

The Modernity of Witchcraft in the Ghanaian Online Setting

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By

Idris Simon Riahi

Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS)
University of Bayreuth, Germany

Supervisor:
Professor Dr. Ulrich Berner

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Widmung

Ich widme diese Arbeit meinen geliebten Eltern. Ihr habt nie mehr, aber auch nie weniger verlangt, als dass ich meine Wege selbst wähle und gehe. Dabei wart Ihr immer meine stillen Begleiter.

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Abbreviations

BRM	Bremen Mission
BAM	Basel Mission
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGYL	The Next Generation Youth League International
NPP	New Patriotic Party
SCM	Students Christian Fellowship
SCOAN	The Synagogue, The Church of All Nations

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Abstract

This study is focused on contemporary discourses on witchcraft in Ghana, and involves the internet as material for such a study. It is the aim to gather a broad range of voices and opinions from *journalists*, *columnists*, and *readers* of online newspapers, dealing with the topic of witchcraft. In recent years anthropologists have begun to involve modern media in the study of witchcraft (as for instance in video films: e.g. Meyer 2008a, 2010a; Austen and Şaul 2010; Haynes 2010). This opening and the resulting possibilities of reaching alternative discourses is an important step and a long overdue recognition of the growing importance of such media for human culture. This thesis takes the next consequent move forward which also includes the internet, and investigates how the topic of witchcraft is discussed in specific online settings. The online setting is a hitherto overlooked aspect in the study of witchcraft in Africa; it is a rich source of information which is equally relevant to the furthering of scholarly interest in this topic as other in-situ studies.

There are three major discoveries made in this dissertation project. The first point regards what I call the ‘problem of observation and projection’ in the study of witchcraft in Africa. This notion addresses the problem that African discourses on witchcraft from the European observer have not only for a long time stood at the center of the idea of Africa as the continent of the ‘Other’, but also has the topic of witchcraft in specific served as a projection surface for European ideas, which still holds on until today and resonates in contemporary Anthropology. Even though the latter field has brought forth most valuable insights, the *problem of observation and projection* still exists in form of the attempts to declare witchcraft to be first and foremost a symptom of the imbalances by capitalism; as is present in the prominent paradigm of the *modernity of witchcraft* (e.g. Geschiere 2000) Once more ‘African’ phenomena are used to account for the problems and failures of ‘European’ systems. The second major point in this thesis therefore asks for a contemporary African view onto the subject of witchcraft, which has resulted in the observation and collection of witchcraft critical voices from within genuine African discourses. Despite the scholarly attempts to assess witchcraft in terms of a consequent reaction toward the imbalances and injustice in capitalism, and the troubles with modernity, and to reintegrate it into the latter, thereby negating the supposed contradiction of *modernity and magic* (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxxff.), one may not overlook those genuine African voices which insist on that very separation. The third major discovery made in this thesis regards an in-depth analysis of such witchcraft critical discourses, where it is revealed that to some extent such discourses show that the function of the concept of witchcraft also is metaphorical in nature. I demonstrate how the notion of witchcraft is used to illustrate the unjust and antisocial behavior of certain politicians who misuse their power to enrich themselves upon the livelihood of the communities.

This study is to be understood as situated within the discipline of Religious Studies, and it is written predominantly for an audience interested in the religious aspects of witchcraft discourses. With this qualification I want to stress that the opposition between ‘rationality’ and ‘irrationality’ (even though not a useful concept in academic meta language), is not a trivial point when it comes to the description of the insiders view. The dominant paradigm in the study of contemporary witchcraft in Africa as suggested in the discipline of Anthropology reduces the notion to the clashes with modernity in Africa, thereby neglecting a distinctive element of human behavior and cognition: belief in the supernatural. I follow Freiburger (2009:21ff.) in highlighting the comparative aspect in the study of religion, which asks for a second material horizon, which can then be compared to the contemporary discourses. Considering a topic of such magnitude, it is necessary to place it into a context of historical comparison. This includes an entangled historical view upon the topic of witchcraft in Afro-European situations of cultural exchange. By comparing historical material to contemporary material, this research project advances and empirically underpins the observation that the discourses of contemporary participants in the Ghanaian online setting bear argumentative similarity to those early modern European thinkers that challenged the belief in witchcraft conceptually as well as theologically. In this way, this thesis contributes further to the deconstruction of Africa as the continent of the *occult*, and also enriches the study of witchcraft by highlighting its alternative African voices.

Regarding structure, this thesis begins by delivering the literature review background of the study of witchcraft in Africa with a special regard to the history of the notion of magic in the European academic and social scientific discourse. The second Chapter assumes an approach which is sensitive to *entangled histories* (Conrad and Randeria 2002), and which informs the investigations of the contemporary material. In

doing so, it introduces new angles which help to better understand the meaning of the notion of modernity to the topic of witchcraft. In this regard I present two historical contexts in specific: a) early modern Portuguese endeavors in West Africa and b) modern missionary aspirations by the Bremen Mission among Ewe societies in Ghana and Togo. The third Chapter presents the material that was gathered from Ghanaian online newspapers and brings together the voice of the authors of articles with their readers' ideas, opinions, and convictions. These two material horizons are then analyzed and discussed to further our understanding of the meaning of witchcraft in the Ghanaian online setting.

1 Introduction

One of the earliest and most instructive pieces of advice that I received for my beginning Ph.D. research project was provided by Peter Geschiere¹. I met Professor Geschiere after a talk he held at the University of Bayreuth, my alma mater, and he invited me to discuss my project over a cup of coffee. He told me that actually, he wanted to research *politics* in Africa and at first did not have *witchcraft* on his agenda. He soon realized, however, that it was impossible to conduct that research without carefully examining witchcraft.² I was intrigued but also hesitant to appreciate how closely *witchcraft* is connected to a modern achievement such as *politics*. So, in a mood of inspired skepticism, I went on an early field research trip to Ghana; July until August 2013. Looking back, I can verify Geschiere's assessment. From my point of view, however, I have to turn it on its head, and state that I wanted to research witchcraft exclusively, and became more and more impressed by how easily it addresses not only politics but also economy, and other aspects of modern life, including—as I can draw from my research—the internet. Once focused on the subject of witchcraft in Africa, there hardly seems to be any other matter in everyday life, which appears to be entirely free from it, or at least free from anything one might want to refer to as magical thinking.

