

The Great Chikanga

By Mike Harper

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Malawians in general had a strong belief in witchcraft despite the fact that this was made illegal by the Prevention of Witchcraft Ordinance. A number of witch doctors practised their arts and were known as Chikangas but there was only one Great Chikanga who lived in a remote spot in the hills near Rumpul. He was very famous and people came from near and far to consult him and, for a fee, have some ceremony performed to free them from a spell or to relieve some medical or other problem which troubled them. As far as I am aware no legal action was ever taken against him. He became involved in one of

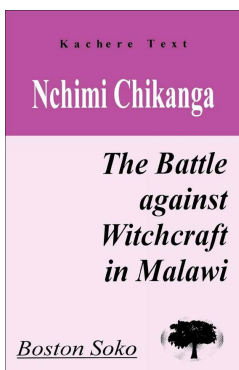
the villages near Fort Hill when the four children of one of the villagers fell ill and died. The father, Jonas, was advised by others to go and consult the Great Chikanga to find out who the witch was who had clearly caused the death of his children. He went and consulted the Great Chikanga who told him the witch was his brother-in-law, Amos, and that he should bring him to the Great Chikanga to perform a ceremony to un-witch him. Jonas returned to his village and told Amos this but he said he was no witch and refused to go. A fight broke out and Amos stabbed Jonas.

This was reported to Police and Amos was arrested and charged with causing grievous bodily harm. He was taken before the Resident Magistrate at Karonga where he was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of £1.00 to be paid as compensation to Jonas. The RM also advised Amos to go as soon as possible to the Great Chikanga because until he did there would always be trouble in the village. This was sound advice but a little odd in view of the Prevention of Witchcraft Ordinance!

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## Note:

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## NCHIMI CHIKANGA

### The Battle Against Witchcraft in Malawi

By **Boston Soko**

Chikanga was one of Malawi's most powerful and successful healers who brought concepts and methods from indigenous tradition to his own Christian culture. During the fifties and sixties people having heard he had the power of divination to free them from the bondage of witchcraft and other evil practices, would make pilgrimages to him from the whole of eastern and southern Africa. His methods were, and are, popular and common, though always controversially opposed by the institutional Christian church. This book documents eye-witness accounts of pilgrims, and Chikanga's sessions and techniques, and includes interviews with his acquaintances. It describes his activities in the political context, which forced him to go into exile for seventeen years, and his final period in Malawi.