

WITCHES AND GHOSTS*

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON *NAVAHO
WITCHCRAFT* by CLYDE KLUCKHOHN

In the character of witchcraft as a universal phenomenon of human beliefs, though also as a manifestation of behaviour and social institutions, there is something indistinguishable that for a long time has interested and intrigued many authors concerned with widely differing spheres (historians, sociologists, anthropologists, writers, poets, etc.). Already in the 16th and 17th centuries the new humanism, begun by the Middle Ages, was accompanied by a renewal of interest in "occult sciences," "white" or "black," and the positivism of the last century itself was transformed without eliminating the fascination for witchcraft indicated in the researches on satanism.

* At one time a distinction was usually maintained between the words "Witch" (female) and "Wizard" male. Nowadays, however, and in the work under discussion, the term "Witch" sometimes connotes both sexes, and should be so interpreted in this essay. [Ed.]

For the anthropologist of today this interest in witchcraft is kept alive not only by reason of its exotic nature seemingly totally strange to our "scientific" mentality, but also, and more perhaps, by the fact that among the primitive societies who constitute privileged terrain there are very few where one has not found it under some recognised form. That is also true, moreover, for most peasant societies, and one can legitimately ask oneself if its disappearance in our industrial society was not rather the result of a transformation and of a concealment that prevents us from recognising it among us. From what one knows of it, there is no doubt that witchcraft constitutes an almost universal cultural trait, and that it is, in fact, a subject particularly valuable for comparative anthropological research.

But, finally, what is witchcraft, how can it be defined? Correctly speaking witchcraft is not an institution; nevertheless, in many societies it appears as a system more or less coherent in beliefs and actions as a pattern of behaviour. From the functional point of view also it manifests an ambiguous character because it operates in different societies, and often within those societies at the same time, a balancing factor of inequalities and latent hostilities in the social organisation, and a disintegrating force in that same organisation.

On the other hand, if one considers the lowest level of its basic concepts it is evident that witchcraft lifts this form of thought so facilely known as "magic;" this implies belief in the possibility of one subject affecting another by means of the use of "supernatural" forces. Lévi-Strauss has brought to light well the *objective* character of this belief; he observes that for his agent "the magic work... appears to be an addition to the objective order of the universe: for those who use it, it presents the same requirement as the linking of natural causes where, by means of rites, the agent imagines it is only necessary to insert additional links. Accordingly, he thinks that he is observing it from the outside, and that it does not emanate from himself."¹ Therefore, from this point of view European witchcraft had very close bonds with religion and with mythological and speculative thought.

¹ C. Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage*, Paris, 1962, p. 292.

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In his work on the beliefs and magical practises of the Central African Azande, which is still the best ethnographic treatise on the subject, Evans-Pritchard underlines the polymorphism of the magic phenomenon, and the complex relations between this and the other realms of culture such as religion; and his restatements mark a date in the history of anthropology.² Long before him, however, Marcel Mauss had already indicated the correct view in some of the reports on works on African ethnography that go back to 1900-1906, where he insists on the necessity:

“to examine... the reports of negro religion and the negro priest with magic, and the witch... between them exist close affinities. The principle is the same: animism, lack of distinction between man, nature, the spirit. But, at the same time nothing is more opposite than the fetish priest and the witch. One fights the other. The witch is already the man of black magic, and the priest protects the faithful against the wiles of the magician, the evil of bad spirits. The one addresses himself to good divinities, the other to spiteful and ghostly ones. *But both think basically in the same way.*”³

And it puts us on our guard against classifications too premature in observing that

“the fundamental distinction... between the two classes of magicians, the *witch doctor* and sorcerer is really very delicate, interesting, but difficult to concede. The *witch-doctor* is the anti-magician, the seer, the exorcist; the sorcerer is the evil magician. It is possible. But why make this ‘doctor’ only a witch? Is he not a priest, the only priest of the Bantu with the King, or the Chief? (Whoever declares himself against the *wardoctor* is a magician)... The rain makers, the priests of the purifications, of hunting, of war... do they not identify themselves with the soothsayer?”⁴

If Mauss treated the sorcerer in the function of a *witch-doctor*, the first was merely an aspect of the second; Evans-Pritchard,

² E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, 1937.

³ M. Mauss, Report by M. H. Kingsley, *West African Studies* (London, 1899), in *L'Année sociologique*, 3, 1900, pp. 224-226, particularly p. 225. The italics are mine.

⁴ M. Mauss, Report by D. Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), in *L'Année sociologique*, 9, 1906, pp. 195-198, particularly pp. 196-197.

in the treatise already referred to, reversed the problem describing witchcraft first and white magic after, with the argument that among the Azande nearly all the magical practise has as its aim the combatting of the effects of a previous act of sorcery, and that the two form a system closed and coherent.⁵ What is important is that the approach of Evans-Pritchard was “structural,” to the degree that it saw the purpose of anthropological research, in what concerned magic, in the elucidation of the relations (*a*) between the system of magical beliefs and the “total” beliefs of members of a society, and (*b*) between the beliefs and magical practises and other different social phenomena that come to be associated with them. As he has recently written:

“To try to comprehend magic as an idea in itself, what constitutes the essence of it, is a hopeless task. One understands better what it is when one examines it in relation to empirical activities, but also in relation to other beliefs, as part of a system of thought, because it is certain that magic is often, primarily, less a means of controlling nature than of combatting witchcraft and other mystical forces obstructing human endeavour by imposing empirical measures taken to achieve an end.”⁶

Exactly as Evans-Pritchard, and about the same time, Clyde Kluckhohn strove to bring to light analogies between the beliefs and practises concerning witchcraft and other aspects of the social life of the Navaho, such as the division of property and the power within families, and between distinct family groups.⁷ For him, as for Evans-Pritchard, “the word ‘meaning,’ in science, consists first of all in showing that an isolated fact does not play a haphazard rôle, but a fixed rôle in relation to another fact or set of facts,”⁸ and one can then be in good accord

⁵ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft...*, cit. p. 387.