The chance to visit Ghana, supported by the *Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies* (BIGSAS), has helped me to get a better understanding of the whole topic as such. I would like to mention some of the endeavors I had in the field, and honor those people from whom I have learned more about the subject than one can through the reading of academic literature. The journey started in Accra and lasted one month. After a couple of days in the capital, I moved up north to Tamale, visited some places in the area, then I went back to Kumasi in the center, and finally back to the south to Legon University Campus. I met with experts like Professor Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Professor Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, and Dr. Amenga-Etego at University, and Trinity Theological Seminary Legon, Accra. Further, I was kindly allowed to visit the Archbishop Emeritus of Kumasi, Dr. Peter Kwasi Sarpong. In the North, I visited the so-called *witch camp* of Gambaga where I conducted a number of interviews with alleged witches, accusers, other people of the 'witch camp' (like the daughter of the chief of Gambaga) and others in the vicinity. One of the discoveries and realizations I made there, which have guided my thinking since, is the impressive potency of witchcraft discourses to address nearly every aspect of daily life. I was aware through my preparations how easily witchcraft addresses local and global changes. Nevertheless, dealing with the subject day in day out, traveling through unfamiliar places, learning where and when to ask about witchcraft and where and when not to do so, has given me ideas which now translate into intuitions on how to access my research material. One 'lesson' which stuck in my head was when I replied to fellow passengers, who had asked what my job was in Ghana, that I wanted to research witchcraft. In a state of naïvety, I loudly explained this during the

¹ In my view one of the most accessible of the major contributors to the discussion of the *modernity of witchcraft*.

² The implications of this impossibility of neglecting the topic of witchcraft when discussing politics in Africa have later translated into one of the pioneering studies on the *modernity of witchcraft*: Geschiere 1997; here the book is cited in its 2000 version; therefore it is Geschiere 2000 in the following.

bus ride from the plane to the terminal, causing embarrassed laughter and drawing the looks of more people than I intended.

During my trip, I have seen the worrying impact on people labeled *witches* in the North. There is, for instance, *Margret*³, an elderly lady who lives as a resident of Gambaga witch camp. She told me about her grandson who accused her of bewitching his legs in his dreams when one morning he felt unfit to go to work. Then there is schoolboy *Daniel* from Gambaga who accused a girl in his class of being a witch⁴, and a Professor at Legon University whose colleague claimed his housemaid was a witch too. These cases, among others, have illustrated to me in a tangible way that witchcraft discourses are readily available, changeable, and the notion of witchcraft applies to all sorts of situations. Moreover, witchcraft belief is shared amongst all people disregarding their level of education⁵. Taking part in the *Jericho Hour* of the *Action Chapel International* in Accra only days after coming back from the north of the country, and having seen what detrimental effect these beliefs can have on human beings, is a powerful inspiration to get a hold of the potency of the topic. I remember the loud music, the friendly smiling and welcoming faces, the shaking of hands, and a Pastor who, a few minutes into the sermon, began to shout “shoot the pain”, “find the witch”, “burn those who take your reward from God”.

Those observations, however, which paved the way for my project to evolve, were made in situations that, initially, I had not expected to be promising regarding researching witchcraft. When I came into contact with people, through chats and talks on the streets of the cities, I saw how modern ways of communication (cell phones and computers with access to the internet) are a massive attraction for young people, just like anywhere else on the globe. This realization, the growing awareness of the importance of rumors on witchcraft (cf. Ellis 1989; Geschiere 2000; Stewart and Strathern 2004), as well as the way such stories put order into social life, made me consider the possibility of focusing more on modern forms of communication. I wanted to inquire in what way witchcraft discourses play a role in the online setting. Especially the accessibility of Internet Cafés enabled me to pursue this material focus. I could witness this on a daily basis during my stays in Accra and Tamale—going about my own routines of staying in touch with family, friends, and colleagues. Internet Cafés are intensively used, especially by the younger generation⁶, and briefly glancing on the screens when passing by fellow internet users in the Cafés, moreover, brought to my attention, for the first time, the popularity of online newspaper websites. These are the websites which I later decided to use as the major part of collecting data. In this way, my research trip has inspired me to consider material that is different from other works on the topic of witchcraft (which primarily rests on ethnographic fieldwork) and to bring together modern ways of communication with the ancient old belief in witchcraft.

³ This name and the following names are anonymized.

⁴ According to Daniel she predicted that he would not be able to write his exam. Indeed the boy fell sick at the date, and later died from heart failure as I learned from a colleague who knew the family of the boy.

⁵ The level of education and lack of belief in witchcraft do not seem to correlate positively.

⁶ For a thorough discussion on youth and Internet Cafés in urban Ghana see Burrell 2012.

As I describe in the first Chapter, the online discourse is a place of anonymity and equality, without overt control of religious institutions or religious experts, and thus makes possible secular discussions. This makes the web an interesting communication setting and allows the researcher easy access to an enormous amount of data. It is a rich source for witchcraft discourse in Africa, which no longer should be left untapped. Moreover, “religious content”, as Jenna Burrell (2012:111) claims, is a prominent part of mass media. Such “modern technologies have not simply compromised the role of religious faith in Ghana”, but instead the internet (as well as other technologies) have “provided new platforms for its diffusion.” (ibid.) The important point is that modern media technologies are not only used by the already powerful West African Churches⁷, but also by individuals like Kwaku Bonsam⁸, and, as I shall investigate in this thesis, also regards *participatory websites*. On these websites, discussions about religion evolve from the participation of many Ghanaian readers with a variety of social and educational backgrounds, religious affiliations, motivations, and attitude towards the subject of witchcraft.

