

## **SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT IN FLORES AS A MATTER OF FACT AND THE DIVINE POWER OF SACRAMENTAL HOLYWATER**

Alexander Jebadu, SVD  
St. Paul Seminary of Ledalero, Maumere 86152 Indonesia

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### **Introduction**

This paper aims to present sorcery and witchcraft practices in Flores, an island in the Eastern part of Indonesia. Like in any other world society, be it in primitive societies, in Greco-Roman antiquity, in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, or in contemporary African and Asian traditional societies, sorcery and witchcraft, considered as two main types of black magic, are still widely practiced by people in Flores Island. The practices of sorcery and witchcraft in the island have been condemned by local authorities as well as by the Church. Those suspected of performing sorcery and witchcraft practices have been punished in various ways. They have been, for instance, shunned in social relationships or even excommunicated. Yet these means have not successfully terminated the practices. Today, despite the dislikes toward or even enmities between people and the suspected sorcerers or witches, people find it difficult to go after and confront them and feel reluctant to use violent means against them due to the presence of strong positive modern state laws inspired by today's concept of universal human rights. Under such a legal standard, it is quite difficult to bring charges against a sorcerer or a witch.

In the last 15 years or so, however, Catholic Christians popularly known as *para pendoa* have been scrutinizing some of the practices of sorcery and witchcraft in Flores. These *para pendoa* claim—and are believed—to have a special charisma to identify and even tame the invisible supernatural power of evil spirits manipulated through the practices of sorcery and witchcraft using certain mediums. They can find the hidden mediums secretly put by the sorcerers at the houses of the intended victims. The common materials used as mediums are various, for instance, some strands of hair, a piece of a match, an old rusty pin, an old rusty hairpin, an old rusty zipper and so forth. All *para pendoa* at different places and regions in the Island of Flores reveal that these mediums emit some kind of strong energy that causes heat radiation in the vicinity believed to cause sickness and even death for its intended victims. The *para pendoa* can feel the heat of these mediums and interestingly the heat radiation of these mediums subsides or disappears only by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. Then the health of the victims slowly improves.

The aforementioned facts will be the focal points presented in this paper. The author aims to bring to light how these phenomena should be widely understood including from the Catholic theological perspective. Prior to presenting these main points, however, descriptions of the Catholic Church in Flores-Indonesia and of the world's spirits will be briefly laid out.

## Methodology

The research for this paper was mainly conducted through a field research project and studies of available literature. The field research was carried out by the author between December, 2016 and February, 2017. The size of Flores Island is 13.540 km<sup>2</sup>. According to various reliable data, out of its population of more than 2.000.000 people as of 2016, 96% are Catholics, a demographic fact which makes Flores known as the only region that is predominantly Catholic in the country, see Map 1.

**Map 1: Indonesia**



Ethnically Flores has seven major groups – Manggarai in the western part of the island, Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka in its central part and Lamaholot in its eastern part, each uniquely enriched by its own distinct languages and culture.



sacramental holy water. With all these in mind, a big question that needs to be dealt with is this: How should all of these phenomena be appropriately and correctly understood?

### **The Catholic Church in Flores and Indonesia at a Glance**

The modern-day sorcerers and witches in Flores are those who have embraced Christianity. As seen later, those caught red-handed practicing sorcery and witchcraft in Flores are all Catholics. They frequent Church on Sundays. They regularly receive Holy Communion at Holy Masses. They pray the rosary in the months of May and October annually. They are active in a Basic Christian Community to which they belong. Yet at the same time they practice sorcery and witchcraft commonly known as a primitive science or knowledge (magic) to manipulate evil spirits for a destructive goal – either to harm the lives of their neighbors or their neighbors' belongings such as crops or cattle. During my field research, people often raised difficult questions. For instance, why has not the Christian faith been able to wipe out the evil practices of sorcery and witchcraft? Partly as an attempt to respond to this question and in order to know how Catholic the Flores Island is, a brief presentation of the history of the Catholic Church in Flores and in Indonesia might be useful.

Historically the Church has been in Indonesia more than 1300 years. According to the writings of an historian of ancient history named Shaykh Abu Salih al-Armini, already in the mid-7th century the Church was present on Sumatra Island at Barus near Tapanuli today, believed to be brought by the Nestorian Church of the Syria-Malabar in India. There were quite a good number of Christians in 7th century Sumatra since Shaykh Abu Salih al-Armini mentioned in his writings that there were many churches on the island. According to ancient Indonesian history, Barus was indeed one of the commercial centers in Sumatra of this period and was known for its camphor products which attracted Indian traders to frequent the city. But it seems that this early church disappeared for reasons unknown up to this day. Indonesia's modern Catholic and Protestant church grew from the Church brought by the Portuguese in the 16th century and by the Dutch beginning in the 17th century, since the establishment of the Dutch monopolistic trading corporation known as VOC (Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie) or Dutch East India Company in 1602. For over 500 hundred years, the Church in Indonesia has grown significantly in many aspects. Institutionally the church, the Catholic Church in particular, has developed into thirty-six dioceses, of which there are ten archdioceses, twelve major seminary institutes and thirty-three minor seminary institutes, a number of Catholic universities and other Church-based social institutions.

Both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church are among the five major religions officially recognized in the country's 1945 constitution: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Nationally the percentage of Indonesians embracing the Christian religion has not been very significant. Since its independence from Dutch colonial rule in 1945, Indonesia has been one of the most populated Muslim countries in the world. More than 85% of its population are Muslims. While it is always difficult to have exact data, Catholics in Indonesia were estimated to number as low as 3.5 million out of more than 160 million Indonesians in the early 1980s, today there are about 7.2 million Catholics (about 3% of the country's population of 240 million) and 12 million Protestants (about 5% of the country's population) in Indonesia. Muslims number 195.2 million or about 88% of the country's total population. Despite some discrimination and human rights violations toward religious minorities, including toward the Christian churches, tolerance is guaranteed by the state philosophy Pancasila and the 1945

Constitution Article 29: “(1) The state of Indonesia is based upon belief in one supreme God; (2) The State guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his/her religion and to worship according to his/her own religion.” Christians by and large enjoy religious freedom in Indonesia and have made a significant contribution to the social, political and economic development of the country, a subject that is not the focus of this paper.

Flores Island is part of East Nusa Tenggara Province (Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, NTT). While the NTT Province is the only region in Indonesia that has a significant presence of Christianity, in which 89.91% of the province total population of 4.7 million are either Catholic (55.85%) or Protestant (34.06%), as already mentioned, Flores is the only part of the country with an outstanding presence of the Catholic Church. According to the Statistic Board Agency of the NTT Province in 2017, about 86% of the island’s total population of more than 2,000,000 are Roman Catholics. These are spread throughout four dioceses (Ruteng Diocese, Ende Archdiocese, Maumere Diocese and Larantuka Diocese) and are supported by two major seminaries (Saint Paul Major Seminary at Ledalero-Maumere which belongs to the Society of the Divine Word and St. Peter Major Seminary at Ritapiret-Maumere which belongs to the four dioceses of Flores Island) and five minor seminaries (John Paul II Minor Seminary of Labuan Bajo, Pius II Minor Seminary of Kisol, St. Berkman’s Minor Seminary of Mataloko, Bunda Segala Bangsa Minor Seminary of Maumere and San Dominggo Minor Seminary of Hokeng).

Historically the Catholic Church in Flores, like the Catholic Church in other parts of Indonesia, has been there for more than 450 years, initially brought by the Portuguese. The expansion of the early mission of the Church in Flores depended largely on the changes of political and economic interests of colonial Portugal, Spain and Holland in Asia over centuries. To make a long history short, since Goa (India) in 1510 and Malacca (Southeast Asia) in 1511 – two central trading cities of Asia at that time – fell into the hands of the Portuguese, India and all Southeast Asia including Indonesia’s archipelago became the trading territories of Portugal. The actual arrival of the Portuguese on Flores Island, however, which marked the beginning of the colonization and evangelization of the island, was in 1561.

They established their fortress for trading activities and evangelization in Solor of East Flores, known in the history of Catholic Church in Indonesia as Solor Mission. In 1602, however, the huge and widespread Portuguese colonies were seized one by one by other western colonizers, particularly Great Britain which took the whole of India and Holland which took the major part of Indonesia’s archipelago. Portugal only retained control over Flores until 1851, one part of western Timor (Noemuti) until 1916 and East Timor until 1975. Portugal, therefore, colonized, influenced and evangelized Flores for 280 years – from 1561 to 1851. Because of its military weakness and continuing internal political problems, Portugal was no longer able to defend its widespread colonies and began to hand them over one by one to other European colonial powers. In an agreement with Holland held in Dili, East Timor, in 1851, Portugal handed over Flores Island to Holland on the condition that the Calvinist Dutch governments were to guarantee the religious freedom of Catholics in Flores. Dutch colonial rule in Flores lasted until 1945 when Indonesia managed to free itself from its colonial status.

During the 280 years of Portuguese colonization of Flores Island, the mission of the Catholic Church on the island was largely administered by the Dominicans (OP) and Jesuits (SJ) with Solor Fortress in East Flores as their mission center. Hierarchically the Flores Church, during these turbulent initial periods, was part of the faraway diocese of Malacca in Malaysia or sometimes under the diocese of Goa in India. Under Dutch rule it was still under the diocese of faraway Batavia (now Jakarta). Due to various kinds of difficulties at that time, the success of the

Church's mission in Flores was mainly concentrated on the eastern part of the island until the end of the 19th century, that is, today's East Flores District, Sikka District and Ende District. The western part of the island – today's three Manggarai Districts and Ngada and Nagekeo Districts – remained un-Christian until 1913. Samuel H. Moffett noted that, like in other parts of Indonesia, the development of the Catholic Church's mission in Flores during this long period was hindered by continuous attacks by Muslim traders and the Dutch Company (VOC) that centered its military and trading power after 1619 in Batavia (now Jakarta) and made every effort to chase out the Portuguese totally from all of Indonesia's islands.