⁶ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford, 1965, p. 111.

⁷ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Limited Edition, 1944. A recent second edition of this “classic” work (but unavailable) (Boston, 1967) has provided the text for this study.

⁸ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, Boston, 1967, p. 65.

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with John Middleton when he writes that Evans-Pritchard and Kluckhohn have shown that "belief in magic and in witchcraft is an integral part of cultural life; one can only understand it therefore in its global social context."⁹ The problem is to define this social context: in a traditional concept one had, on the one side, a series of beliefs and *rules* of behaviour, and, on the other, an inventory more or less covering *acts* and interactions between members of a society who represent "social reality," "that which really happens." It is not possible here to come to the heart of this delicate question, but one must at least remember that today a certain number of anthropologists consider the distinction between systems of thought and social facts as not having much analytical value. Indeed, acts in social life are only feared by members of the society in relation to standards of behaviour which they set, and these patterns, individual or collective, arise from the system of total thought.

Kluckhohn has probably been in agreement with this view, since in the first part of his study, as we shall see, he took a great deal of trouble to describe minutely the ideas of the Navaho on witchcraft; in the second part he tries to put forward what he calls the "obvious" functions, and the "hidden" functions of Navaho witchcraft, by means of an analysis of individual psychological responses to situations of tension and anxiety. This interpretative approach, which is included in the routine of the American school of *culture and personality*, apart from several naïvetés due to the novelty of the psychoanalytical theories for anthropologists, is not without interest, even today, and without doubt it merited a detailed commentary. However, that which seems to me above all striking in *Navaho Witchcraft*, and that which pushes me to give another direction to this study, is first, the wealth and the quality of the documentation in Part I, and then the fact that the interpretations that form the matter in Part II correspond only loosely with that documentation. In my opinion these two characteristics determine the value and the limits of Kluckhohn's work.¹⁰

⁹ J. Middleton, Introduction to *Magic, Witchcraft and Curing*, published under the editorship of J. Middleton, Garden City, New York, 1967, p. 10.

¹⁰ By reason of the limitations of this paper I am not going to talk of the appendices, that is to say, of the documentation itself, of which Part I

On the one hand, and although it is impossible to disassociate completely the presentation and interpretation of data in matters of either social or natural science, Kluckhohn has found a satisfactory compromise to this theoretical exigence. And with an intellectual honesty unfortunately all too rare in anthropological works. But, on the other hand it is difficult to discover more than a purely generic and rather superficial relation between the documentation, so detailed, so respectful of native ideas, and the general psychological and social interpretations with which Kluckhohn ends his study.

In order to demonstrate this more clearly I have decided not to discuss these interpretations, but to go back to the data themselves, to examine them more closely, and to show by some examples what kind of conclusions can be drawn from a different type of analysis. My intention is to adapt this analysis more closely to the ideas of the Navaho, and to be more explicit in dealing with the actual logical relations that we can perceive between certain concepts or sets of concepts. In my examples I will use only data drawn from *Navaho Witchcraft*, or occasionally from other writings of Kluckhohn, in order to show that these called for, I would say demanded, a type of approach that Kluckhohn did not apply, but to which he would probably have had recourse had he gone back to this material towards the end of his life.

In the book under discussion Kluckhohn writes that a more exact title would have been: "Navaho idea and action patterns concerned with the influencing of events by supernatural techniques that are socially disapproved." This sentence contains a definition of witchcraft, at least that of the Navaho's, that is, without doubt, good.¹¹

What is more questionable is that Kluckhohn, asserting this, limited himself throughout his study to the consideration of witchcraft beliefs by themselves, or only in relation to

is only a resumé. I will try to show that this resumé, in which the Navaho ideas are faithfully respected, seems to require a different type of analysis to that presented in Part II.

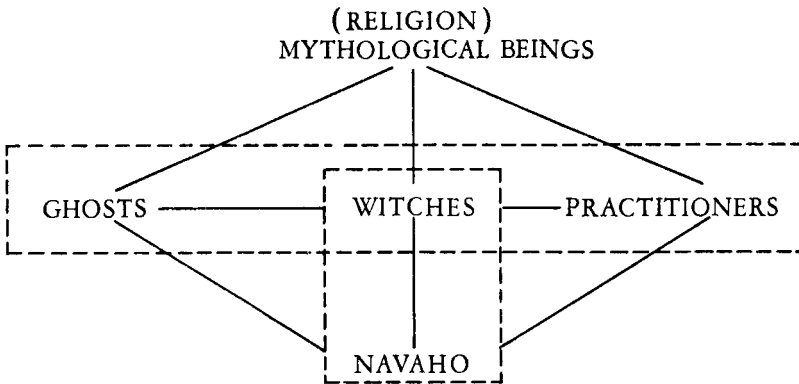
¹¹ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 5. However, even this definition poses a problem, as will be seen later, because the "supernatural techniques" of witchcraft are the same as those used in white magic.