1.1 Witchcraft in Africa – A Primer

Generally speaking, the belief in witchcraft is a widespread and multifaceted social phenomenon in many societies populating the African continent, and other regions of the globe, in history and contemporary times. Between the year 1950 and 2000 researchers recorded witch-hunts⁹ not only in *Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire/Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe*, and *South Africa* but also in parts of *South America, India, Indonesia, Malaysia*, and *Papua New Guinea* (Behringer 2004:197). Particularly severe witch-hunts (during the same period) were recorded in *Uganda, Angola, Benin, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Tanzania, Zaire/Congo*, and *Zimbabwe*. (Behringer 2004:227) These years roughly span the transition from colonial to postcolonial Africa, also reaching into very recent times where they capture significant motives of the colonial and postcolonial settings framed into witchcraft discourses.

Very early, colonial administrations have begun the textual documentation of cases, while anthropologists engaged in researching the phenomenology, practices, and motives behind witchcraft belief as well as cases of witchcraft accusation/execution. For the new European rulers, witchcraft belief was something that belonged to the past. The times of the witch-crazes were “endured but had now outgrown”, and from that new perspective, beliefs were rather taken as evidence of “‘primitive or ‘pre-logical thinking’”, as Lévy-Bruhl calls it (Moore and Sanders 2001:2). ‘Enlightened’ Europeans wanted to leave their mark of ‘progress’ in Africa, so that, for instance, with the installation of British legislation in East Africa, the

⁷ e.g. the Synagogue Church of all nations, see Subchapter 1.2.2 *Early Western Scholarship on Witchcraft in Africa*.

⁸ Bonsam’s talent with the new media has been demonstrated in a variety of studies, see section *Kwaku Bonsam* in Subchapter 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

⁹ The systematic persecution and punishment of people (women, men, and children) who allegedly are capable of performing magic acts, and are perceived as a threat to society.

discourse of disbelief in witchcraft and an accurate section of colonial law came into being. Locals were suddenly confronted with a new law, which, in their view, wrongfully protected witches. With these changes, the accusation of witchcraft was no longer a valid case in front of colonial authority but instead the “ritual killing of witches [was] classified as murder”, which to the locals seemed like an “inversion of norms”¹⁰. (Behringer 2004:196) Local African authorities then searched for “loopholes” to conserve witchcraft as an act of crime (Behringer 2004:198), which, among other factors, has contributed to the emergence of a variety of anti-witchcraft movements—a “response to colonial rule”. (ibid.) Such movements partly still hold until today.

Witchcraft has already been part of African societies before the arrival of Europeans. This is documented by written records reporting about witch-hunts in Africa that date back as far as the 17th-century (Behringer 2004:198). Also, as I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, witchcraft was noticed, reported and commented on during the early phase of European endeavors in West Africa in the first decade of the 16th-century.

A recurring topic that emerges from discussing witchcraft aims at the cause of the violent side of witchcraft persecution. There is ample evidence for such violence in history and contemporary Africa, Europe, and elsewhere, which often occurred and still occurs in the form of full-fledged witch-crazes.¹¹ The violent side of witchcraft is easily visible today and in the last couple of years has also attracted the attention of Western media.¹² Witchcraft and violence seem to fuse together not only in the media representation of the subject but also in the academic context. Reading only the titles of studies on the subject, which have been published during the last decades, gives the impression that there is a conflation of *witchcraft* and *violence*, while adjectives like *uncertainty* and *evil* make it seem as if the topic only exists within the spectrum of the *obscure* and *occult*¹³. One cannot deny the fact that there is a strong causal connection of witchcraft accusation and violence, which very often comes in response to accusations, while motives of obscurity and

¹⁰ See Rowland and Warnier (1988:126f.), who state that in Cameroon as well as in other African countries, public opinion holds that the colonial state protected witches.

¹¹ Behringer (2004:209), for example, links the European witch-hunts to “health crises, as well as to economic, cultural or *political crises*”. During the time of the liberations, these crazes often went along with civil disturbances or even civil war, and “extreme spiritual and/or social uncertainty”. The idea to link historical, ecological or significant meteorological events to witchcraft is a reoccurring motif. It has been observed for instance that the small ice age in Europe coincides with the high times of witch-crazes in early European modernity. Witches were apparently made directly responsible for the weather. (Behringer 2009:173) In the African context, Niehaus (2001:154), in contrast, deflates the impact of particular political troubles and maintains that “witch-hunting must be understood in the first place as an attempt to eliminate misfortune.” In this way, one can then understand how “organised action against witches” becomes a “valuable social service” awarding political legitimacy to the responsible individuals. (Niehaus 2001:154)

¹² See, for instance, these representations of the topic in international media: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/schwarze-magie-tausende-noch-immer-als-hexen-verfolgt-1.634849> (accessed August 7th, 2016); <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/kindesmisshandlung-die-hexenkinder-von-nigeria-a-656308.html> (same date of access); <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2012/mar/01/witchcraft-curse-africa-kristy-bamu> (same); <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3276057/My-grandmother-died-said-witch-drink-salt-water-stuck-fingers-throat-pieces-said-d-eaten-Congo-s-child-witches-exorcised-devil-beaten-them.html> (same); <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/africa/witchcraft-returns-to-haunt-new-south-africa-1139937.html> (same). In addition, there are numerous film documentaries which cover the subject, e.g. *Saving Africa's Witch Children* (2008). The film is set in Nigeria and features Gary Foxcroft, a British anti-witchcraft activist. Moreover, there is the sequel to the 2008 documentary entitled *Return to Africa's Witch Children* (2009), and *The Witches of Gambaga* (2010) directed by Yaba Badoe.