In 1912 the ministry of the Catholic Church in Nusa Tenggara Islands – Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Timor, Sumba and Flores – was handed over by the Jesuits to a new religious congregation, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD – Societas Verbi Divini) based in Germany and Holland. In 1914 the SVDs, as the first step of their mission strategy, moved the center of the Church's mission from Solor-Larantuka in East Flores to Ende in central Flores. Then the Little Sunda Islands (from Bali to Flores) were made an Apostolic Vicariate with Msgr. Petrus Noyen, SVD as the first bishop. Then, the SVDs slowly developed the Church into many dioceses and vicariates, setting up public education, vocational schools and formal schools, hospitals and publications, and pioneering indigenous religious vocations into priesthood, brotherhood and sisterhood. The later was particularly inspired and driven by the mission encyclical *Maximum illud* that called for the training of local clergy in the missions:

There is one final, and very important, point for anyone who has charge of a mission. He must make it his special concern to secure and train local candidates for the sacred ministry. In this policy lies the greatest hope of the new churches. For the local priest, one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations, is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the Faith. Far better than anyone else he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result, he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated.

As a response to this encyclical, the SVDs founded the first minor Seminary in Lela-Sikka in 1926; the Major Seminary of St. Paul at Ledalero-Maumere in 1937; the Diocesan Major Seminary of St. Peter at Ritapiret-Maumere in 1955; and other minor seminaries throughout the island as well as in other Sunda Islands of Timor, Sumba and Bali. In 1941 the first indigenous SVD of Flores was ordained to the priesthood. In 1935 Msgr. Henricus Leven, SVD, the third Bishop of Ende, held the first ever Synod and founded an indigenous religious congregation for Sisters that later was called Congregatione Imitationis Jesu (CIJ) or The Sisters of the Imitation of Jesus. On 15th of August 1958, Msgr. Gabriel Manek, SVD, the first Indonesian indigenous bishop from East Nusa Tenggara Islands, founded another indigenous religious congregation for Sisters that he named Putri Regna Rosari (PRR) or the Daughters of the Queen of the Holy Rosary.

In addition to spiritual and educational promotion, since 1913 the Catholic Church in Flores, under the pastoral mission and ministry of the SVD Congregation, has pioneered social and economic promotion for the entire people of the island. Before the 1980s, for instance, almost all schools (elementary schools and middle schools) on the island were set up by the Church, belonged to the Church, and were run by the Church for the welfare of the people of Flores and indirectly for the common good of Indonesian people as aspired to by the Indonesian State in its 1945 Constitution and its philosophy Pancasila. Public state schools that are quite common in Flores today began to come into existence only in the mid-1980s. Much of the early

infrastructure throughout the island of Flores, such as public roads, bridges, dams for wet-rice fields and even many old sea ports on Flores Island were all set up by the Church as part of God's salvific mission it proclaimed. In general, it seems that in about 450 years the Catholic mission has quite successfully changed much of the lives of the people of Flores except in putting to death the sorcery and witchcraft practices. The question remains why.

### The View of the People of Flores on the World Spirits

Like in any other ethnic group anywhere in the world, the people of Flores have their own religious belief system. Since long before the arrival of Christianity, each ethnic group of the island has believed in the existence of the Supreme Being and various world spirits both good and bad ones as well as the spirits of the dead as seen in Table 1.

#### Good Spirits

The Supreme Being, under its various names – Mori Kraeng or Ame Eta Ine Wa (Manggarai), Dewa Zeta Gae Zale or Dewa Meze (Ngada and Nagekeo), Dua Nggae (Ende and Lio), Ama Lero Wulan Reta (Sikka) and Rera Wulan Tana Ekan (Lamaholot) is the Duumvirate God which consists of the Great Father Sky-God and the Great Mother Earth-God. This Duumvirate God is believed to be a single origin of all life. He is the creator of all things, both visible and invisible, both good spirits and bad spirits. Since this God is the Creator, He is omnipotent and therefore humans will go to look for refuge in Him when threatened with any danger including those coming from evil spirits.

**Table 1: Various Names for Supreme Being and Good and Evil Spirits in Flores Island**

Ethnic Groups	Supreme Being	World Spirits	
		Good Spirits	Evil Spirits
Manggarai	<i>Mori Kraeng, Ame Eta Ine Wa</i>	<i>naga (nagagolo, nagatana, nagabeo), darat or kakartana</i>	<i>Ineweu, potiwolo</i>
Ngada, Nagekeo	<i>Dewa Zeta Ga'e Zale, Dewa Meze</i>	<i>ngébu, nitu (kazu, watu, matawae, mbarusao, tanawatu)</i>	<i>Inengiu, noa, wera-polo</i>
Ende, Lio	<i>Du'aNggae</i>	<i>nitu (lowo, pu'ukaju, watu), limabua</i>	<i>Duahela, painoa, ineleke, laihoa, mataria, polo</i>
Sikka	<i>AmaLeroWulanReta</i>	<i>naga (ahu, laka, tobong, sawaria, nagalautahi), nitu</i>	<i>Duahelang, dua toe robong, dua ha wu'ang</i>
Lamaholot	<i>ReraWulanTanaEkan</i>	<i>nitung (kayo, wato, haring botang)</i>	<i>beo pone</i>

Good spirits addressed with similar alternative names – naga, darat, nitu or nitung by people of Flores – are believed to be God's messengers to guard human beings and other creations. In Manggarai, for instance, the good spirits are indentified in two major groups, that

is, naga and darat or kakartana. Naga are good spirits believed to be the guardians and protectors of human beings such as a village and then they are commonly named according to the place where they perform their tasks: naga beo or naga golo (the spirits that guard and protect a village). Every village is believed to have at least one nagagolo or naga beo ( naga = spirit, beo or golo = village).

Darat or kakartana are the second major type of good spirits. Darat are believed to live in the forests, mountain tops, big rocks, rivers, ponds or lakes and serve as their guardians. Since inhabiting and guarding the wild life they are also commonly called kakartana from kaka de tana which means “creatures of the land”. They are generally friendly to humans. They will be upset only when humans disturb their places of residence. For instance, if humans cut down trees for farming without acknowledging their presence, they would come and mysteriously abduct a child and hide it in the forest for days. The kid will be found alive again after humans perform a rite of reconciliation with the kakartana whose residence has been trespassed.

Likewise nitu or ngebu of the Ngada and Nagekeo, nituo f Ende and Lio, naga and nitu of the Sikka or nitung of the Lamaholot are also believed to have the same role. They are God’s messengers to guard humans and other creations and are named in accordance with the tasks they perform. In Ngada and Nagekeo, for instance, nitukazu are the spirits that guard the trees of the forests; nitu mbaru sao are the spirits that guard houses; and nitu mata wae are the spirits that guard the water springs. In Lamaholot, in addition to their role as God’s messengers to protect humans and other creations, nitung are regarded as part of the human family and therefore often address them as kaka ari (brothers and sisters) of human beings. Like kakartana or darat in Manggarai, however, nitung will be upset if humans disturb their habitat.

### **Evil Spirits**

People of Flores believe in the existence of countless evil spirits. Only a few of them are identified with certain names. For instance, they are known as potiwolo and ineweu by the Manggaraians; ebungiu, noa, ula and wera-polo by people in Ngada and Nagekeo; duahela, painoa, ineleke, laihoa by people in Ende and Lio; and dua helang, dua toe robong, dua ha wu’ang for people in Sikka. People in Flores believe that these evil spirits are not friendly to humans. They are very mean. They are in constant search of various possible ways to harm human beings or their belongings such as their homes, crops or cattle. Ineweu, for instance, is described by people of Manggarai as a very malevolent long-breasted female spirit-being who uses her long breasts to capture humans.

People of Flores believe that, no matter how mean they are, however, evil spirits are less powerful compared to their Duumvirate God. The Duumvirate God which is known with His/Her various names – Ame Eta IneWa, DewaZeta Ga’e Zale, Du’a Nggae, Ama LeroWulan Reta, Rera Wulan Tana Ekan – is superior to all evil spirits – potiwolo, ineweu, ebungiu, noa, ula, wera-polo, duahela, painoa, ineleke, laihoa, dua helang, dua toe robong and dua ha wu’ang. Yet people believe that this superior and omnipotent God will not directly help human beings who are in any danger including those coming from the attacks of evil spirits but through His/Her messengers – good spirits – communicating through various diviners.

## **The Facts of Sorcery-Witchcraft and Witch-Hunt**

As stated in the introduction of this presentation, sorcery and witchcraft, like in any other world society, are still widely practiced by peoples in Flores Island. People, both those living in cities, and suffice it to say they are considered more educated, and those living in remote villages, talk about it very often. People are in constant fear of it. It is one of the major sources of social conflicts in almost every village in Flores. In regard to this, Yance Janggat, a lawyer, gave me this account:

Father Alex, we are glad that you conduct research on this issue. Janto[sorcery or witchcraft] exists in almost every village in Manggarai. It is one of the major sources of social conflicts in all the villages here in Manggarai. A number of cases regarding janto have been brought up to the legal sphere. But the problem is that the cases brought up are pending with police because the issues raised cannot comply with the terms of legal procedures especially when it comes to the demands for physical evidence of a case. The problem is that if the cases are pending with the police then people feel uneasy. The issues of janto that they face and live with are very real yet they cannot be legally solved in court. The state, it seems, fails to protect its citizens in war against the attacks of janto. If you want, I can help you get data at RESKRIM (Resort Kriminal or Criminal Resources) in the main police station of Manggarai regarding cases of social conflicts that are caused by sorcery and witchcraft practices in Manggarai.