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psychological and social aspects of Navaho culture. It seems to me that this treatment of the material is very inadequate, it ignores a great deal of data and shows precisely that one has not the right to interpret witchcraft beliefs without taking into account their connection with religion and mythology on the one side, and black and white magic on the other. What I mean by this is that if the Navaho made a real distinction, of which one should take note, between black and white magic, for example, one cannot lay stress on the importance of this, laying it down as a principle, at the beginning of a study, to speak later only of witchcraft, so-called.¹² Besides, it appears from Kluckhohn's data that, among the Navaho, belief in witchcraft is closely linked with belief in ghosts; but nowhere is any attempt made to interpret this connection which appears to me to be of fundamental importance.

Bearing in mind the limitations imposed by this paper, and having decided, as I have already said, only to use data published by Kluckhohn, I am not going to discuss the relationship between witchcraft, religion and mythology (although reading G. Reichard's works I was left with the impression that this is very important), for the simple reason that Kluckhohn says almost nothing on this topic. On the contrary, I would like to offer some comments on the connections between (*a*) witches and ghosts, and (*b*) between witches and ceremonial practitioners, and to add something on the subject of initiation and the "witches' Sabbath," according to Navaho beliefs noted by Kluckhohn. In the following diagram the vertical rectangle indicates the limits of Kluckhohn's study, the horizontal figure the range of my interest of which examples will be found in this article.

¹² In the introduction to his book Kluckhohn says that he will not deal with "the bad side" of Navaho magic, and that he will not speak at all of the rôle of witchcraft in mythology. (C. Kluckhohn, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8). The fact that this limitation has been deliberate does not make it any less regrettable, because in eliminating essential differences the value of the scientific study is diminished.



Before examining the examples I have chosen I should like to mention briefly another general question. Just as I do not agree with Kluckhohn's willingness to ignore religion, mythology, and other aspects of Navaho culture in a work on witchcraft, so, I do not see either why he has thought it useful, theoretically, to give so much importance to a classification of Navaho witches.

Again, I consider that these distinctions should not be made in isolation because their importance only becomes evident when analogous distinctions are made on other cultural levels. The proof is that, subtle though they may be, they do not play any part in Kluckhohn's final interpretations, showing clearly that his theories, as already pointed out, have only remote connection with his documentation.

Incidentally, discussing other distinctions frequently emphasized in studies on East African Witchcraft, Professor Victor Turner, in a recent article has expressed views I find particularly illuminating:

"Almost every society recognizes the existence of such a wide variety of malpractices that it might be completely misleading to attempt to marshal them, come what may, in two opposing categories. Their name is legion, their character protean. This is why I do not like very much the term 'inversion' used by Professors Middleton and Winter to define the fundamental behavior of witches. In most societies this behavior, contrary to Professor Winter's statements is not 'the exact reverse' of that of other members of the population.

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It certainly has some 'inverted' features, but in other respects it is rather a caricature of normal conduct. The world of sorcery, according to tribal beliefs, is not the structural world 'inverted', nor as seen in a mirror image; it is a world of decay in which everything that is normal, healthy, ordered, is returned to chaos and primordial degradation. It is an 'anti-structure', not an inverted one."¹³

Professor Turner's last argument seems to me completely convincing, with the reservation that this "anti-structure," inverted or not, itself has a form, the shape of which only appears clearly when it is compared with other "normal" or "abnormal" structures. It is precisely some aspects of this structure in relation to the system of Navaho beliefs in witchcraft that I want to try to disentangle.

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In an article on "The conception of death among Indians of the South-West," Kluckhohn gives us some very interesting information on Navaho belief in ghosts. For instance, after pointing out that any connection with the dead, human or animal, is considered extremely dangerous, he adds: "This intense and morbid aversion to the dead and everything connected with them rests on their fear of ghosts. ... Ghosts are, as it were, the witches of the world of the dead, an obscure world peopled by impalpable shadows."¹⁴ The pages that follow will be mainly an examination of this statement, because it seems to me a good example of

¹³ V. W. Turner, "Witchcraft and Sorcery: Taxonomy versus Dynamics," *Africa*, vol. 34, pp. 314-325, 1964, Especially p. 323. This article is a study on *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, published under the editorship of J. Middleton and E. H. Winter, London, 1963. For a more general development of the position of Turner see the admirable study by Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London, 1966, pp. 160 ff. and *passim*. In this same work Mary Douglas has shown that if the distinction, explicitly made by many African peoples, between voluntary and involuntary witchcraft (respectively *sorcery* and *witchcraft*, according to the terminology instituted by Evans-Pritchard) must not be ignored, it is also true that her interpretation in terms of comparative analysis is only possible if one renounces an absolute value, but if one considers it in relation to other varying social orders, such as the distribution of authority and of political power in each society.

¹⁴ C. Kluckhohn, "Conceptions of Death among the Southwestern Indians," (*Conférence Ingersoll sur l'immortalité de l'homme*, for the University Year 1947-1948), Harvard, 1948, brochure, p. 9.

both Kluckhohn's perspicacity and of his tendency to forget or to disregard his own observations when he goes on to develop his general interpretations.