¹³ eg. Adinkrah 2015, 2008, 2005, 2004; Ashforth 2005, 2001; Beneduce 2010; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Crais 2002; Gifford 2014; Martinelli and Jacky 2012.

the occult are also embedded in witchcraft beliefs. However, I would like to stress from the beginning that witchcraft discourses also exist beyond a frame of violence, and violence is not an essential element of these discourses. On the contrary, in some ways, witchcraft can also be used to address *positive powers*, which makes it a highly ambiguous notion.¹⁴

Witchcraft belief today matters in a range of subjects, such as *politics* (e.g. Ashforth 2005; Geschiere 2000, 2013; Niehaus 2001, Schatzberg 2006), *economy, commerce*¹⁵ in *sports*, specifically *football* (e.g. Baller et al. 2013:8; Fumanti 2013:135f.; Leseth 1997¹⁶). Moreover, the topic plays a role in *films, entertainment, music* and other sectors of modern social and cultural life. Apart from the representation of witchcraft in the public sphere, there is also a notion of proximity to the topic, which lies in the village, or to ‘the house’ (cf. Geschiere 2013), giving witchcraft a dimension of intimacy (Geschiere 2013¹⁷). Geschiere maintains, that witchcraft, even though a “globalizing” phenomenon has its roots in the “close environment” of the people. (Geschiere 2013:xvi) In regards to the country of Zimbabwe, Chavunduka (1980:133) draws a similar conclusion and argues that witchcraft emerges when there are tensions within “the household, village or community” which usually evolves into accusations. Such tensions may reflect “conflict over succession [...], misunderstandings over the distribution of family wealth [...]”, which can then result in the public identification of and dealing with the ‘witch’.

Regarding the prevalence of witchcraft beliefs, it is worth noting that they cannot be understood as either a European or an African cultural singularity, and contemporary witch-hunting, in particular, is a cultural practice that frequently occurs on the globe. Ronald Hutton in his 2004 (420f.) article considers studies on witchcraft beliefs from 148 non-European societies which were published between 1890 and 2002. The vast majority of those studies is situated in *sub-Saharan Africa*; others refer to *India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, North America and South America*¹⁸. However, despite the visible propagation of the concept in a diverse range of cultures, Hutton maintains that there are “plenty of peoples across the globe who do not believe that humans can inflict harm by non-physical means”.

¹⁴ cf. Geschiere 2000:219. See also Subchapter 3.1.3 *Case – Akua Donkor: “I will use my witchcraft to make everything free”*. There I discuss the lyrics of a popular Ghanaian *High-Life* song, where it is stated: “If you have witchcraft do something good with it!”

¹⁵ See, for example, Geschiere 2000, who reports that in the 1970s a small mail-order business between Cameroon and France was established. One could buy unique objects (“stars and rings”) from France, to protect oneself “against evil”. (Geschiere 2000:247) Geschiere interprets this as an indicator of a modernity of witchcraft, as commodification and commercialization seem to have reached witchcraft. (Geschiere 2000:113f.)

¹⁶ See Subchapters 3.4.2 *Case – Richard Kingson: “My Wife Is Not A Witch”*, 3.4.3 *Case – Emmanuel Adebayor*, and 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

¹⁷ See page xix in Geschiere 2013 for a primer.

¹⁸ Two examples of countries where reports on contemporary witch-hunts frequently make their way into international media are India (see Bailey, Frederick George. 1996. *The Witch-Hunt; or, The Triumph of Morality*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press) and Papua New Guinea (see Zocca, Franco. 2009. “*Sanguma in Paradise: Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Papua New Guinea*.” *Melanesian Institute*). Google searches quickly yield contemporary incidents related to the *beating, torturing and executing* of witches in both regions of the world. Moreover, there is Indonesia which also shows recent witch-hunts (<http://www.insideindonesia.org/legislating-against-the-supernatural>, accessed January 20th 2016). Also, can one find such hunts in Saudi Arabia, where the execution of witches is carried out by the state, and not by people who ‘take the law into their own hands’ as in the examples before. These two cases report on two women who were accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death. In one instance the supposed witch was beheaded (2011) (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/13/world/meast/saudi-arabia-beheading/index.html>, accessed January 20th 2016). In the other case the fate of the woman (accused and sentenced) remains unclear (2012) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-witchcraft-rights-idUSBRE83H0UM20120418>, accessed January 20th 2016).

Witchcraft belief, despite its impressive prevalence through histories and cultures, is not a universal trait shared by all human cultures¹⁹. Witch panics occur again and again and cause a constant “humanitarian crisis”, which for reasons yet unknown, has not fully made its way into public “Western consciousness”. (Riedel 2014:7) The total estimate of victims of the 350 years lasting history of European witch-crazes (between 40,000 and 120,000) has likely been exceeded by just the last 50 years of witch-hunting around the globe. (Riedel 2014:7)

In other instances, witchcraft even merges with modern media technology like film (cf. Meyer 2010a, 2008a, 2008b, 2003, 2002b) or online communication. Regarding the internet, especially interesting is the notion of *sakawa*, which takes away the boundaries between *witchcraft*, and *Devil worship* or *the occult* in general as they become fused with new technologies, spreading worrying as well as promising rumors in Ghana. (see Armstrong 2011; Oduro-Frimpong 2011; and Riedel 2014:118, 201ff.) Here, cinema (as well as online communication) play a central role in (re)-producing rumors regarding occult practices that are designed to increase the powers of *internet scammers* in conducting fraud over the internet. Occult practices like these include ‘tests’ of one’s tolerance of *nausea*²⁰, the performance of *blood rituals*²¹, and the betrayal of *trust*²². (Riedel 2014:210) The films, as Riedel (2014:207) observes, depict young people driven by *economic, sexual* as well as *medical crises* to increase their malign skills through an “occult brotherhood” (*okkulte Brüderschaft*). With such skills, they can then produce money in occult ways, or in other magical ways respond to their problems.

This multifacetedness and the “polyinterpretability” (cf. Geschiere 2000:10) of witchcraft, as briefly indicated in these paragraphs, hints at the complex nature of the concept. Easily the question will arise, how can all these phenomena be labeled by the same token, which would imply a conceptual connection between them all. Specifically, when the topic is situated in cross-cultural context²³, one might inquire about the *cross-cultural transferability of witchcraft terminology*. Does it make sense to call all these things *witchcraft* in the first place? Is there a unifying motive that consists in all these utterances? Dealing with witchcraft also addresses questions regarding its relation to magic, as one intuitively uses that notion when describing in particular what constitutes a ‘witch’ (cf. Hutton 2004:425). To clarify the role of the European observer, their views, intuitions, and ideas, which are based on a certain cultural-historical background, I believe it is valuable to place witchcraft in the larger context of magic, and begin by an investigation of the meaning of magic and witchcraft in the ‘West’²⁴.

