to practice divination or soothsaying, or to turn to mediums or spiritualists. In Deuteronomy 18:10-11,

God's people were commanded not to learn the "abominations" of the people of the promised land such as child sacrifice, divination or sorcery, and they were not to interpret Oman, engage in witchcraft, cast spells, or turn to spiritualists/mediums who consulted the dead. Necromancy or talking to the dead was forbidden because it challenged the concept of prophecy with Yahweh as the one and only true source of "divination" as outlined in Deuteronomy 18:9-22.

When God did not respond positively to Saul because of his wickedness, instead of searching his own heart Saul attempted to obtain a revelation of the future from an ungodly source (1 Sam 28:8). At night and in disguise, he turned to a witch, an ungodly medium or spiritualist condemned as worthy of death by the Pentateuch. Saul's action in this case parallels the actions of *ghoras* and *babaraus* who seek ungodly sources, usually at night. Previously, Saul had driven the necromancers out of the land (v. 3), but in his desperation now found himself doing the exact opposite.¹¹

In v. 7 Saul commands his officers to seek a בִּזְמִית ("ghost wife" or "woman ventriloquist"; cf. Isa 29:4, "the one calling out from the earth", LXX). In other words, a woman who communicates with spirits of the deceased who are buried in the ground. The phrase "divine unto me by the familiar spirit" (KJV) in v. 8 would mean that Saul was seeking answers to his questions by using a witch to contact a departed or dead person. The woman describes her vision in the following way, "I saw gods (יְהוָה מְהֵלָא) coming out of the [opening in the] earth like an old man (וְקִזְ' שִׂיָא) wrapped up in a robe (לִיעֵמ)" (vv. 13-14).

Smelik surveys various early answers to the question "did Samuel himself appear or not?"¹² First, Smelik observes that Philo did not deny that it was Samuel himself who appeared, and points out that Philo did not believe in necromancy. Second, Smelik refers to Pionius' remark that the rabbis considered necromancy to be wicked but possible, and taught that Samuel himself was raised at Endor. Third, Smelik observes that early Christian authors have three opinions: (1) that Samuel was resuscitated by the woman (Justin Martyr, Origen, Zeno of Verona, Ambrose, Augustine, Sulpicius

¹¹ See P.T. Reis, "Eating the Blood: Saul and the Witch of Endor," *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament* 22 (1997): 3-23.

¹² K.A.D. Smelik, "The Witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 AD," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 164-65 (160-79).

Severus, Dracontius, and Anastasius Sinaita); (2) either Samuel or a demon appeared in his shape at God's command (John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Pseudo-Justin, Theodore bar Koni, and Isho'dad of Merv); (3) a demon deceived Saul and gave him a forged prophecy (Tertullian, Pseudo-Hippolytus, Pionius, Eustathius of Antioch, Ephraem, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus, Pseudo-Basil, Jerome, Philastrius, Ambrosiaster, and Pseudo-Augustine).

So which interpretation is correct? The witch of Endor is an older example of "talking to ancestral spirits" in Bible times. Some may argue that the disguised Saul asked the woman to bring up Samuel from the grave and the woman "saw Samuel" (v. 12) and not a demon in the shape of Samuel. However, the words the "woman saw Samuel" are not meant to be definitive. The reader will understand this "magic" of raising Samuel to be *delusive* because it is understood that the story is about the condemned practice of necromancy. The passage sets out to reiterate that seeking ungodly sources is wrong.

The historical books and prophets (see Isa 44:25; Jer 27:9; 29:8; Ezek 13:9; 21:21-23) also speak against such things. Jezebel, the wicked queen of the northern kingdom of Israel, was deeply involved in witchcraft and her "sorceries were many" (2 Kgs 9:22). Consequently, she died a violent death (vv. 33-35). King Manasseh of Judah practiced different kinds of occultism, including spiritualism and magical sorcery (2 Chron 33:6). God called these wicked deeds "abominations" and stated that Manasseh had done wickedly (2 Kgs 21:11).

God will not let sorcerers go unpunished indefinitely. When the Messiah, Israel's prince of peace returns (Mic 5:2-5), all "man-made religions with their sorcerers, diviners, idols, shrines, and cities devoted to idolatry will be destroyed (vv. 12-14). Malachi also refers to the removal of sorcery as part of future judgement at the Lord's return. The Lord will be "a swift witness against the sorcerers" (Mal 3:5). Finally, the profusion of sorcerers in both Egypt and Babylon along with the magicians and enchanterers in Babylon is condemned throughout the Old Testament.¹³ This judgemental attitude of the Lord toward sorcery and its practitioners indicates that it has a defiling effect

¹³ R.B. Zuck, "The Practice of Witchcraft in the Scriptures", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (1971): 352-60.

upon God's people. Complete removal of every trace of this terrible sin is necessary.

3. The New Testament Response

In the New Testament Peter spoke against Simon the sorcerer who tried to buy the power of God with money (Acts 8:9-25). Simon had gained a great following through his practice of sorcery (vv. 10, 12). People were amazed because of his magical arts (v. 9). However, on hearing the gospel message from Philip, Simon believed and was baptised. He was amazed when he saw that the miracles performed by Philip were far greater than his own (v. 13). This shows that God's power is superior to the power of demons.