I think that one can concede without risk of error that, for the Navaho, as for most people throughout the world, the dead who return in the form of ghosts are those who refuse or who cannot accept their new situation, and who remain for this reason in some region between the world of the living and of the dead. Their position is essentially ambiguous; they don't live any more, but they continue to exist, and behave, to some extent, like the living. And if one compares them with witches it is not only because their activities are considered terrifying and harmful in the extreme, but, because—more fundamentally—their structural rôle, is on a different level and characterised by the same ambiguity. In this sense one could very well reverse Kluckhohn's definition and say that "witches are the ghosts of the world of the living." Funeral ceremonies, in their character as exorcisms, seem to be the means used to make the dead accept their new situation, and to confirm expressly to those who remain their state of living, permitting them to accept the void created by death with the resulting rupture of the social equilibrium. The same could be said of the widespread custom of burying with the corpse their most cherished personal possessions.

I could be wrong, but there seems to me to be an analogy, a connection between the almost universal attitude towards the compulsory confession of a witch, through which one tries to define, without dangerous ambiguity, the nature and the reality of the act of witchcraft (and accordingly the position of the witch in society). It is in the confession of the "crime" that efforts are made at any cost, and often by force, to make the witch reveal *where he stands*, his position vis-a-vis other members of society, and it is that which eliminates immediately his menacing equivocalness and the hostility of the group in this respect. The witch who confesses is the most often acquitted, he is known and there is not much risk involved as far as he is concerned, but the one who doesn't confess must be suppressed, as constituting a permanent danger.¹⁵

¹⁵ On the rôle of the confession in a witchcraft trial see C. Lévi-Strauss, "Le sorcier et sa magie," in *Anthropologie Structurale*, ch. 9, pp. 183-203,

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Are these assumptions confirmed by what we know of the Navaho? I think they are, and again it is Kluckhohn who supplies the necessary information. To quote from his article once more: "Most of the dead can return as ghosts to plague the living. Only those who die of old age, and still-born babies, or those who die before they are able to utter a cry cannot become ghosts. For them it is useless to observe the four days mourning after burial since they cannot harm the living. Otherwise any dead person, however friendly or affectionate his attitude in life, is a potential danger, the ghost representing the malignant aspect of the dead."¹⁶ Two pages further on Kluckhohn adds: "It is significant that the living believe above all in the dead of their own particular family. When a ghost appears in the midst of or near a crowd, only his relatives are conscious of the presence. There is little fear of those long gone."¹⁷

It is a pity that Kluckhohn has interpreted these facts on the lines of Opler's explanation of similar beliefs among the Apache: "To survive physically close cooperation in the heart of the family group is indispensable. All feelings of antagonism and rancour must be severely suppressed, because open conflict or rivalry is a threat to livelihood. Hence ghosts appear to symbolise sentiments of hate and evil the living have experienced, often subconsciously, towards dead members of their own family circle."¹⁸

In passing we note that this idea of ghosts is very close to that of witchcraft as put forward by Kluckhohn in Part II of the work under discussion, and that I am not, then, the first

pp. 189-196 specially. I was myself surprised to learn that among the Zinacantecos on the Chiapas high-plateau, México, that a known witch, because he had confessed his ill deeds, was allowed freedom in a village, and was treated with the respect due to faith-healers, and that others had been executed the previous years merely on suspicion of witchcraft. This witch was evidently "classé," one didn't believe in him very much, and laughed at his pretensions to "wickedness."

¹⁶ C. Kluckhohn, "Conceptions of Death," cit., p. 9.

¹⁷ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, pp. 11-12. See also M. E. Opler, "An Interpretation of Ambivalence in two American Indian Tribes," *Journal of Social Psychology*, VII, No. 1, 1935, pp. 82-115.

to compare ghosts with witches. I would like to ask, however, among other things, why the old never “return.” Without denying the existence of these fears in connection with the power of dead relatives who return as ghosts to harass their descendants—often found also in European folklore—, can one not, the other way round, see them as a consequence of the belief in ghosts? One accepts that old people can have accumulated a lot of hostility against themselves during their long lives, above all as a heavy economic burden on their family or local community, as is shown in so many traditional cultures among poor nations (e. g. rural Japan prior to the industrial era). If I am hardly able to develop this point here, nevertheless, I feel that the situation of these unhappy old people, deprived of the pleasure of vengeance and injury after death, seem very relevant to my theories: the aged, in effect, often appear to become witches during their lives, dabbling in realms of power that others only acquire after death. If one admits the analogy of witches-ghosts one cannot deny the significance of these reports of inversion as shown in the following table:

	PEOPLE	OLD PEOPLE
WITCHES	-	+
GHOSTS	+	-

It could be objected that if this diagram is correct, if it is true that those who die at an adult age, as opposed to the aged, can return as ghosts, and that the old are often thought of as witches during their lifetime, it appears also from Kluckhohn’s data that adults can become withches. To this argument I would reply by remembering that opposing forces are operating here, that the greater importance of one element in relation to another

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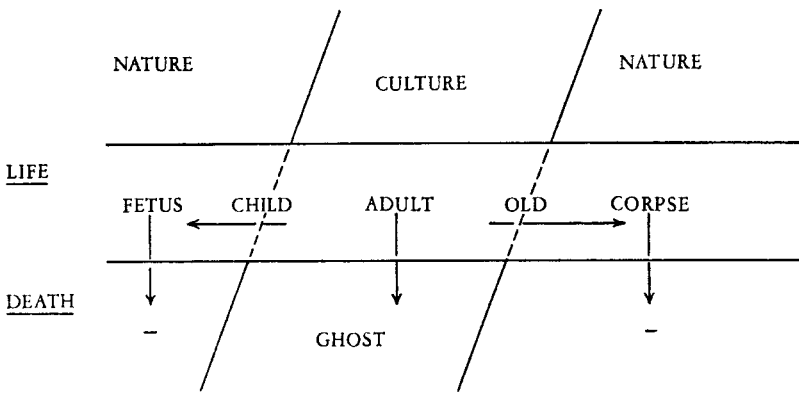
is sufficient justification. What matters, in the present case, is that one attributes to the old a more marked disposition to become witches.