In regard to the urgency and actuality of social conflicts relating to sorcery and witchcraft, let me present the following stories. As part of my research, on the 10th of December, 2016, I went to Sekolah Tinggi Pastoral (STIPAR) or The Institute of Pastoral Theology of Atma Reksa Ende in central Flores to find out how this institute responds, academically, to problems relating to sorcery and witchcraft. I reaped information which says that since its opening in 1990, no course has been offered on the subject and no student has written about sorcery and witchcraft practices. Yet Fr. Dominikus Nong, a diocesan priest of the Ende Archdiocese who holds a doctoral degree in Canon Law from the Pontifical Urbanian University of Rome from the 1990s, said: "Sorcery practices exist in almost every village here in the Archdiocese of Ende and it is even practiced by urban people who are considered more educated. Sorcerers and witches [understood as those owning evil spirits and collaborating with them to harm others] are all around us. If you do not believe in the existence of evil spirits, it is a blunder. The choice is whether you want to collaborate with evil spirits or not."

To make his point, Fr. Dominikus Nong, then spontaneously told me a story regarding a priest of Ndora Parish in the Archdiocese of Ende who celebrated a so-called Black Mass in 2016 for all parishioners in his parish who were suspected either as sorcerers or witches. All parishioners were haunted by suspicion and fear of sorcery and witchcraft practices. After 19.00 o'clock every night people did not dare to leave their homes. Since no sorcerer came forward to acknowledge the evil practices of sorcery or witchcraft, the parish priest unilaterally condemned anyone who is a sorcerer or witch by celebrating a Black Mass for the whole parish, calling the Lord to bring them to justice.

On the same day in December 10, 2016, I sniffed out along hateful conflict among members of a male religious community in one of the nine main cities in Flores. The members of this convent, both priests and brothers, clandestinely suspected one another of being sorcerers or witches. They accused one another of practicing sorcery or witchcraft which made others in their community get sick. Sickness which befell any member in the community was believed to

be caused by sorcery practices conducted by other confreres. This clandestine reciprocative suspicion and accusation lasted almost 16 years until it was publically revealed in 2014. The tension at its revealing point was so high that the members of this convent almost turned to physical violence. To make a long story short, the conflict was finally solved by the rector of the community, involving the provincial of their religious congregation, by holding community meetings eight times. In the meetings, all parties openly talked about the matter and then they ended the whole conflict by celebrating a Holy Mass of reconciliation.

From the 12th of December, 2016 to January, 2017 I focused my field research at my home village, Rego, and its neighbouring villages. When my family and relatives knew that I was researching sorcery and witchcraft they had mixed feelings. They were all, on one hand, very surprised as to why and what it is for. On the other hand, they were also very happy that as a scholarly priest I finally gave special academic attention to janto (sorcery or witchcraft) – a supernatural thing which is still a nightmare to them. It is very real yet difficult to understand. When asked if janto does exist, all people in my village and the neighboring villages spontaneously replied that it does. They said that even though it is difficult to know how janto operates, yet its existence can be observed.

First, those who practice sorcery or witchcraft or ata janto can be revealed by words of mouth. The suspected sorcerers or witches or ata janto are prone to not recognizing the special charism of the so-called para pendoa. They are also indifferent to their Christian faith. Going to Church or not going Church, for instance, makes no difference to them. They can be repeatedly seen in ure or a dream state in half self-consciousness. Sometimes they are caught red-handed, sitting and doing a weird ritual on a tomb of a newly dead person who is not related to the suspected sorcerer.

Second, the high suspicion of sorcery and witchcraft practices at my home parish in 2002-2007 spurred the parish to tackle the problem pastorally. After consulting the members of the Parish Pastoral Council and the wise elders of every village in the parish, Fr. Andy Latu handled the problem by setting up a pastoral program that he called cebong beo or village purification. One of the programs, other than public discussion of sorcery, taking an oath to publically renounce sorcery or witchcraft, was a voluntary individual confession of sins. When asked if people went to him for confession, Fr Andy Latu said: “Oh yes, many did. Most of those coming to me for confessions were those practicing sorcery or witchcraft. The way they stared at me was very sharp. Their eyes were very red. It was frightening. To protect myself, I kept the Blessed Sacrament with me in a pix and put it inside of my alb. To my surprise, they even confessed to me the total number of victims harmed or killed by their sorcery or witchcraft practices. I told them to stop it and renounce the practice all at once or the Lord Himself will bring them to justice.”

Third, according to my memory, the only event that I still vividly remember was a sorcerer at my own village, Rego, who was severely punished in 1969 when I was two years old. A man caught red-handed practicing sorcery that harmed others was punished by a local village authority who was also my grandparent. He was punished by being forced to consume pig-shit in public while being watched by all people in the village of Rego. Yet when I started doing field research on sorcery practices in December, 2016, to my surprise, various punishments given to sorcerers and witchcraft are not bygone things and events. Even though addressing it with a somewhat caustic tone, sorcery was mentioned by the participants in the pastoral synod of the Catholic Diocese of Ruteng held in 2013-2015 as one of the pastoral problems faced by the diocese. They said that people in their diocese of Ruteng still have a tendency to simply blame

sorcery practices as the cause of their state of ill-being. The reality is that sorcery practices and conflicts caused by sorcery practices take place in almost every village. Sorcerers and witches have been under watch and hunted. From the 1990s onward sorcerers and witches who have been caught red-handed practicing sorcery and witchcraft were victims of attempted murder, were punished and even publically tortured to death at a number of villages in seven regions of Manggarai as seen in Table 2.

Western Flores today is divided in three districts – Eastern Manggarai District, Central Manggarai District and Western Manggarai District– was traditionally divided into 39 regions as seen in Figure . Yet from my short field research in order to get sample data on sorcery and witchcraft practices among the people of Manggarai as seen in Table 2, I encountered four major findings.

First, during this very short field research I was able to collect data only from 7 regions: Rego, with seven cases; Pacar with three cases; Kolang with five cases; Ndosso with 7 cases; Rahong with two cases; Rongga with one case; and Ndehes with one case. This means that the number of witch-hunts in the other 32 regions of Manggarai is still unknown.

Second, from the 1990s to 2016 at least, there were 25 witch-hunt cases just in 7 regions of Manggarai: seven cases of attempted murder of witches or sorcerers; two cases in which the sorcerers or witches were only severely punished; and sixteen cases in which sorcerers or witches were publically killed, tortured or stoned to death. Out of these 25 witch-hunt cases, I was able to investigate only four of them, namely the one at the village of Paurundang in the region of Rego, at Mawe and Sasa in the region of Pacar, and at Raja in the region of Ndosso. The detailed stories regarding other cases, other than those in four villages, are still in need of completion by future research.

**Table 2: Cases of Witch-Hunts in Manggarai-Western Flores**

No	Village	Sub-district	Sorcerers/witches	Age	Treatment	Year
1	Pogol	Rego	Frans Mada	55	Publicly killed	1992
2	Rego	Rego	Ende Fi	70	Attempted murder	2001
3	Wontong	Rego	Mus Itong	67	Attempted murder	2014
4	Kengko	Rego	Arnold Embo	75	Attempted murder	2012
5	Rego	Rego	Edu Lodo	58	Attempted murder	2010
6	<i>Paurundang</i>	Rego	Kornel Krandus Herasmus Atut Alex Muda	67 55 59	Punished by being forced to eat the shit of pigs in public	2005
7	<i>Mawe</i>	Pacar	Dami Nabu	70	Publically tortured to death in a “ <i>rumah adat</i> ” (ancestral home)	2004
8	<i>Sasa</i>	Pacar	Emad Lalong	67	Attempted murder and the sorcerer’s house was burned down by villagers	2014
9	Sae	Pacar	Domi		Attempted murder	1992

			Dandur			
10	<i>Raja<sup>1</sup></i>	Ndoso	Petrus Nggut	67	Killed by his own children and relatives	2001
11	Rewas	Ndoso	Donatus Halal	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
12	Metang	Ndoso	Thomas Tahi	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
13	Kalo	Ndoso	Aloysius Talu	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
14	Raka	Ndoso	..... ...	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
15	Puntu	Ndoso	..... ...	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
16	Rawuk	Ndoso	..... ...		Killed at cemetery (tomb)	2000s
17	Kotok	Kolang	..... ...	...	Killed (not known yet public or in secret)	2000s
18	Suka	Kolang	..... ...		Killed	2000s
19	Pata	Kolang	..... ...		Killed	2000s
20	Ranggu	Kolang	..... ...		Killed	2000s
21	Mon sok	Kolang	.....		killed	2000s
22	Dimpong	Rahong	..... ...		Publically stoned to death	2000s
23	Lawi	Rahong	..... ...	...	Publically killed in the yard of his village	2000s
24	Waesepang	Rongga	..... ...	...	Attempted murder and the sorcerer's house stoned by villagers	2013
25	Ling	Ndehes	.....	...	Punished by being forced to drink the urine of the elders of his village in public	2016

Third, the trial of a witch or sorcerer normally goes through a long process. Usually it begins by observing weird events and signs in a community village. For instance, people get sick massively and when they go to hospitals the doctors would say that they have no problem with their health while in reality they feel very sick. Or doctors would simply say that they are not

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<sup>1</sup> The villages in italic are four cases of witch-hunt that I was able to investigate during my three months' field research.

able to identify the problem. People, then, come back home and their sickness continues and often ends in death. The village community holds a public meeting to look for a solution.