¹⁹ Hutton (2004:424) names the *Andaman Islanders* (Indian Ocean), the *Korongo* (Sudan), the *Tallensi* (Ghana), the *Gurage* (Ethiopia), the *Mbuti* (Congo basin), the *Fijians*, the *hill tribes of Uttar Pradesh*, and the *Ngaing, Mae Enga, Manus, and Daribi* (New Guinea), who, despite being surrounded by other societies who believe in witches and who even share similar social, economic and even cosmological features “either do not believe in witchcraft at all or do not believe that it matters in practice”.

²⁰ Swallowing feces, rotten food, spiders or frogs, having sexual intercourse with a homeless person, etc.

²¹ Raping a young woman, extracting blood of victims or murdering and cannibalizing them.

²² Refusing to help one’s own kin, partner, etc.

²³ Most of the literature on the subject in the African setting is still produced by European writers who unavoidably carry with them their own views, intuitions, and ideas, and apply those to African phenomena. As is the case with any other religious (or more broadly cultural) phenomenon, the comparative perspective is inescapable, and will always shape one’s interpretations.

1.2 Literature Review: Witchcraft and Magic as a Challenge to ‘Western’ Thinking?

When dealing with the discourse on witchcraft in the social sciences, one easily realizes the insecure attitude of Western scholarship towards *magic* as a whole. Seemingly related concepts, both witchcraft, and magic have, since the beginnings of Anthropology and other interested disciplines, posed a conceptual problem for the Western discourse: *how can notions of witchcraft and magic be organized, categorized, and interpreted, considering the enormous collection of phenomena that are involved with the notions?* Above I discussed a small fraction of what is referred to as witchcraft in Africa, underlining the problem of the ambiguity and complexity of the concept. More problematic than defining and understanding concepts of witchcraft (and magic), however, is the continuing use of such concepts in societies around the globe in the face of modernity. While bookshelves continue to be filled with reports and interpretations on witchcraft, sorcery, and other forms of magic, a conclusive answer to the question how modernity and such notions can be reconciled seems almost out of reach.

1.2.1 The Ambiguous Attitude Towards Magic in the West

In his 2009 published doctoral dissertation entitled *Magie – Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, Bernd-Christian Otto discusses the 2500 year long history of the term magic. He begins with the realization that despite the fact that the term *magic* in social scientific and academic discourses has been treated as problematic, and at times has even been found undefinable, it has become a very popular notion in non-scientific, multimedia and globalized public discourse. In reference to Hans Kippenberg’s assessment²⁵, that there is a *breaking apart of the category* of magic (*Zerfall der Kategorie*), Otto observes a discursive gap between the social scientific and academic treatment of the concept on the one hand, and the reception in “numerous segments of modern popular culture” on the other²⁶. Further aggravating the problem, the author explains (2009:3f.):

Hieran schließt sich die kritische Beobachtung an, dass die akademische Theoriedebatte den Anschluss an den quantitativ außerordentlich relevanten, zum Teil sehr differenziert ablaufenden außerwissenschaftlichen Magiediskurs – der sich heute auch und gerade im Medium Internet manifestiert – weitgehend verloren hat.²⁷

²⁴ I am aware of the problematic nature of designations such as *Western, Eastern* or *African* as their purpose of separating one region, culture, society, etc. from another is a hopeless reduction of a complicated entanglement of histories. However, I am aware too that these are still indispensable labels when one compares regions, cultures, and societies to one another. Thus I understand any such designation to remain as questionable, however, without putting every single word into single quotation marks.

²⁵ Kippenberg, Hans G. 1998. Art: “Magic” In: Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, Karl-Heinz Kohl (eds.). *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe. IV: Kultbild-Rolle*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer. 85-98.

²⁶ Translation Riahi.

²⁷ The author admonishes that the social scientific or academic debate has lost hold of the “quantitatively extraordinarily relevant, and partly highly differentiated non-scientific discourse on magic, which today manifests predominantly on the internet.” (ibid.)

Magic in contemporary popular discourse is presented surprisingly positive and covers areas such as fictional literature, films in TV and cinema, TV serials, computer games, as much as journalism, product marketing, and new religious contexts such as Wicca and Neopaganism. If we project this European observation on the African setting, it poses a challenge to a preconception: namely that the occurrence of magic in modernity is only a relevant observation in the African context. There, one supposedly ‘still’ finds a strong belief in magic, whereas in Europe this was not the case. Reading about the *modernity of witchcraft* creates such a picture: in Africa magic still matters and, in surprising ways, fuses with modernity, while Europe seems free from it. The discussion of modernity and witchcraft or magic is shifted to Africa, ignoring the fact that modern European discourses are as impressed by the topic of magic as are African ones.