The second possible objection concerns the position of children, and we know already that the still-born and those who die before they are able to utter a sound cannot become ghosts, and obviously, there is little risk of them being accused of witchcraft. But what about other children? Can they become witches, and can they return after death? Unfortunately, the information gathered by Kluckhohn does not permit of an answer with any certainty. My own impression is that children are rarely considered as witches during their lifetime, nor as being transformed into ghosts after death. If this is so then I think their position must be considered in relation to that of women, with whom they are normally associated, and that an interesting comparison could be made in this respect with European beliefs in witchcraft. It is worth noting that among the Navaho witchcraft is essentially a masculine phenomenon, while that of Europe is basically feminine, and that here children often play an important part in different ways.¹⁹

As a preliminary conclusion to be drawn from the examination of the rôle of witches and that of ghosts in Navaho beliefs, I should like to try to answer the basic question that arises logically from all I have said: why, among the Navaho, do old people often become witches, and why, on the other hand, are ghosts so rarely the aged or very young children? By now it must be clear to the reader that in Navaho conceptions the very old and infants occupy a similar marginal position, analogous, on another level, to that of witches. In the ordered realm of culture they are the human beings closest to the dangers of a return to the chaos of Nature, children being too near their natal peril, and old people too close to the biological fatality of death and

¹⁹ Regarding the rôle of children in European witchcraft, see, for example, Christina Hole, *Witchcraft in England*, London-New York, 1966, *passim*. The predominant part played by female witches need not be underlined; Sprenger, the great religious specialist in the detection of witches, wrote, about the end of the 15th century: "It is necessary to speak of the heresy of witches (female), not of wizards (male): the latter are of small account." See, among others, Jules Michelet, *Satanism and Witchcraft*, New York, 1939, pp. viii and *passim*.

corruption. Because of their foetal status children and the old return after death to the unimportant, primitive kingdom of Nature, which exerts on them its normal attraction. Adults, on the contrary, always die as victims of evil, that is from an abnormal intervention from a region of chaos into the cultural order, and keeping their cultural significance in the natural kingdom of death, giving life to ghosts, essentially ambiguous beings who belong to the cultural order. The following diagram is an attempt to summarize these ideas:



As a postscript I suggest it would be interesting to study the extent to which mourning customs vary according to the age of the dead in modern Western societies. I feel in our civilization, as among the Navaho, one mourns for a much shorter time for the death of infants and the old than for those who die at an adult age.

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I hope to have shown that a connection does exist between Navaho conceptions concerning witches, on one side, and ghosts, on the other, and that the study of this question by a specialist on Navaho culture would give us a clearer general idea of the beliefs of these people.

Now I would like to come to another aspect of the problem, that, once more, Kluckhohn has brought out, but to which I

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think he did not give enough importance in his interpretations. This deals with the distinction between sorcerers and celebrants, on which Kluckhohn based his study, having decided to consider the former separately, a distinction which, in his documentation, often seems obscure and difficult to define.

Let me remind you of some of these observations: in *Navaho Witchcraft* Kluckhohn states that the Navaho tend to place witches and practitioners of ceremonial rites in the same category, that of individuals capable of influencing the course of events by the use of supernatural techniques, and he suggests that as a consequence the Navaho often use the same word to describe witches and chant singers.²⁰ He also says that the chants themselves, like those who recite them, inspire ambivalent sentiments. Many informants are convinced that a sacred chant can actually serve to bewitch, if it is inverted or otherwise improperly used. ... The chants are instruments of great power designed to have beneficial effects, but an evil celebrant can use this force for wicked ends. Among the questions on which there was serious disagreement between members of the group of investigators was the question as to whether the Coyote Prayer had to do with witchcraft, or whether it was a powerful means of protection against malpractices, and a cure for them.²¹ On pages 47-48 Kluckhohn says also that oak-gall medicine is considered as a specific against witches and wizards, but that one of his informants regard galls as "witchcraft poison;" and that "if some informants say that all plants used in magic (white) of the hunt and of war can protect against sorcery, others state that they are used by the witches. On this question the investigators were almost equally divided." Conversely, if singers of sacred chants and faith-healers are considered dangerous, always ready to become witches, a sentiment felt in our day by many Westerners, perhaps not without some reason, in regard to their own doctors and scientists, the reverse is equally true because, as one investigator said "witches are needed to bring rain as much as for celebrants."²²

²⁰ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 226, n. 7.

²¹ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 51.

²² C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 60.

Kluckhohn saw in these differences of opinion contradictions that at present hinder one from finding the truth. I believe, on the contrary, that they represent important items of information from the point of view of interpretation, no less than undisputed findings. For the same reasons that Lévi-Strauss pointed out in the study of myths²³ I think that two serious pieces of information, no matter how contradictory they may appear to be, should be considered equally valid, and the interpretation should be found through the meaning of their differences and not by refuting either one or the other. Kluckhohn had the great merit of gathering carefully all these "contradictory" opinions, without trying, as do many anthropologists, to effect a choice, but he didn't draw from their confrontation any conclusion on the relationship between witches and chant singers in Navaho beliefs.