In the case of Mawe in the Region of Pacar, for instance, the community invited a diviner to help them find who were the witches or sorcerers among them. To make a long story short, the invited diviner asked all members of the village to shake hands with him one by one. For those who do not have black magic, nothing happens when shaking hands with the diviner. Yet one of them that owned black magic felt like he was caught by an electric power. That was the sign. Even so he denied that he had black magic. The members of the community, then, asked him to vow under oath that he did not have black magic while killing a black chicken as the symbol of the darkness of wrong doing (sin). If he had had black magic, he and his family would die and be extinct like the black chicken being slaughtered. Then he was asked to drink the fresh blood of the chicken. Seconds after drinking the fresh blood of that chicken, he was like a person in a state of being drunk and started revealing all evils that he had done. The total number of victims harmed by his black magic was 38 persons in the last 15 years and two of them were still alive but still very sick. People demanded he heal those two but he said that he could not. He said that he was only able to harm people but not to recover their health. People, then, went nuts and began torturing him to death in their rumah adat gendang or ancestral house.

Fourth, out of four cases I was able to investigate – Paurundang, Mawe, Sasa and Raja – the witch-hunt cases at Mawe and Sasa ended up in state court. In the case of Sasa, for instance, the ata janto (the witch, sorcerer) ran away. He left his village of Sasa for another village when the villagers set up a plan to kill him. As a result, the angry village mob set his home on fire. The relatives of the ata janto brought the case to the court. However, the subject of the case was no longer sorcery or witchcraft practices but the act of arson. To make a long story short, black magic as the reason for the arson was not acceptable to the court. The court convicted six men representing the villagers of Sasa and they were imprisoned for 1 year. In the case of Mawe, sorcery or witchcraft practices as the reason for the murder of an ata janto, even the ata janto himself confessed his wrong doing, but the sorcery or witchcraft practices also were not acceptable to the court. As a result, a man of Mawe, who had been democratically chosen to represent the villagers of Mawe, was jailed for 5 to 7 years.

#### The Nature of Janto (Sorcery/Witchcraft) Practices Terms Used

An inquiry into the nature of sorcery or witchcraft according to the experience of people in Flores can be done by observing the terms used to name the phenomena. Each of the five major ethnic groups in Flores has a proper term to name sorcery or witchcraft and sorcerer or witch as seen in Table 3.

**Table 3: Terms for sorcery/witchcraft and sorcerer/witch among people of Flores Island**

No	Ethnic Group	Sorcery/Witchcraft	Sorcerer/Witch	No	Ethnic Group	Sorcery/Witchcraft	Sorcerer/Witch
	Manggarai	<i>janto</i>	<i>ata janto</i>		Sikka	<i>u'en</i>	<i>ata u'en</i>
	Ngada, Nagekeo	<i>polo</i>	<i>ata polo</i>		Lamaholot	<i>menaka'ang</i>	<i>ata menaka'ang</i>
	Ende, Lio	<i>polo</i>	<i>ata polo</i>		Indonesian	<i>suanggi</i>	<i>orang bersuanggi</i>

As demonstrated, among people of Manggarai the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is janto which literally means poison. Or, a more common complete term is mbeko janto (mbeko = science or knowledge) which means the science of poison. The term used for sorcerer or witch is ata janto (ata = person) or ata mbeko janto which means a person who owns a science of poison to harm or to poison his/her neighbors. But the poison (janto) meant here is not an ordinary poison like DDT or any other poisonous herbs or materials. Rather it is a poison of an attack by evil spirit, either directly or indirectly by using various mediums, commissioned by an evil person, ata janto. Ata janto or ata mbeko janto (sorcerer or witch) is a person who owns and collaborates with evil spirits in order to harm or to poison (janto) his/her neighbors. The people of Manggarai, therefore, name sorcery and witchcraft by emphasizing its effect on its intended victim, that is, poison that harms.

Among people of Ngada, Nakekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka, the term used is somewhat different. The term they use is polo or u'en which simply means evil spirit. While the term used for sorcerer or witch is ata polo or ata u'en (ata = person) which means a person who owns evil spirits that he commissions or collaborates with in order to harm other human beings. Compared to people of Manggarai, people of Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende, Lio and Sikka, then, name sorcery and witchcraft by underscoring the principal agent used by sorcerers and witches to harm others, that is, evil spirit.

Among people of Lamaholot the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is menaka'ang. It comes from two words, I was told by an informant, mena which literally means female genitals but often uttered either by women or men in a rude manner to belittle or mock women (somewhat like "fuck you") and ka'ang which means crows – birds whose color is naturally black – and are commonly associated with evil spirits. While ata menaka'ang (sorcerer or witch) is a person who owns and collaborates with evil spirits in order to harm other people. Compared to the previous ethnic groups of Flores, it is clear that people of Lamaholot give a name to sorcery or witchcraft by belittling or mocking it and at the same time identifying it with a black thing like a crow or with evil-doers that are believed to live in darkness.

Lastly, in Indonesian, as the national language of the country, the term used for sorcery or witchcraft is suanggi or ilmu hitam. The term suanggi means the evil spirit that has been manipulated by humans to harm other human beings. The person who manipulates or collaborates with the evil spirits is called orang bersuanggi which literally means someone who owns an evil spirit used or commissioned to harm other fellow human beings. In Indonesian, another term commonly used for sorcery or witchcraft is ilmu hitam which literally means black science. I assume that it is an Indonesian translation for black magic. The use of these two terms, suanggi (evil spirit) and ilmu hitam (black science, black magic), indicates that sorcery or witchcraft in the view of the peoples of Indonesia is a system of science or of knowledge commonly used to harm other people by collaborating with and commissioning evil spirits as its principal agent to execute the harmful mission.

In conclusion, despite the different terms used to name these monstrous phenomena, sorcery or witchcraft are, in the view of people in Flores, evil practices carried out by a person to harm his/her other fellow human beings or their properties such as crops or cattle by mysteriously collaborating with and then commissioning or sending an evil spirit as its principal agent to execute the evil mission.

## Evans Pritchard's Category

Many world scholars, however, following the category made by Evans Pritchard based on his research among the Azande people in Africa in 1937, claim that there are two major types of black magic: sorcery and witchcraft. A.D.J. Macfarlane, for instance, summarizes Evans Pritchard's finding laying out the distinct difference as well as similarity between the two as follows:

The distinction here is between different types of means: the end is similar. Both witches and sorcerers injure people. Among the Azande a person is a witch. Witchcraft is an inherent quality, whereas sorcerers act in a certain way. Sorcerers are conscious of their activities, whereas witches, whose power is internal, may not be aware that they are witches until they are accused. While the witch is the vehicle of the power greater than himself, often the unwilling agent of vast evil forces, the sorcerer controls the power inherent in certain 'medicines' or other objects [italics and other marks are originally from the author]. Although both are driven by antisocial feelings, the witch is permanently malicious, having inherited her power or been taught it very early in life, while the sorcerer is only dangerous at specific times and acquires the power of evil later in life by a more self-conscious transmission.

In his own words, Evans describes the uniqueness of witchcraft by comparing it with other types of magic (ngwa) among the Azande as follows:

We are taking several distinct Zande ideas and are using for them a distinguishing symbol in English. To the Zande mangu (witchcraft) and ngwa (medicine or magic) are quite different things. Mangu is an hereditary trait which can be discovered in the stomach of a witch (ira mangu, possessor of mangu). It is a physiological fact and its functioning needs no use of the concrete [concrete] magic, the material substance of medicine, the spell, and the rite. Ngwa on the other hand is characterized by the special attribute of magic all over the world, the material element, the spell, the rite, the condition of the performer [all italics are originally from the author].

Some nocturnal birds and animals are very definitely associated with witchcraft and are thought to be the servants of human witches, and to be in league with them. Such are bats, which are universally feared for their evil attributes, and owls, which hoot forebodings of misfortune in the night. These nocturnal creatures are associated with witches because witchcraft is especially active at night.... The witch is asleep during the period of his activity on his bed in his hut, but he has dispatched the spirit of his mangu ...to accomplish his ends. The spirit of mangu removes parts of the spirit of the victim's flesh...and devours it. The whole act of vampirism is a spiritual one; the spirit of mangu removes and devours the spirit of the body.

Echoing Evans Pritchard's category of black magic into sorcery and witchcraft, Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern succinctly write: "Witchcraft as [is] the expression of a malignant power in a person's body and sorcery as [is] the use of a magical craft or knowledge. Especially, what is labeled witchcraft is often seen as a consuming force. The witch eats the life power of the victim."

Looking at the category of Evans Pritchard of two main types of black magic, sorcery and witchcraft, it seems that the people of Flores do not distinguish the phenomena of black magic practices into this category. They simply call the practices of black magic as janto (Manggarai), polo (Ngada, Nagakeo, Ende and Lio), u'en (Sikka) and menaka'ang (Lamaholot), and the person who practices black magic is ata janto (Manggarai), ata polo (Ngada, Nagekeo, Ende and

Lio), ata u'en (Sikka) and ata menaka'ang (Lamaholot). In a word, people in Flores do not have a category of black magic that parallels the black magic category made by Evans Pritchard.

Looking at the detailed practice, however, what Evans Pritchard categorizes as witchcraft and sorcery also exists among the people of Flores. When I interviewed various people at my home village at Rego, for instance, they said that those who practice black magic to harm others would do it in various ways. They can simply blow their spiritual power from a distance to harm their intended victims. They also can simply touch the intended victims such as babies or toddlers and they would get sick instantly. They would also go out at night in the forms of animals such as cats or big dogs or horses. Sometimes their spirits would go out in the middle of night and appear in naked persons who, among the people of Manggarai, are called *poti laco* or *poti mbolang* which literally means naked devil or naked evil spirit or *poti ngeping* which has *mata mbere* or red eye for orang Rego in West Manggarai which means the devil that sneaks in to harm people normally at night.