The fact that contemporary popular discourses on magic show a benign interpretation of magic is a surprising observation when going back “only one hundred years” in the European discourse, where one can see that the concept of magic was perceived much more negatively. It was referred to as “superstitious, ineffective, even ridiculous practices and beliefs, which were regarded as intellectually retarded” and imputed on European rural populations or ‘primitive’ or ‘wild’ tribal societies. (Otto 2009:5) Going back further, especially before the *Enlightenment era*, the label of magic could even bring about life-threatening situations (e.g. during the early modern witch-crazes)—an observation which holds even when one goes back to the times of the Roman Imperial Era or Classical periods in Greece during the times of Plato. Otto concludes:

Offensichtlich fand im 20. Jahrhundert ein weitreichender, sich auch [in] öffentlichen Diskursen niederschlagender Umdeutungs- und Aufwertungsprozess des Magiebegriffs statt, der aus begriffsgeschichtlicher Sicht [...] geradezu einmalig dasteht. (Otto 2009:4f.)²⁸

The basic problem in the negative occupation of magic, as Otto suggests, and which also reflects in the work of late 19th-century and early 20th-century theorists, draws from the long tradition of *Christocentric* views upon different religions as well as supposedly deviant or heretical practices and beliefs. Christian polemics, as well as the discourse of the *Enlightenment* of Europe, have made their way into the academic view on magic. Magic was either perceived as opposed to the concept of *religion* (following the Christian view) or opposed to the concept of *science* (following the Enlightenment view). Further, the notion was fashioned as a classificatory feature of human history which could be found through time and space, and which “specifically in Gründerzeiten” was framed in terms of evolution in which the Western civilization stood as the target of development (*Entwicklungsziel*). (Otto 2009:7) This was the basis for the attitude of European theorists who used the notion of magic to describe “colonial observations of curious cultural practices in distant places”, as well as “classifying incomprehensible ideas and practices of one’s own European rural population.” Thus they expressed their inferiority in contrast to the Christian religion or to science.²⁹

²⁸ The author assumes, there has been a significant shift in the image of magic in the 20th-century, which also revealed itself in public discourse and entails a revaluation of magic towards the positive—a change which in view of conceptual history almost marks a unique moment.

In this context, famously articulated by James George Frazer (1854-1941) in *The Golden Bough* (1890), lies the theory of *universal progress* in the history of human development. The development, according to theory, goes through three stages that followed one another: *magic*, *religion*, and *science*. (Otto 2009:46ff.) This transition is defined by changes in human ways of understanding and relating to nature. The first stage, magic, is characterized by human agents who rely upon their powers to meet the challenges of the world. Man believes in the order of nature, which he wants to make use of for his own good. In this way, magic can be seen as “rudimentary, primitive science”³⁰. (Streib 1996:58) The next step, religion, originates when humanity sees contradictions and gains insights into the “illusionary character of magic”, and then “invents” religious explanations. (ibid.) In the acknowledgment of his error, i.e. to see that his reliance on the order of nature, as well as his power over it, was mere imagination, humanity begins to believe and trust in the care and mercy of “certain great and invisible beings which are hidden behind the veil of nature [...]” (ibid.) Thus, magic becomes more and more substituted by religion. Nature is subjected to non-human entities, which are perceived as related to man but which are much stronger in power. The final step towards science is carried out when man again finds his (religious) explanations unsatisfying, but notices the monotony of the laws of nature, and recognizes empirical and scientific laws. These made man change the perception of chaos into a cosmos. In a way, as Streib interprets Frazer, the scientific standpoint returns to the magical one by explicitly postulating what in the magical view was only implicitly formulated: “namely an unshakable regularity in the order of natural phenomena, which, under careful examination, allow us to make predictions and to act upon them.” If man wants to understand nature, he has to move away from the religious view which portrays nature as inaccessible and move on to the scientific view. (Streib 1996:58)

In a similar way, Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), another important early theorizer on magic, focuses on contemporary ‘primitive’ ‘tribal’ societies. He applies the model of cultural evolution by Herbert Spencer, to which he adds the idea that cultures retain so-called *survivals* (i.e. manners and customs of former stages of culture). Those are maintained in their outer form but lose their original meaning. In *Primitive Culture* (1871) Tylor presents an encompassing list of *survivals*, and in relation to those develops the idea that there are deeper and more primitive stages of cultural transmission that continue to exist under the surface of civilization. (Otto 2009:54f.) In this way, Tylor is able to compare findings from the British colonies to the customs of the rural population of Europe. Both sides showed features that seemed to represent the magical stage of culture: in one occasion this could be interpreted as a central characteristic, whereas it may also merely appear as *survival*. Magic was understood as an irrational survival originating from the beginnings of human development. Given the estimation of people at the end of the 19th-century, it acted for them as a link between those ‘intellectually retarded’ people in Europe and those in Africa. (Otto 2009:55)

²⁹ A vivid example of the attempts by Europeans to explain ‘incomprehensible’ cultures in the African setting is given by the reference to the emergence of the concept of *fetishism* as I discuss in Subchapter 2.1.4 *Contrasting Views on Witchcraft in History—African and Portuguese*. It is argued that the theory of *fetishism* was used to make understandable why Africans were not ‘capable’ of ‘rational trade’.

³⁰ Translation and following by Riahi.

With Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), who should also be mentioned as an early contributor to the Western academic discourse on magic, a more sociological view on the subject comes into being. Magic in many ways seems similar to religion, and thus Durkheim suggests a sociological criterion of differentiation: religion, as he claims, is social in principle, while magic is private. Religious convictions and rites are shared by all members of society and in that way exemplify unity in terms of a common faith (especially in religious institutions like the Church). Magic, on the other hand, in its focus on technical and useful aims, is not only less developed than religion but is also expressed by its more private and egoistic character:

There is no church of magic. Between the magician and the individuals who consult him, as between these individuals themselves, there are no lasting bonds which make them members of the same moral community, comparable to that formed by the believers in the same god or the followers of the same cult. The magician has a clientele, not a church, and it is very possible that his clients have no relationships with one-another, or even not know each other. (Durkheim in Giddens 1998:223)

This antisocial framing of magic leads Durkheim to exclude magic from the subjects which should be studied by the Sociology of Religion. On several occasions he emphasizes the “moral value of religious communities”, and by stressing its supposedly antisocial and egoistic character, magic becomes an opposition to religion. (Otto 2009:62f.)