To sum up, it seems evident that Navaho beliefs remain very ambiguous, at all levels, in relation to the ceremonial chant singers, and the chants themselves, the witches, their poisons and their incantations, and even to the remedies reputedly efficacious in the cure of diseases attributed to witchcraft. As I have already said, this shows that to try to separate witches from ceremonial practitioners, "black" magic and "white" magic, is without doubt a mistake that hinders the real understanding the nature of these two forms of magic, such as those believed in by the Navaho, and the rôle played by those who practise them.

Before concluding this section of my paper, I must mention another aspect of the ambiguity of the respective positions of witches and celebrants in the Navaho conceptions, that one might call the "bewitcher-bewitched complex."²⁴ It is said not only that a witch who confesses his crimes will die within the year, victim of his own magic, or that he will be killed if he does not confess within four days (corresponding to the four days of mourning observed for the death of those susceptible to become

²³ C. Lévi-Strauss, "La structure des mythes," in *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, 1958, pp. 227-245, particularly p. 242.

²⁴ "From an anthropological point of view... the main interest in a witchcraft situation turns on techniques of divination and the relationship between witch and bewitched." E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Boston, 1965, p. 180.

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ghosts), but further, that “who practises it (witchcraft) too much, does it to his own detriment.”²⁵ Kluckhohn reports also that of 164 supposed *victims* of malpractices, 133 were described as “rich,” and that of 222 people *accused* of witchcraft, 140 officiated at ceremonies and 115 were rich, representing an extremely high percentage, taking into account the fact that in 90 cases Kluckhohn was unable to gather any economic information.²⁶

These totals speak for themselves. They show not only that there is a significant statistical correlation between witches and practitioners, but also that the majority of the sorcerers and their victims are rich, a fact which, in my view, is interesting because it reveals that at a certain level the two categories of people are united.

I could have quoted several other examples and arguments from Kluckhohn’s work, proving the ambiguity and complexity of the relationship between the idea of the witch and that of the ceremonial practitioner, and the fluctuating nature of the Navaho sentiments towards both. That would add nothing, however, to my treatment, because in any case it would be impossible here to disentangle the structural implications of these facts, as there is a total lack of consistent data on ceremonial rites and white magic, limiting severely, in my opinion, the programme decided upon by Kluckhohn.

Nevertheless, relying on such information as we have, we can make several general observations on the relations between the respective positions of witches, chant singers, and the general Navaho people. It seems obvious that one can range any one of these three against the other two (or to group them in a pair opposing the third), on the basis of the very elementary criterion of “well” or “ill,” “good” and “bad.” From this point of view the witches are demonstrably “ill” in face of the group Navaho + singers, and the singers the “good” as against the group Navaho + witches. But when it comes to comparing the mass of the Navaho people with the group witches + chant singers, the

²⁵ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 47. This remark is confirmed by Gladys Reichard, in *Navaho Religion*, New York, 1950, vol. I, pp. 87-88.

²⁶ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit. pp. 59-60.

problem begins to get complicated, because, as we have already seen, the members of the group witches+chant singers as possessors of terrifying and dangerous power, are indubitably “bad” as opposed to the rest of the population, but these latter can also be called “bad” in the sense that they are disarmed by their ignorance in front of the witches who alone know the supernatural techniques indispensable to the maintenance of good relations with the mysterious forces that govern the world of nature and of men.

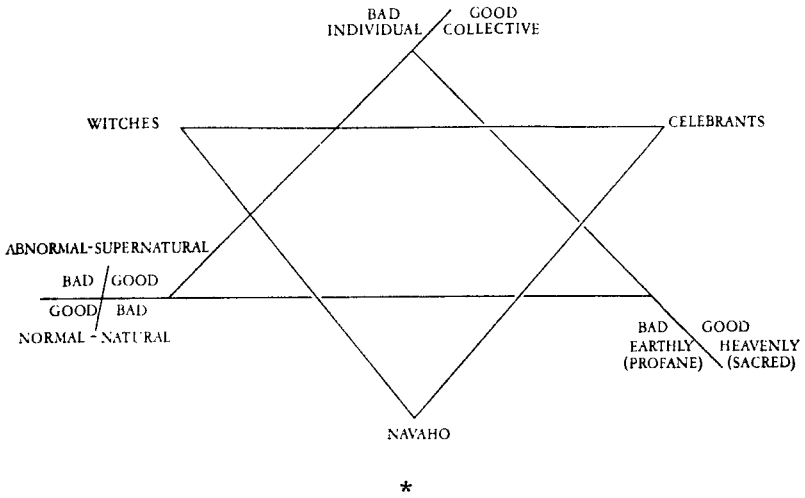
If, unfortunately, the data available does not allow us to specify these basic but too general considerations, we can all the same add, hypothetically, that the witches, in opposition to the group Navaho people+chant singers represent individual anti-social interests in the struggle against the community, while the singers, in opposition to Navaho people+witches, play the rôle of mediators between those and the “Heavenly” powers, between the Holy People and those concerned with terrestrial affairs. The common people, as we have seen are distinct from the group witches+ceremonial practitioners in that they represent the “normal” and the “natural” in face of the “abnormal” and “supernatural” which latter are the domain of the witches.