On each of Paul's missionary journeys, he confronted some form of satanic power. On his first journey Paul condemned a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was also called Elymas, who tried to oppose the work of the apostles (Acts 13:6-12). Paul denounced Bar-Jesus with strong words saying "you are a child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (v. 10). In this denunciation, Paul indicates that every kind of sorcery is deceiving, satanic, the opposite of righteousness, and a spiritual perversion.¹⁴

It is also important to understand the source of *ghora* killing in light of the evil powers outlined in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." (RSV)

¹⁴ Zuck, "The Practice of Witchcraft," 358.

Without hesitation, this is the clearest description in the New Testament of the ever present reality of spiritual warfare. Paul is in no doubt as regards the presence of evil principalities and powers.¹⁵ He asserts that God's people are in constant confrontation with evil forces. Collectively, the "spiritual hosts of wickedness" are in league with the *ghoras*, *babaraus*, and *toe-yawa* people discussed in this article. That is, these people are under the headship of Satan, the devil.¹⁶ The person who manifests behaviour like a *ghora*, *babarau*, or *toe-yawa* is to be understood as controlled and taken possession by an evil invisible power or being.

So, when Paul talks about wrestling with "principalities and powers," he speaks in a language that immediately resonates with people's struggle over *ghora* killing in the Rigo inland. According to Paul, believers are to clothe themselves with the spiritual armour only God can provide.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues involved in *ghora* killing are difficult for people to judge correctly because of the supernatural nature of these events. The *ghoras*, *babaraus*, and *toe-yawa* are always successful because their methods are empowered by supernatural forces and there is no physical evidence which can be traced. People in the Rigo inland need to understand that *ghoras* communicate with demons which allow them to further their ambition to dominate other people, animals, plants, and the material world. This enlargement of control is beyond the five senses. It is achievable because these demonic spirits are emissaries sent from Satan with personalities and the characteristics of intelligent beings. They hear, speak, see, think, know, and dwell in the human body in order to accomplish their evil purposes (Matt 12:43-45, Mark 1:23-24, Mark 3:11).

Ghoras, *babaraus*, and *toe-yawa* people who consult demons in a desire for power and payback are always hungry for new knowledge that will enable them to dominate nature. They become superhuman individuals and have a very powerful attraction for ordinary people. In Rigo inland the fear of misfortune and sickness is a major reason why many seek the protection and

¹⁵ C.E. Arnold., "The 'Exorcism' of Ephesians 6:12 in Recent Research: A Critique of Wesley Carr's View on the Role of the Evil Powers in First Century AD Belief," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (1987): 71-87, esp. 71-79.

¹⁶ J.A. Adewuya, "The Spiritual Powers of Ephesians 6:10-18 in the Light of African Pentecostal Spirituality," in *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 22 (2012): 256 (251-58).

defence they long for from these individuals. But they only strengthen the people's trust in the devil.

Demon-controlled practices destroy the fabric of society through fear, hatred, payback, spiritual decline, and discomfort. Though these practices cannot be scientifically proven or legally verified, they remain a deeply serious spiritual problem. If God condemned these practices in the Bible, then God-fearing Rigo inland people ought to *destroy* the triangular mode of *ghora* killing by revealing the dangers of cooperation with demonic spirits and discouraging people from becoming involved.

On the other hand, people who resort to these practices need help themselves because they are held in demonic bondage. They seek power, recognition, popularity, and wealth, but they cannot get these things through hard work, so they resort to supernatural means. Stephen Hayes rightly puts it by saying that "in many cases it is their very powerlessness that has caused such people to use magical means. It is their disempowerment that caused them to resort to witchcraft or sorcery in the first place."¹⁷

People who wish to emulate Christ can be like Jesus in saving these people. Jesus came to set Satan's captives free (Matt 12:22-29; Luke 4:18-21) and in all his dealings with demons he had great compassion for those who were possessed. For example, he commanded the evil spirits in the Gerasene demoniac to come out (Luke 8:29). Likewise, he ordered the demon to come out of the man in the synagogue (Mark 1:27) and from the young dumb boy (Mark 9:25). Jesus simply commanded the demons and they obeyed him (Luke 4:36). The demons in the Gerasene demoniac even needed Jesus' permission to enter the pigs (Mark 5:13; Lk 8:32). He also denied demons permission to speak (Mk 1:34; Lk 4:41).

Like Jesus, godly men and women can through the Word of God point out the dangers involved in *ghora*, *babarau*, *toe-yawa*, and other related practices. God-fearing people in Rigo inland have the authority and mandate to resist and overcome Satan and his demons (see Matt 10:1) by rekindling the strong advocacy against satanic practices of the early and the later Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. This should be done not only for people's good, but on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross.

¹⁷ S. Hayes, "Christian Response to Witchcraft and Sorcery," *Missionalia* 23 (1995): 12 (239-53).