Other than that, people at my home village, Rego, believe that the evil spirit with whom the person who practices black magic collaborates with to harm his/her neighbors resides or lives inside the body of the person. The relationship between the two is so intimate -- like the relationship between husband and wife -- that the evil spirit is called *wina wa* which literally means second-hidden wife (if the person that practices black magic is a man) or *rona wa* which literally means second-hidden husband (if the person that practices black magic is a woman). In this way, the person and the evil spirit becomes one. When the person sleeps at night, this *wina wa* or *rona wa* (the evil spirit) leaves the body and goes out searching for victims. According to Gregory L. Forth, the evil spirit that is called *wina wa* or *rona wa* by people of Manggarai, is identified as *wa* by the Nage people in central Flores. At night the *wa* is believed to leave the body and in human or animal forms goes out in search of victims. During this time, Forth reports, the mundane body of the person remains asleep and is able to awaken only once the *wa* has reentered it. The persons that practice black magic in this way can fall under Evan Pritchard's category of witches. The rest of the group of people that practice black magic uses various mediums to harm their intended victims, both humans and properties such as crops and cattle. Under Evan Pritchard's category, they can be identified as sorcerers.

### The Motives of Janto

Like in other world societies, witches or sorcerers bewitch others out of jealousy, be it due to social status, economic status, due to being successful in career or business or because of friction over every day family matters. During the Focus Group discussions in my home village, people told me that the reason to be bewitched is quite often very insignificant and not serious. They simply have no mercy when it comes to deciding to bewitch others. They simply no longer have rational nor moral consideration. In regard to this, an interviewee at my home village said: "Fr. Alex, if we who have no black magic get angry with our neighbors, no matter how serious the problem is and how angry we are with our neighbors, we still at the end have mercy and have room to forgive our neighbors. We will not kill our neighbors no matter how angry we are. But those who have black magic, *ata janto*, even though the reason to get angry with their opponent is very insignificant or not very serious, they will have no mercy and bewitch the person to death. Why? The answer is because their actions are totally under the control of evil spirits."

The victims are normally their neighbors and their own relatives such as uncles, aunts, nieces, cousins, the in-laws – sister in-law, brother in-law, daughter in-law. etc. The 38 victims of the ata janto who confessed his evil practices of sorcery at Mawe, for instance, all were related to him and lived in the same small village as their brother ata janto. Each of the victims also had friction with their brother ata janto ranging from small ones to serious ones. At my own village Rego, I was told by my relatives on the 18th of December, 2016 that a female ata janto, popularly known as Ended Kosmas who is 70 years old, was rumored to have even bewitched her own daughter-in-law to death. Two days later, on the 20th of December 2016, I went to a diviner, Patronela, at Munting village, about 8 km away from Rego, to dig out her experience regarding the phenomena of janto and ata janto.

Among many things, Petronela told me that in 2008 all adults from Rego village, either they were witches/sorcerers or not, including ata janto Ende Kosmas came to her home to to vow that they did not have black magic. If they had black magic they must renounce their black magic practices and voluntarily turn in all of the mediums they used to use – magic knives, oil or herbs -- or else they would have faced torture and even the death penalty by their local authorities. Yet eight years later, exactly on 11th of 2016, ata janto Ended Kosmas went to Petronella and stayed overnight at her home. All night she demanded that Petronela give all her magic mediums back to her because she was really in need of them. But Petronela refused to comply with her request. Petronela said: “Fr. Alex, ata Janto Ended Kosmas was here last week – on the 11th of December 2016. Unconsciously she revealed all her secret evil sorcery practices. Can you imagine, Fr. Alex? She [Ended Kosmas] said: ‘I have even bewitched my own daughter-in-law. She humiliated me all the time that she regretted that she had married a man from a very poor family. I just can no longer stand it. So I bewitched her and she died afterwards.’ I [Pendoa Petronela] said: “So you also want to bewitch me like that? No way, my Lord Jesus is more powerful than your evil spirit.”

Other ata janto also bewitch others for economic gain. People of Manggarai are quite familiar with the so-called mbeko janto plambar. It is a witchcraft practice that makes the intended victims get a deadly stomach ache followed by diarrhea. When a male ata janto would set up a plan to visit his relatives at a neighboring village, he would send his evil spirit, his wina wa, in advance to depart as a forerunner of the ata janto and randomly attack one or two persons at intended village. Upon the arrival of the ata janto, people would naturally be busy helping their loved one who is suddenly sick. And the ata janto would calm them down, and without their request he would offer his help by giving a glass of water that he has silently put a spell upon. In a few seconds, the sick person would recover his/her health again. Then the ata janto would automatically be viewed as God’s messenger and upon his departure he would get various material economic things as kick-backs for his favor. In fact, he would have been the one, through his wina wa (evil spirit), who bewitched the one or two persons in the village to get sick.

Ata janto also want people -- especially their neighbors-- to know that they have black magic. This would force their neighbors to always behave themselves when dealing with them – ata janto. Their neighbors would, for instance, always avoid being rude with them. If ata janto want to borrow some money, people would have no choice but to lend the money. In regard to this my own brother Vinsensius Jerhani said:

Dealing with ata janto, we lose all the battles. If you don’t give it, then it would be a reason for the ata janto to bewitch you. And if you send a bill for the debts, it also can be a reason that the ata janto will bewitch you. You also cannot easily accuse ata janto of bewitching you because it is very difficult to have physical proof that they did it. Here in our village, we

have a cousin who is well known for his mbekojanto [black magic, sorcery/witchcraft practices]. He has borrowed various things from his various neighbors – a number of buffalos, pigs, chickens and more than ten million Rupiahs of money. Up until today, nobody dares to send him a bill because they are afraid of their mbeko janto. A buffalo as the bride-price (dowry) of our oldest sister in 1986 was borrowed by this ata janto and up to this day [2016] our dad, the uncle of this ata janto, does not dare to even talk about it with that ata janto. Do you want to get that bride-price buffalo, or you want to save your life?

In conclusion, ata janto quite often use their state of being ata jantos as a weapon to bully their neighbors for economic gain. They are social oppressors. However, no matter how oppressive they are, in general they are economically poor. Their family life is not very good, not happy and they are generally not successful in any business. Their children fail at school and so forth.

### Para Pendoa and Their Charism

No matter how real the phenomena of janto or sorcery/witchcraft of black magic are, not all people, either in European modern society or in poor villages in Flores, believe in the existence of sorcery and witchcraft practices. In regard to this, Max Marwick, writing an “Introduction” for a book he edited, *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings* in 1970, says that in the modern European world of the 1970s, witches and sorcerers are often presented through myths and fairy-tales. This made modern Europeans believe that sorcery and practices are not real but merely a fantasy. Yet in contrast to this notion, however, the accounts regarding esoteric practices of witches prove that sorcery and witchcraft have never died out in European modern society. I would say the same is true all over Indonesia, particularly in Flores.

As already described in the introduction of this study, the phenomena of sorcery and witchcraft practices take place in almost every village and pose a real threat to people in Flores. It is a life-threatening invisible monster. In spite of this, however, many people in Flores doubt its existence and its evil practices. Educated people such as doctors and nurses are prone to not believing that sorcery and witchcraft practices are possible causes of sickness. Even some of the villagers themselves also have doubts about it. They, for instance, say: “Is it possible that human beings – the sorcerers – collaborate with the invisible evil spirits to harm others? How can that happen? How is it possible that Satan makes you sick, makes your head ache or stomach ache?” In regard to this a doctor told me once: “Father Alex, I checked up on a patient once at our hospital here in Ruteng and the person positively had a liver-problem – acute hepatitis. Yet three days later he passed away and all people at his village claimed that a sorcery practice caused his death. The whole family, then, went after a man suspected to be a sorcerer. For me, that is nonsense and wrong. The man who died was my patient and he had acute hepatitis.” Contrary to this stand, the experiences of the so-called para pendoa in Flores show that janto, polo, u’en or menaka’ang (black magic, sorcery/witchcraft) truly exist; how it works can be detected and its deadly power can be defeated by the superpower of the Christian Triune God.

As briefly stated in the introduction of this study, in the last 15 years or so, Catholic Christians as well as followers of other religions, particularly Muslims, popularly known as para pendoa, have been hunting down the practices of sorcery and witchcraft in Flores. These para pendoa are believed to have a special charism to identify and even tame the invisible supernatural power of evil spirits manipulated through the practices of black magic, especially those using certain mediums. Following the category made by Evans Pritchard, the ones they hunt are

sorcerypractices. The para pendoa claim to be able to detect the hidden locations of mediums secretly put by the sorcerers at the houses of the intended victims. The common materials used as mediums are various, for instance, some strands of hair, a piece of a match, an old rusty pin, an old rusty hairpin, an old rusty zipper, rocks, broken glasses, sharp pieces of bamboo, roots of weird trees mixed with certain strange oils, and so forth.

All para pendoa at difference places and regions in the Island of Flores reveal that these mediums emit some kind of strong energy that causes heat radiation in the vicinity and tht is believed to cause sickness and even death to its intended victims or their property – crops or cattle. The para pendoacan feel the deadly heat power of these mediums and marvelously their radiation will subside or disappear by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. Then the health of its victims slowly improves.

During my field research, I was able to meet and interview 5 pendoa – four are in the ethnic group of Manggarai and one is in Sikka. Among those who are in Manggarai, two pendoa are lay Catholics from my village, Rego, in the Western Manggarai Disctric – Vinsensius Nadjo and John Tarni; one pendoa is Fr. Aloysius Gamur, the Parish Priest of Cancar in Central Manggarai District; and Fr. Antonius Pea SVD who is working as a spiritual director in an SVD Retreat Center in the Eastern Manggarai District. The pendoa I interviewed in the Sikka District is Br. Hilarius Embu SVD, living at St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero – known as the biggest SVD (Divine Word Missionary) formation house in the world today in terms of the significant number of its seminarians.