<u>WITCHES</u>		<u>NAVAHO</u>		<u>SINGERS</u>
Bad Individual	/	Good Collective		Good Collective
Bad Earthly (Profane)		Bad Earthly (Profane)	/	Good Heavenly (Sacred)
Bad/Good Supernatural (Abnormal)	/	Good/Bad Natural (Normal)	/	Bad/Good Supernatural (Abnormal)

While insisting on the highly conjectural character of what precedes this, we can apply this classification to our first diagram concerning the relationship between the witches, the singers and the Navaho people in general.²⁷

²⁷ One must compare this diagram with that given by Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft...*, cit., p. 423.

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As a third and last example of the considerable interest offered in the documentation gathered by Kluckhohn, I will try to develop some observations on initiation of witches and on their Sabbath, in the hope of being able to return to certain comments on the ideas relating to the connections between witches and ghosts. Initiation and Sabbath are closely linked, because the Sabbath is also an initiation ceremony (as in European witchcraft), in the minds of the people it represents the witches as members of a category and of a group of individuals, in contrast to their usual solitary aspect.

In *Navaho Witchcraft* Kluckhohn gathered a lot of detailed information on this question, and it seems to me a pity that he only used some of this in his interpretations. We learn that "killing a near relative, for preference either a brother or a sister, is part of the initiation into witchcraft."²⁸ On the other hand "Witchcraft is closely associated with incest. To be suspected of incest is at the same time to be suspected of witchcraft, and vice versa."²⁹ At least to suppose that the witch

²⁸ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit. p. 26. Kluckhohn interprets this practise and belief as the expression of a repressed hostility among members of the same family; only seeking here to show that his documentation is perhaps from a different angle I am not going to analyse this theory.

²⁹ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 25.

has incestuous relations with the female members of his family, and that he kills his male relatives, that, if I dared to say it, would gratify my wishes, but it is not corroborated by the documentation, it must be remembered that the two conditions requisite to becoming a true witch or being considered as one appear incompatible. It was exactly this apparent lack of logic that pushed me to search for the structure of witches' attributes, and that, naturally, to looking for comparable contradictions at other levels.

The data given relative to the Sabbath provides some examples. From this data all the activities of the Sabbath come within one of the following five categories:

- (a) Planning concerted action against future victims,
- (b) Initiation of new members,
- (c) Intercourse with dead women,
- (d) Practise of cannibalism,
- (e) Killing of victims at a distance by means of ritual practises.³⁰

Only two of these activities directly interest us here (the others being of a general nature and only being distantly connected with our problem), necrophilia and necrophagia, because they seem to transpose on the level of the relationship with the dead the contradiction we have already noted à propos of relations with living members of the family. Without great exaggeration one can safely say that the sequence of these events constitutes an excellent programme for the complete exploitation of a human being (perhaps a sibling): first one has incestuous relations with a person, then you kill him, make love to the corpse, and finally eat it.

LIVING	INCEST	+	-	DEATH OF THE SIBLING
DEAD	NECROPHILIA	+	-	NECROPHAGIA

Contiguity

³⁰ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 27.

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I find it significant that on the level of relations with the living, it is necessary, in order to become a witch, to break the equilibrium of the discontinuous relationships on which human society rests. Incest creates a promiscuity in contradiction to the principles on which social life is based, the death of the sibling pushes the discontinuity of social communication to the extreme. Ideally, the consequences are the same, in both cases there is the dissolution of culture and a return to the chaos of Nature. Following their refusal to respect the principles of society the witches, in the Navaho conceptions, "are associates of the dead."³¹ And this union places them completely on the side of the abnormal and of chaos, because the normal Navaho carefully avoid any contact with the dead, of which they also refuse to speak. This appalling contiguity of the world of witches and of the realm of the dead, and of corruption, expresses itself in the two different levels of necrophilia and necrophagia.

Let us stress this point a little. One can say, metaphorically, that a witch is incestuous or fratricidal even though he does not actually commit these crimes because, like incestuous or fratricidal individuals he does not respect the rules of the social order. The witch does not kill his sibling as an expression of hostile sentiments, but rather to break the closest social bonds he has with society. After this, will he not be free of all social constraint? Equally, if he practises incest, it is to treat a sibling as a stranger, a brother or a sister as a distant relative;³² this is another way of refusing personal social ties, questioning the fundamental rules of social exchange and alliances. In refusing normal social relations with the living, the witch establishes paradoxical relations with the dead; in this domain he refuses the rules of the natural order. The dead are for him at once objects of sexual desire and nourishment; making love to a corpse he treats it like a living being, eating it, he refuses to recognise its human nature. As in the preceding case one goes from an extreme and abnormal promiscuity to a complete refusal of con-

³¹ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 25.

³² I borrow this phrase from Lévi-Strauss, "The Future of Kinship Studies," The Huxley Memorial Lecture, 1965, in the *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, pp. 383-390, particularly p. 384.

tiguity, equally extreme. This is, if I understand it correctly, the "anti-structure" mentioned by Professor Turner.

