

Chapter 1

Topic 7 Ideology and science

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Activity: Media

Witchcraft among the Azande

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify the characteristics of a closed belief system, using the example of witchcraft.
- Describe how the witchcraft belief system can act as a form of social control.
- Analyse how witchcraft acts as a self-sustaining belief.

A. In pairs, watch the clip below and answer the questions that follow. (Note that the tribe in the clip, the Azande, are also referred to as Zande.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIX7RfYAY5U>

1. What is the important question that victims ask when a disaster or misfortune happens?
 2. What answer do the Azande give to the question?
 3. According to Margaret Buckner, in what ways is witchcraft similar to belief systems such as religion?
 4. According to the Azande, what particular feature do witches have?
 5. How and when does witchcraft manifest itself?
 6. Describe the example given from Evans-Pritchard's work about the granary (grain store) collapsing.
 7. What does witchcraft explain?
 8. In Zande culture, who is likely to harm you with witchcraft? What can a witch do to you and why do they do it?
 9. What do the Azande do when medicine does not cure illness?
 10. What do the stories show about how witchcraft can be used as conflict resolution?
 11. Why do the Azande not trust in medicine alone?
 12. How does witchcraft facilitate social control?
 13. How does the case of Zande witchcraft beliefs compare to Christian beliefs?
 14. What are the implications of witchcraft for wealth distribution and development among the Azande?
 15. Why are accusations of witchcraft on the increase?
 16. According to the Azande why does evil occur?
- B. How does witchcraft among the Azande illustrate Polanyi's three devices for a belief system sustaining itself? Give an example of each of these from the clip.