Pendoas Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni

Pendoas Vinsen Nadjo (60) and John Tarni (40) embarked on this ministry in 2002 after listening to a special call through a vision and dream. Each of them was mysteriously asked in a number of dreams to pray for 8 months. Then, to make a long story short, they ended up having this special capability to detect mediums of sorcery practices. The mediums are usually buried underground in places where people usually pass through such as at the entrance of a house, on a clothes-line, near furnaces or near animal cages. Pendoas Vincent and John said that they can detect or sniff out the presence of these mediums from 200 meters away. The mediums also have heat radiation and therefore they must be removed carefully. In their own words, Vincent and John explained it this way:

Fr. Alex, the mediums taken are hot and if touched with bare hands we will feel as if we had an electric shock. Therefore we always remove them very carefully after sprinkling the spots where they are located with the sacramental holy water which neutralizes some kind of toxic gas of the mediums. Then we pry them out by using machetes or crowbars. Many people here do not believe in what we have being doing. They say that we are the ones who bury the mediums and then retrieve them again. The reason, they argue, is that we always remove the mediums at night. In reality, we do so simply because the mediums emanatesome sort of gas or vapor or smoke which can be easily seen only in the evening with the help of the light of a flashlight.”

It is believed thatthe toxic gas of these mediums is what maketheir intended victims get sick. The power of the gas emanating from these mediums also has a certain radius because the victims would feel sick or do not feel good only when they stay at the locations where the mediumsare placed. Once they go away from those places, they would feel okay again. In regard to this, I interviewed various people in the village. A lady whose home is next to my parents’ home said:

Fr. Alex, I do believe the evilness of janto. In 2007, I was very sick. I had a problem with my stomach. I felt scared and insecure all the time with no clear reason. But this occurred only

when I was at my house. If I went away from home – to our garden at Libo (3 km away from home), for instance, I was okay. I felt fresh, safe, happy and had no abdominal pain. I was sick only when I came back home. I went to the hospital, yet all doctors found no problem with my overall health. My husband, then, called Pendoas Vincent and Tarni. To our surprise, they detected sorcery mediums placed at three spots at our house. After the removal of all these mediums by these two pendoa, I have been okay up to this day. I feel no more abdominal pain or insecurity when I am home.

Who places these mediums? Are they placed by sorcerers or by evil spirit as the principal agent commissioned by a sorcerer? Most likely the second possibility is the answer. The mediums detected by the para pendoa are found in various places including under tiles or cement or under stones that have sat there for ages. Once Pendoas Vincent and John sniffed out a medium and finally they found it under a rock. They had to take it out using a crowbar. To the surprise of many, they found a package the size of a fist, wrapped in a red cloth. Inside the bundle, they found broken glasses, one coin, ash from the kitchen and a blade-sharpened piece of bamboo. Of course, we find it difficult to believe that these items were placed under that natural rock/stone by an ordinary human being or even by a sorcerer himself/herself. People believe that it is the work of an evil spirit commissioned by *ata janto* – a sorcerer. All people I interviewed claimed the same mysterious phenomena.

Pendoas Fr. Aloysius Gamur and Fr. Antonius Pea SVD

Fr. Aloysius Gamur (47), a diocesan parish priest of Cancar in Central Manggarai District and Fr. Anton Pea SVD (45) currently working at an SVD retreat center in Eastern Manggarai District, also have had similar experiences. They are believed to have a charism to detect sorcery mediums. In separate interviews, they said that the sorcery mediums have some kind of toxic gas yet it can be neutralized only by calling God's power in prayer and sprinkling the toxic sorcery mediums with sacramental holy water. Both Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius claim

that actually many people fall sick not because of a natural medical illness but quite often because they are attacked by the so-called negative energy. This negative energy can be improper home construction, gas in the ground inside their homes, ground water flow under their homes or evil spirits sent by *ata janto* – sorcerers.

As for evil spirits that possess people, those spirits are generally sent by sorcerers because of, for example, jealousy toward their intended victims. The victims could be humans or human's property such as crops or cattle in the form of sudden attacks of rats, locusts or wild boars in their farms. Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius are able to sniff out the presence of the mediums placed at the homes of people coming to them for help. They can distinguish if people are sick due to natural disease or due to gas or ground water flow under their homes or because of sorcery practices.

According to Fr. Aloysius, the mediums that are commonly used by sorcerers are hair, wood-chops, gravels, nails, charcoals, whiting, oil, yarn, ropes or perfumes, bracelets or even hand rings. Then these mediums are mysteriously placed at the homes of potential victims, in the door jambs, inside the walls, on the ceilings or on the driveways toward the main house. Fr. Aloysius testified that if these mediums can be retrieved and disposed of, the owners of the house, who often complain they suffer from unclear source of sickness, will instantly feel fresh, healthy and safe.

Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Antonius claimed that they are able to detect the types of the mediums used, from a distance, and the total number and locations where the mediums are placed at the homes of potential victims asking for their help. Like other pendoa, such as Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni, Fr. Aloysius said that the mediums have some sort of poisonous gas. Nonetheless the power of these toxic sorcery mediums can be eliminated by being sprinkled with sacramental holy water. If the toxic sorcery mediums are placed under cement or tile, the cement or tile must be destroyed to remove the toxic sorcery mediums. Otherwise, the sacramental holy water cannot penetrate the cement to reach the medium.

When asked if para pendoa are able to know the sorcerers who place those toxic mediums that harm their neighbors, all para pendoa – Fr. Aloysius Gamur, Fr. Anton Pea, Vincent Nadjo and John Tarni – claimed that they are, but they keep it secret for fear of possible conflicts between the victims and sorcerers because more than often the sorcerers are related to the victims. In his own words, Fr. Aloysius Gamur said in this regard:

I can identify the sorcerers concerned [who placed the toxic mediums], even their age, their gender, I also know whether the sorcerers who placed the mediums are still alive or already dead. I can know the presence of the mediums from a great distance [even thousands of km away]. But I keep it secret from the victims to avoid open conflict between the victims and sorcerers. The sorcerers generally have a close relationship with their intended victims such as extended family members, relatives or acquaintances. Hardly ever is there no relationship between the victims and the perpetrators of sorcery practices. Usually the mediums have been placed at the intended spots for a long time. The longer a medium is placed, then the higher the power of its venom. It rarely occurs that once the medium is placed at an intended spot, its intended victims fall sick instantly, unless the toxic mediums are placed in the food or drink consumed by its intended victim. But no matter how powerful the evil spirits manipulated by sorcerers, they are easily defeated by God's power. God is superior to evil spirits of every kind. My spiritual weapons are the Apostles Creed and invocations of the Saints. Evil spirits will instantly leave the possessed and sick if in prayer I call for the help of heavenly armies – the angels and saints – if we believe in them.

### **Pendoa Br. Hilarius Embu SVD**

Br. Hilarius Embu SVD is a member of the community of St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero, Flores that belongs to the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD – Societas Verbi Divini). By looking at the facts of what he has been doing, Br. Hilarius is believed to have a kind of charism precisely like the aforementioned Catholic pendoa. By using his mission cross, he is able to identify and find the mediums that are mysteriously placed strategically, sometimes in hidden places, by sorcerers to harm their intended victims. The mediums Br. Hilarius identified and found are precisely the same as those identified and found by other Catholic pendoa. The mediums were discovered in various places such as a door jamb, at the top of a window, within walls, under the tiles of a house floor, in the wardrobe, in a bolster pillow, in a closet, in human hair, or even inside the genitals (vagina) of a teenage girl. Br. Hilarius claims that the mediums emanate some kind of heat radiation believed to cause sickness and even death to victims.

Compared to other lay Catholic pendoa, however, Br. Hilarius uses an additional diagnostic technique. He has tested the mediums he found from the victims of the sorcerers with

an analog Avometer. If he tested a medium, say an old rusty zipper, the pointer of the Avometer would quickly go up to a number between 500-2000, which means that the medium has strong electrical radiation in it. The same thing happens if he tested a medium in a form of a piece of a used match. Conversely, the pointer of the Avometer would not move when he tested other ordinary zippers or other plain matches that have not been used as medium by sorcerers or witches.

The heat and a sort of electric radiation of the mediums will subside and eventually disappear after being sprinkled with sacramental holy water (consisting of water and salt which has been blessed by a priest) while invoking the power of God the Holy Trinity. At first, Br. Hilarius thought that the electrical radiation of the mediums disappeared due to the salt factor contained in sacramental holy water. Then Br. Hilarius sprinkled the medium with plain water mixed with ordinary, unblessed salt. The result was that the electric radiation of the medium did not disappear. Br. Hilarius also tested it by sprinkling the medium with the water that had been prayed over by atambeko (the maker of white magic or a diviner). The result was the same as the previous test. That is, the electric radiation of the medium did not disappear nor subside except by using the sacramental holy water.



### The Procedures of Br. Hilarius' Special Ministry

Br Hilarius said that he began to know of his special call in 1987 but he did not develop it due to his main career as a gardener of the SVD society. He started to develop it only in 2013 when a number of sick people came to him asking for his help. This call was increasingly apparent in 2013, after he prayed the Hail Mary prayer 350 times in his room. After completion of this long time of prayer, Br. Hilarius felt like he had a vitamin tablet in his throat and was trying to swallow it. He tried to remove it with an artificial cough, as people usually do to clear up the esophagus, but he could not remove the thing that tasted like a vitamin tablet from his throat. When he started serving people who were in need of help, he then slowly began to understand that this is a special ministry entrusted to him by the Lord.

To make a long story short, according to Br Hilarius, the means he uses in this special ministry are: 1) his Mission Cross, 2) sacramental holy water, 3) the liver, heart and gall of fish (cf. Tobit 6: 1 to 9.17, Acts 19:13 -20) for fumigation and the burning of toxic mediums and 4) the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. The procedure of his ministry is as follows.