Bronisław Malinowski (1884-1942), about 10 years after Durkheim’s *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1912) suggests an understanding of magic that is based on the ideas of Frazer and Durkheim. However, Malinowski makes a difference especially in regards to the opposition of magic and religion (as favored by Durkheim). Moreover, with Malinowski, there is one of the first ethnologists who applied the method of *participant observation*, which aims at testing the “existing anthropological theories of his time [...]”. In 1922 he published *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, a field research report in which he concludes that the differentiation between the concepts of *magic*, *religion*, and *science* was true. However, instead of following one another in sequence, as Frazer suggests, the notions encompass patterns of thinking and acting which are able to coexist side by side within one culture, while having different functions. (Otto 2009:78f.)³¹

What all these argumentations have in common is that they are based on substantial definitions, which in the following decades, led to an “inflationary increase” of definitions due to the theoretical and methodological plurality of perspectives that were specifically applied to the central dichotomy of magic and religion. Even more problematic was that empirical data, for instance, drawn from ethnographic fieldwork, increasingly falsified the theories.

Returning to the strange fascination with magic in the West, it is revealing to take note of the fact that the negative reputation of magic in academic circles stood in stark contrast to the romantic re-enchantment discourse of the Western world at that time. The interest in folklore studies was fueled by the fascination

³¹ With theorists like Sigmund Freud and Ruth Benedict, there are contributors who, like Malinowski, acknowledged the existence of “magic in modernity”. On the other side, however, “this acknowledgement was rarely accompanied by theoretical statements that reflected on the ways in which magic *belongs to* modernity”. It mostly seemed that magic in modernity was “merely tolerated” but not understood to be “culturally *at home* in the institutions and practices we associated with the Occidental world.” (Pels 2003:3f.)

“with the rites and spells” of Puritans who in their own religion were not allowed to satisfy these interests. This lack of magicality in life goes together with the emergence of Gothic literature³² and other genres that “worked as a counterpoint to the dominant realist tradition” (cf. Pels 2003:9f.), where magic was portrayed, for instance, as “hidden wisdom”³³, “poetic imagination”³⁴, as a “wishful ‘omnipotence of thought’³⁵, as reasoning by analogy [...]”³⁶, or as the ‘institutionalization of human optimism’ [...]”³⁷. Pels (2003:3) The ambiguous attitude towards magic has been part and parcel of Western discourses, and, in regards to witchcraft, still continues today.

1.2.2 Early Western Scholarship on Witchcraft in Africa

As indicated above, the early academic view on magic in Africa bears a similar image as to what is discussed above. This should not come as a surprise considering the fact that European scholarship in Africa carried with it what it had learned from its own cultural history. Moreover, Pels argues that unlike “any other scholarly discourse on magic” Anthropology was “responsible for the interpretation of magic as an antithesis of modernity and for the reproduction of the peculiar ambiguity and involvement of magic and modernity [...]” (Pels 2003:4f.)³⁸ Expanding on the idea of magic as antithesis, MacGaffey formulates a political argument, and dresses Anthropology as a “servant of imperialism” as it

exoticized Africans in particular, representing them as very different from ourselves in order to make their continued subordination to Western powers seem appropriate, to confirm an ideology of social evolution, and to incline us to feel good about ourselves as the vanguard of the modern. (MacGaffey in Geschiere 2000:viii)³⁹

Similarly to the situation in European popular culture at the end of the 19th- and beginning of the 20th-century, there has been an interest in African magic by novelists who contributed to the image of the continent as an exotic place through their fictional texts. There are writers like Joseph Conrad, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson who famously contributed to the idea of a ‘dark, occult African continent’. A prominent example can be found in John Buchan’s novel *Prester John*. A character in the book is named Captain Arcoll, and he is the “archetypal spy-cum-ethnographer”, as “[i]t was, to a

³² Pels (2003:10) names Horace Walpole’s “The Castle of Otranto” (1764); Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” (1817); John Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (1819), and also mentions authors like Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. All these shared a common interest in “magic, the occult, and the irrational.”

³³ Pels mentions the musings of Europeans on Hermeticism as in the 18th-century discourse on Hermes Trismegistus’ “revelation of a *prisca theologia* [...]”, or the later expansion on “Egyptomania, Orphic mysteries, Pythagoreanism, Kabbalah [...], Paracelsianism [...], and Rosicrucianism.” (Goodrick-Clark 2006:550f.)

³⁴ cf. Denis Diderot and Johann Gottfried Herder on shamanism (Pels 2003:4).

³⁵ cf. Sigmund Freud’s 1919 essay “The Uncanny” (Das Unheimliche). (ibid.)

³⁶ cf. Ruth Benedict’s “Patterns of Culture”, 1934. (ibid.)

³⁷ cf. Bronisław Malinowski’s “Coral Gardens and Their Magic”, published 1935. (ibid.)

³⁸ Concerning Pels’ warning of an essentialization of ‘otherness’ in anthropology also see Pels 2008.

³⁹ An early example of European scholarship charged with such beliefs can be found in Frazer, who “feared civilization was only ‘a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below’” (Pels 1998:198). This fear was shared by Tylor who made it more accurate and hoped that if witchcraft belief should surface again, they should take on “a milder shape than heretofore” (cited after Pels 1998:209).

considerable extent, the work of more or less professional ethnographers to decipher secrets (of Africa or elsewhere) and make them available to a certain audience, whether this audience was ‘confidential’ or public.”⁴⁰ (Pels 1998:198) Another example is writer H. Rider Haggard, and his novel *She* (1887) which displays “lurid details of ‘witchhunting’ and magical performance”. (Pels 1998:196) It is worth mentioning that Evans-Pritchard (1976:195) submits that the

emergence of the commonplace in its present form (signposted by the notion of ‘witchcraft’) can be dated around the 1880s, with the appearance of popular novels like H. Rider Haggard’s *She* [...] which tells the tale of the discovery of a powerful witch in the heart of Africa who threatens to come to Europe and turn it into her empire. (Pels 1998:197)

The containing of the fear of witchcraft in Africa, as exemplified here through Haggard’s novel, however, is not a fictional motive. It was, among other things, the task of Evans-Pritchard to assist the colonial powers in containing the phenomenon through information on the possibilities of colonial legislation. His double role bears witness of that, and Pels (2003:12f.) even argues that to some degree the “emergence of the witchcraft paradigm” was due to the “context in which Evans-Pritchard was confronted with it.” Speaking in front of anthropologists, but also missionaries and colonial administrators, Evans-Pritchard made clear that the *offense* of magic is an *imaginary* one. Using legal terminology like *offense*, however, also brought the colonial administration into a problematic situation in regards to the “implementation [of] Witchcraft ordinances”. On one side witchcraft accusations were considered “features of the indigenous cultural order”, which are “potentially useful for the maintenance of indirect rule”, while on the other side they were “classified as imaginary and illegal [...]” So has, in this way, the “problem of controlling and modernizing colonial societies” partly contributed to the changes in anthropology whereby the study of “pragmatic magic” was shifted towards an “intellectualist agenda of studying witchcraft as a local system of beliefs [...]” (Pels 2003:12f.)