To close this study by returning to the principal theme I would like to quote three statements of Kluckhohn which seem to prove certain connections I have tried to establish. In an article entitled "Navaho Morals" (1956) he wrote: "Incest is strictly forbidden; with sorcery it is considered the most odious of crimes; only witches and cannibals are guilty of incest,"³³ and "there exists in Navaho a generic term applied to crimes and other serious misdemeanours of which the best translation would be 'he took his risks,' that is to say, he knowingly violated the mechancial laws of supernatural origin that govern human existence." He adds that "In Navaho conceptions the nearest approach to the idea of sin is to be 'irregular,' to lose control of one's actions."³⁴ Lastly, one finds in *Navaho Witchcraft* this important remark: "In fact, according to public opinion witches give themselves away by the rashness of their behavior, above all the risk of incurring supernatural sanctions."³⁵ This statement seems to me of the utmost importance, and it could be applied also to European witchcraft.

Sorcerers and ceremonial practitioners together play in human society, in my judgment, the parts parallel with those of the cultural Hero and of the Trickster in mythology.³⁶ But what remains indistinct, at least apparently in the mythological world, where a single character can be at the same time the founder of a culture, and one who breaks its rules, must be distinctly separated in the results of the activity of the cultural Hero, in order that society can exist and function (we have seen that a certain ambiguity exists depending on the social level). The witch is a mediator, but in a negative sense, denying the social order at all levels he contributes by this very fact to its recognition and preservation. The condemnation of the witch, and even more

³³ C. Kluckhohn, "Navaho Morals," in *Encyclopedia of Morals*, published under the editorship of V. Ferm, New York, 1956, pp. 383-390, particularly p. 384.

³⁴ C. Kluckhohn, *ibid.*, p. 389.

³⁵ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 61.

³⁶ I hope the specialist will forgive me for the general nature and imprecision of this association.

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of his confession (confession also plays an important part in European witchcrafts trials)³⁷ is necessary in order that collective strength clearly represents the opposition between order and disorder, between system and chaos.

For different reasons, I agree then with the opinion of Kluckhohn and other authors according to whom manifestations of black magic, of witchcraft, increase during periods when the pressures of cultural and social evolution are the most intense. In the work under discussion Kluckhohn declares: "I must underline that to understand the known phenomena it is essential to take into account the increasingly heavy ordeals to which the Navaho have been subjected in the course of the last two generations."³⁸ It seems undeniable if one analyses, as one should, these phenomena in relation to the upheaval of traditional order resulting in rapid cultural change, instead of considering them simply as a consequence of opposing rivalries either private or of groups. From this point of view witchcraft would be a defensive reaction of the social organism against influences tending to undermine it, more than the expression and direct effect of such influences.

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Reading some of the arguments that I have put forward against certain aspects of *Navaho Witchcraft*, it might be imagined that I have not a very high opinion of this book. I must emphasise that this impression would be wrong because, as I have tried to show, Kluckhohn has gathered and presented a collection of extremely valuable data; further, many of his observations on this data are very penetrating, and throw a vivid light on the problem.³⁹ His limitations, in my opinion result from the

³⁷ On this point I suggest a comparison with the examples and interpretations of Lévi-Strauss in the chapter already quoted (see note 15) of his *Anthropologie structurale* with the witchcraft trial with Sprenger as the judge, related by Michelet in *Satanism and Witchcraft*, cit., p. 138 which could be interpreted in exactly the same way.

³⁸ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 124.

³⁹ It was only after this study was already finished that I discovered a remarkable essay by Père Haile—who was a missionary among the Navaho for

theoretical orientation of his efforts. All the same it must not be forgotten that Kluckhohn knew perfectly that his investigations did not cover every aspect of the problems posed, because he remarked: "It is probable that certain conclusions that I have drawn from my documentation, even among the most important, will have to be revised or modified. I hope, in fact, that this study will incite other searchers to gather information on the Navaho that will test the validity of the generalizations I have made here." And he adds: "all the evidence, the data that figure in the appendices would be susceptible to other types of analysis."⁴⁰ The present article has as its main objective to prove the justice of this statement.

It is very regrettable that no other anthropologist, to my knowledge, has thought it worth while to accept Kluckhohn's invitation to continue his work, to extend and refine his documentation, to study the facts at different levels, according to different methods and theories, and to observe, if such should be the case, the evolution of the beliefs and Navaho practises relating to witchcraft.

Again, as in other domains of anthropology, for some thirty years there has been a kind of reciprocal impermeability in studies on magic and witchcraft in Europe, and especially in Great Britain, and in the United States. For example, it is surprising that Kluckhohn seemed to ignore completely the results and the theoretical implications of Evans-Pritchard's remarkable study on witchcraft, the oracles and magic among the Azande (1937), of

many years—on the beliefs of the Navaho relating to the spirit. Kluckhohn apparently did not know of this text when he wrote his book, and the fact that his observations coincide exactly with those of Père Haile in very many cases (and never disagree with them), constitutes not only an exception in the history of anthropology, but also another proof, if such were needed, of the extraordinary ethnographical qualities of the American anthropologist. The missionary's observations also confirm through the explicit testimony of native authorities and linguistic data, certain hypotheses that I had formulated on the base of information supplied by Kluckhohn: that encouraged me to published this study which had originally been conceived as a simple analytical exercise. A discussion here of these "connections" would take us too far, I return, therefore to the perusal of Haile: B. Haile, O.F.M., "Soul Concepts of the Navaho," *Annali Lateranensi*, vol. VII, 1943, pp. 59-94.

⁴⁰ C. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, cit., p. 65.

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which we have already affirmed the importance, and that, more recently, Mary Douglas, in developing her own ideas based in large measure on the work of the Evans-Pritchard school, did not consider at all the data assembled by Kluckhohn that would have offered her a larger and more solid basis for certain of her generalizations.