In the first phase, usually those who are sick or their family members would come to Br. Hilarius at his residence at St. Paul Major Seminary of Ledalero. They would narrate the types of

complaints regarding their health. Then Br. Hilarius usually would ask: "Has he/she (have you) gone for a medical checkup? What did the doctor say? What were there results of the laboratory tests?" Normally the sick or their family members would say: "Yes we / he/she did! But the doctors said that I am okay. Or the doctors could not identify what is wrong with me. The results of laboratory examination were also okay."

Second: In the following stage, the family of the sick would pick up Br. Hilarius to go to their home. Then with his Mission Cross in hand, Br. Hilarius would begin detecting the possible presence of: 1) sorcery mediums, 2) gas or ground water flow beneath their home, 3) underground heavy metal and 5) radiation of phosphine ( $\text{PH}_3$ ), that is, possible radiation from human bones buried beneath the home of the sick (for example, from an old grave).

### Underground Phosphine ( $\text{PH}_3$ ) and Its Antidote

According to Br. Hilarius, phosphine ( $\text{PH}_3$ ) can be neutralized with aluminum hydroxide ( $\text{Al}(\text{OH})_3$ ) to become aluminum phosphine ( $\text{AlPH}_4$ ).

### Underground Water Flow or Gas and Their Antidotes



Water or gas in the ground can be neutralized with calcium ( $\text{Ca}$ ) + Water ( $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) to become calcium hydroxide ( $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ ). For calcium, lime can be used, for example a white plaster or whiting ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) or black fibers of palm trees. Br. Hilarius says that black fibers of palm trees contain six single chemical elements: 1) sodium ( $\text{Na}$ ), 2) calcium ( $\text{Ca}$ ), 3) potassium ( $\text{K}$ ), 4) aluminum ( $\text{Al}$ ), 5) magnesium ( $\text{Mg}$ ) and 6) silicon ( $\text{Si}$ ). The trick is that the black fibers of palm trees or limestone were buried, resulting in the cutting of the path of underground water flow or gas that enters the zone.

The existence of water or gas in the ground under a house can be detected by using a pendulum or Mission Cross. There are two possibilities. (1) If there is underground water flow in the zone, the rotary motion of a pendulum or Mission Cross will be clockwise (from left to right). (2) If there is underground gas in the zone, the rotary motion of pendulum or Mission Cross will be counter-clockwise (from right to left). How is it properly done? The pendulum or Mission Cross is held by its rope or chain. The pendola holds the pendulum or Mission Cross in the air without moving it. If there is water or gas in the zone, the pendulum or Mission Cross will automatically move and rotate, by itself, either in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, depending on whether or not there is water or gas in the ground.

## Underground Heavy Metal and Its Antidote

In general, heavy metal can be neutralized by using coconut shell charcoal, tea leaves or tamarind seed flour. Iron (Fe), manganese (Mn) and silver (Ag) can be neutralized by using coconut shell charcoal, while copper (Cu) can be neutralized with tannin that exists in the leaves of tamarind or its seeds. Specifically for tamarind seeds, they must be fried dry, then pounded until they become soft. Then the tamarind powder is sprinkled on top of the place where there is heavy metal underground.

### Sorcery Mediums and Their Antidotes

According to Br Hilarius, in Indonesia there are three types of sorcery mediums, based on where they are placed. The first type is called santet when the mediums are placed in open places such as at a door jamb, in a bag, in a cabinet or in a pillow. The second type is called tenung when the mediums are placed underground. Among people from the East-central district of Sikka, they are called doti; and among people from the districts of Ngada, Nakekeo, Ende and Lio, they are called bura. The third type is called guna-guna when the mediums are placed in favorite things of the intended victims such clothing, food, drink or cosmetics. All these sorcery mediums believed to be mysteriously placed by evil spirits that are manipulated by sorcerers can be easily neutralized by the Divine power in sacramental holy water.

In the third and last phase, Br. Hilarius would pray for the sick or the possessed in the following ritual order:

1. The Sign of the Cross;
2. Act of Contrition;
3. Lord Have Mercy;
4. Spontaneous Opening Prayer;
5. Reading from the Book of Tobit 6: 1-9, 17 and Acts 19: 13-20;
6. The Gospel of Lk 9:37-43 regarding Jesus who casts a demon out of a boy or Mark 5:1-20 regarding the healing of a man on the Sabbath or the possessed at Gerasa;
7. A short reflection or comment on the bible readings;
8. If the person who is being prayed for is possessed by an evil spirit, sing Veni Creator Spiritus (Come Holy Spirit). If not, skip this step and proceed to step 9;
9. Apostle's Creed;
10. Decontamination of the possessed by using the dried heart, gall and liver of fish;
11. Burning the sorcery mediums while reciting the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel;
12. The Laying of the Cross upon the sick or the possessed while reciting a prayer of liberation from the sickness or from the evil spirit;
13. The Sprinkling of Sacramental Holy Water upon the sick or the possessed;
14. Reciting the Our Father. Hail Mary (three times), and Glory Be to the Father;
15. Litany of the Saints (reciting only some of them);
16. Concluding Prayer; and
17. The Sign of the Cross.

Br Hilarius said: "This is what I have been doing. It's very biblical and Christian. Where is the superstition in what I do, of which many accuse me?" Br Hilarius said this because there are a number of SVD priests and brothers at St. Paul Seminary Community who water down what he has been doing by identifying him as a self-styled shaman and a person that believes in vain. I told him that this occurs because they do not understand his charism. Nearly all of the sick

and possessed whose conditions are believed to have been caused by sorcery practices were healed in an extraordinary way. From 2016 until March, 2017, more than 30 sick and possessed people have been freed through the ministry of Br. Hilarius in Maumere and its vicinity alone.

#### Theological Reflection of Sacramental Holy Water

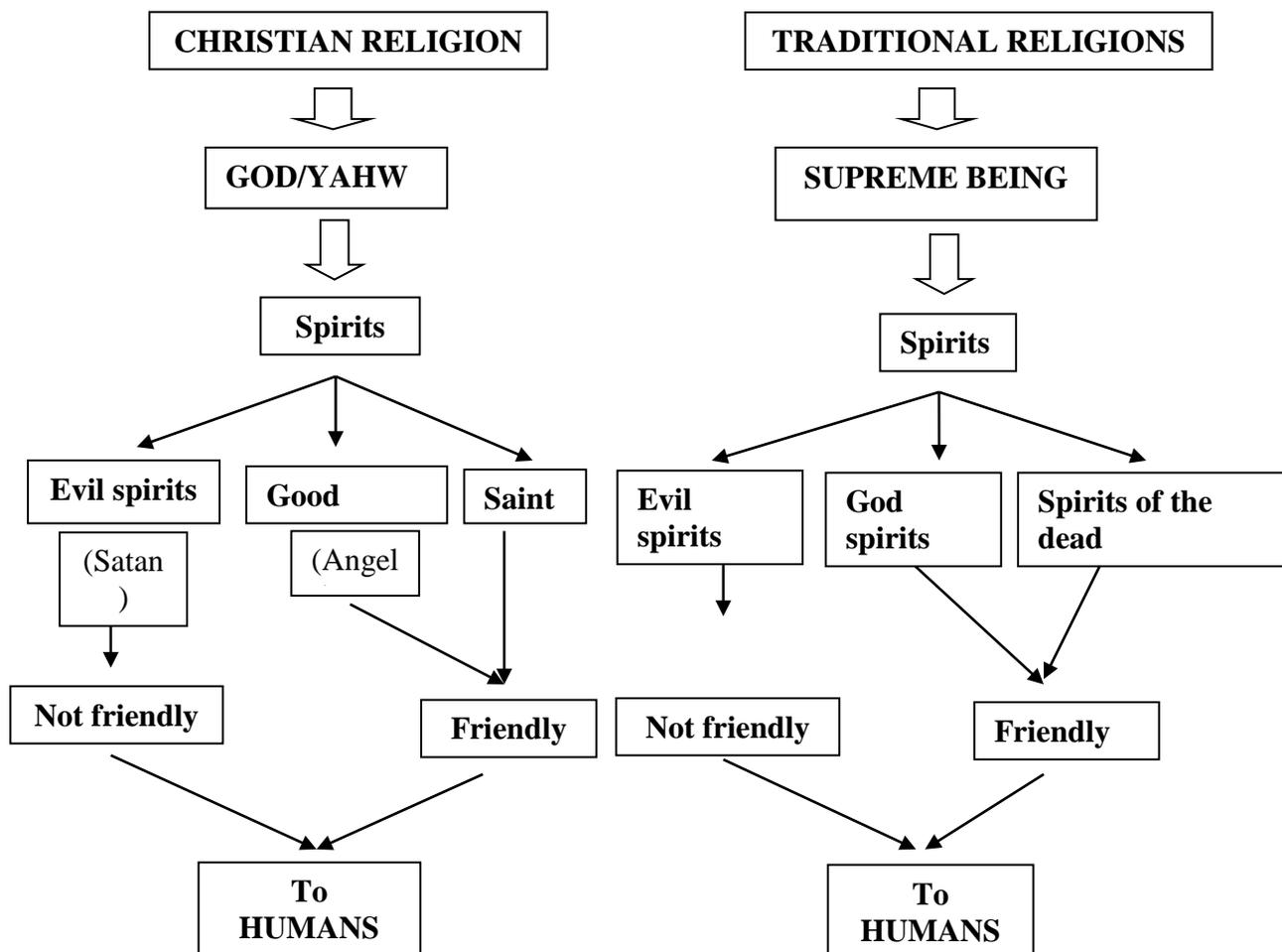
There are a number of major questions regarding the existence of sorcery and witchcraft practices. How is it possible that evil spirits can be manipulated by humans known as sorcerers or witches? Is it possible that the power of evil spirits can enter and animate certain material things that will become their mediums that harm human beings? Why cannot the evil sorcery and witchcraft practices become bygone things after people have embraced Christian faith and other rational modern culture? How can it be possible that sacramental holy water can neutralize the toxic power of sorcery mediums as experienced by pendoathat are reported here in this paper?

First of all, belief in the existence of Satan or evil spirits is a parcel of the Judeo-Christian faith tradition. It is in the Bible. First, Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan (cf. Gen. 3: 1-7). Jesus Himself, the Second Adam, was tempted by Satan in the dessert before He rock-and-rolled His public ministry (cf. Mt 4:1-11, Lk 4:1-13). During His public ministry on earth, Jesus authoritatively dispelled demons or evil spirits that possessed humans (cf. Lk. 9:49-50, Mark 5:1-20, Lk. 6:17-19, Mat. 4:23-25). It is a clear sign that God is superior to Satan and other evil spirits. According to Christian tradition, Satan and demons or other evil spirits were at first good angels created by God but, due to their envy, they became evil and were punished by being expelled from heaven ; and since then they have been looking for various opportunities to tempt humans to follow their steps to disobey God in all aspects of their lives.

Beside bad, disobedient angels, the Judeo-Christian faith also believes in the existence of good angels created by God. The Catholic Church teaches that by their nature they are spirits or invisible spiritual beings and by their office or by their role or by what they do they are the servants and messengers of God to convey His message to humans; on behalf of God, they help and protect humans. The Catholic Church further teaches that the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels and even from infancy to death, humans are guided by their care and intercession.

This basic frame of the Judeo-Christian faith's belief is seen in Figure 4. That is, the omnipotent God – the Creator of all things, visible (world creatures and cosmos) and invisible (world spirits) – is on top and then the spirits are below. The spirits are divided in two. There are good spirits that are simply called angels and bad or evil spirits that are popularly called Satan, the devil or demons. The angels, among other things, serve to help human beings and human beings can turn to them for help and intercession. Bad spirits – the fallen angels – on the other hand always look for opportunities to tempt and harm human beings. This structure of Judeo-Christian belief is similar to the structure of belief of all world traditional religions including those that belong to the five major ethnic groups of Flores, Indonesia. That is, the omnipotent Absolute Being – the Creator of all things visible (world creatures and cosmos) and invisible (world spirits) – are on top and then the spirits are below. The world spirits are also divided in two: good spirits and evil spirits. People like the five major ethnic groups in Flores, Indonesia, who still cherish their traditional religions, believe that the good spirits are friendly to humans. They are the messengers of the Absolute Being to, among other things, protect human beings and other creations. The evil spirits are believed to be unfriendly to humans and can be manipulated or collaborated with by humans to harm other human beings.

**Figure 4: Basic Structure of the Belief of the Christian Religion and Traditional Religion**



We are back to one of the questions in regard to the study of sorcery and witchcraft practices. How can it be possible that evil spirits can be manipulated, collaborated with and even commissioned by evil people – sorcerers and witches -- to harm other human beings who are neighbors or relatives of the sorcerers and witches? The answer is, I would argue, that it is possible. Like we can turn to good spirits, either of Christianity (angels) or of the traditional religions, and collaborate with them for constructive goals, humans also – evil humans (sorcerers and witches) – can turn to evil spirits and collaborate with them for destructive goals, that is, to harm people and their properties (homes, crops and cattle), or to make people sick or possessed. Even though it is difficult to prove, physically, I argue that evil spirits always stand by waiting for evil humans to collaborate with them to disobey God, as believed in Christianity, by doing evil things.

Now let us turn to another question. Is it possible that the harmful power of Satan, of demons or of the evil spirits, can enter sorcery mediums and then can emanate its toxic power to harm human beings? The answer is also an emphatic yes. The reason is, I would argue, that that is exactly the parcel of the Catholic Church's belief system. That is, in accordance with Sacramental theology, the Catholic Church believes that its ordained ministers – priests or

bishops – can invoke God to convey His power to enter materials such as water and salt so that they may contain God’s power which can protect human beings from any harm including those that come from the attacks of evil spirits commissioned by sorcerers and witches. The sacramental holy water and salt, then, operate as mediums that, called by humans – Catholic priests – come or enter with Divine power into water and salt. The result is that the water and salt are now no longer ordinary water and ordinary salt but water and salt that have been animated by Divine power and these Divine power-animated mediums – holy water and salt – are able to heal people or expel any evil spirit.

I would argue that the collaboration between sorcerers and evil spirits operates in the same way. Evil human beings, the sorcerers and witches, also can invoke the power of evil spirits, through their own ritual system to enter sorcery mediums that can harm their fellow human beings – their relatives or friends. But the good news is that, based on the actual experiences of para pendoa in Flores, God’s power that exists in sacramental holy water and salt is superior to the power of evil spirits in sorcery mediums. The toxic power of evil spirits in sorcery mediums can be easily neutralized by the Divine power of sacramental holy water. In regard to this, the Catholic Church fervently teaches, concerning the non-infinity of Satan and other evil spirits: “The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature.” The logic is that since Satan and all other evil spirits are only creatures, they can be easily defeated by their Creator – God.

Other than the sacramental holy water and salt that have been proven able to neutralize toxins of sorcery mediums, there also are a number of people’s stories which revealed the superiority of Divine power over Satan’s and over evil spirits’ power. It seems that magic items or sorcery mediums cannot survive if they are stored together with sacred Catholic objects such as the statue of Jesus, the statue of the Virgin Mary or the Cross of Jesus. Bapak Biono, the headman of Rego village, for instance, revealed his weird experience in this regard: “In 2010 I had a guest staying at my house for a couple of days. He was a merchant. Later on I discovered that he is an *ata janto* – a sorcerer. One day, a bottle of this man’s talisman oil was accidentally left at my house when he went out to sell his wares. Without the slightest suspicion, I took the bottle and put it in a safe place together with the holy Catholic artifacts such as a statue of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary, a Rosary and a Cross of Jesus. Soon after, this bottle exploded and its contents spilled all over the holy Catholic objects. When its owner became aware of what had occurred with his talisman oil, he was very nervous and asked to leave my home with an hour’s notice.” Eduardus Ceo narrated a similar story. In 1992 he received a small bottle of talisman oil from someone that, later on, he discovered was a sorcerer. He stored the bottle near the statue of the Virgin Mary and the rosary and soon after the very meager amount of oil from that bottle leaked out into a large area in his house.

The last remaining question often asked by many is why have evil sorcery and witchcraft practices not become a bygone thing after people have embraced the Christian faith. Or why has Christianity failed to wipe out or suppress the evil practices of sorcery and witchcraft? Definitely sorcery and witchcraft have been widely practiced by various groups of people no matter what their ethnicity or religions are. Sorcery and witchcraft existed in ancient Europe and Egypt and still exist today in many modern societies around the world including among Asian Muslims, Hindus, Confucians, Buddhists and Christians. Flores is a predominantly Catholic Island in Indonesia. The sorcerers and witches who were hunted, tortured to death or otherwise killed in a number of cases in seven regions of Manggarai in Flores were all Catholics. People I interviewed

said that these people went to Church on Sunday, prayed rosaries in May and October and yet, at the same time, they collaborated with evil spirits to harm their neighbors. Why?

There are a couple of possible answers. First, going to Church and praying the rosary can be just a camouflage. Second, their Christian faith has not been able to evangelize their way of life and way of thinking. Third, there is a dualism of religion – worshipping God and worshipping evil spirits at the same time. Lastly, sorcery and witchcraft practice as a collaboration between evil humans and evil spirits to harm other human beings will not become a bygone thing as long as Satan and other evil spirits still exist. The free choice now is in the hands of humans. People are free to choose between two options. That is, either you choose God and collaborate with Him and His good messengers –angels and other good world spirits – to pursue constructive goals or you choose to collaborate with evil spirits to pursue destructive goals.

### **Conclusion**

One of the conclusions of this research is that the invisible power of the evil spirits exists. It operates through sorcery and witchcraft practices. It is real. The power of Satan and other evil spirits can be manipulated by humans known as sorcerers or witches by invoking the power of invisible spirits into certain mediums to harm any intended victim, either directly (witch practices) or indirectly through mediums (sorcery practices). Yet this invisible power of the manipulated evil spirits can be defeated by God’s own power transferred into sacramental holy water. According to Catholic theology, ordained priests can invoke God’s Divine protective and healing power to enter into water and salt so that the water and salt become a material containing the power of God himself. Then, through this blessed material, God Himself can dispel any evil force on behalf of those who believe and use it.

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The Interviewees:

Andy Latu (45), a Catholic parish priest, interviewed in Ruteng on the 28th of December, 2016.

Aloysius Gamur (40), a Catholic parish priest and pendoa, interviewed at Cancar on the 6th of January, 2017.

Janggat Yance Janggat SH (60), a lawyer, in Ruteng, Manggarai on the 29th of December, 2016.

Jerhani Vinsensius (40), a villager, interviewed at Rego on the 15th of December, 2016.

Ica (30), a medical doctor, interviewed in Ruteng on the 3rd of January, 2017.

Nadjo Vinsen (60), a pendoa, interviewed at Rego on the 18th of December, 2016.

Pea Antonius SVD (43), a Catholic priest and a pendoa, interviewed at Kisol on the 7th of January, 2017.

Petronella (46) a pendoa, interviewed at Munting on the 20th of December, 2016.

Rio Ende (55), a villager, interviewed at Rego on the 14th of December, 2016.

Tarni John (45) a pendoa, interviewed at Rego on the 18th of December, 2016