Evans-Pritchard indeed assumes the most prominent position in the early days of ethnographic witchcraft study in Africa. Kapferer (2003) set up Evans-Pritchard’s particular way of conducting research on witchcraft as a counter-proposal to the ‘modernity of witchcraft paradigm’⁴¹, which has come under criticism recently. For Kapferer (2003:1) magic, sorcery, and witchcraft “are at the epistemological centre of anthropology”. In his view Evans-Pritchard honors this tenet by opening up “new horizons of understanding that are embedded in magical practices”. Through these, Evans-Pritchard is able to redirect “the course and import of the anthropological exploration of ethnography.” Moreover, with his study, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937), he helps to “de-exoticise what may otherwise be deemed as exotic and strange”, and in doing so, he does not destroy “the nature of the phenomena in question.” In other words: “Magical practice is not here reduced to terms that are external to it.” (Kapferer 2003:3f.)

Ideas of the superiority of Western civilization have been problematized later (in the 1960s and 1970s) in academic discourse, and the problem of magic set the stage for those discussions regarding the relativity of

⁴⁰ This can be compared to the famous anthropologist and witchcraft expert, Evans-Pritchard, who during second World War II had a similar function like Captain Arcoll for the Sudanese colonial administration.

⁴¹ See Subchapter 1.2.4 “*The Modernity of Witchcraft in Africa*”.

Western rationality. Otto (2009:113f.) suggests that a moment of change in the debate can be found in Evans-Pritchard (1937), where he tries to research the life of the Azande people through their own proper terminology and concepts. In doing so Evans-Pritchard makes a difference between contemporaneous theories of the primitive thinking of ‘tribal societies’ (whose belief systems were perceived as evidence of inferiority to Europeans) and his own approach in which he concludes that:

The Zande acts in a like manner, but since in his beliefs the chief cause of any misfortune is witchcraft, he concentrates his attention upon this factor of supreme importance. They and we use *rational* means for controlling the conditions that produce misfortune, but we conceived of these conditions differently from them. (1976:65; my emphasis)

Thus Evans-Pritchard mitigates the previously held opinion in Anthropology, that magical beliefs were only irrational thinking⁴². With Evans-Pritchard’s work, he creates the possibility to interpret the practices and beliefs of Zande society as a logical system of its own. The rejection of evolutionism, as well as the revaluation of magical thinking, which followed its own rationality, should, however, not lead to conclude that in his life time Evans-Pritchard himself believed in the Azande world view. Witchcraft, as the Azande imagine, did not exist to him. Evans-Pritchard writes in 1933 that the conclusions drawn by the magician are wrong, and if they were true, they would not be magical but scientific. (Otto 2009:114f.)

The following years, shortly after Evans-Pritchard, brought forth scholars like Max Gluckman. Besides his founding impetus to the Manchester School, he combines in his work “Marxism with structural-functionalism”, and further suggests a “methodological focus on examining the rules of social interaction through the use of case-studies.” (Coleman 2010:109) Going beyond the structural functionalist approach as exemplified by Evans-Pritchard, Gluckman concludes that the meaning of witchcraft does not only rest on the stabilization of social structures. In his work, he also emphasizes on the moral background of social conflicts, showing how people, that are involved in conflicts, are “bound by loyalty and traditional law”, which in turn makes possible “social cohesion.” (Roser 2015:159) Similarly, Mary Douglas builds on Evans-Pritchard, but “views witchcraft from a sociological point of view.”⁴³ (Roser 2015:159) To her, the conflicts in which witchcraft accusations are situated, are not to be solely understood as stabilizing factors of a social system (Evans-Pritchard), but rather render the complex nature of interpersonal relationships within social groups. (ibid.) Also, in this context, one should mention the works of Turner (1957)⁴⁴ who conceived of witchcraft in terms of “the orderly release of tensions in social relations”; or Forster (1965)⁴⁵ who understood witchcraft to refer to “notions of a ‘limited good’ in [the] context of economic change [...]” (Shaw 1997:857)

A programmatic overview of the research on witchcraft (early until contemporary), which deserves to be mentioned here, is Hutton 2004. In his article, he summarizes the history of collaboration between

⁴² cf. *irrational thinking* in Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s *Primitive Mentality* (1926; London: George Allen & Unwin LTD).

⁴³ Translation Riahi.

⁴⁴ Turner, Victor W. 1957. *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

⁴⁵ Foster, George M. 1965. “Peasant Society and the Image of the Limited Good.” *American Anthropologist* 67. 293-315.

Anthropology and History as two major scientific fields, dedicated to the study of witchcraft. Further, Hutton advocates for a renewed collaborative interest by both disciplines into one another to further the common goal of understanding witchcraft. In the 1960s such a comparative approach has existed and was focused on “different continents and periods of time”. However, the collaboration “fell out of fashion” in the 1970s “because of criticism by some anthropologists”. It lasted until in the 1990s, when, “unnoticed by virtually all historians”, Anthropology returned to address “global, and interdisciplinary, perspectives on the issue.” (Hutton 2004:413)⁴⁶

Hutton further exemplifies the anthropological discontent through the reactions to a study by Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo⁴⁷, which is a comparison of African beliefs “with early modern European equivalents”, an approach which they see as “one obvious means for an understanding of attitudes of witchcraft.” The study “returned an open verdict”, and it was doubted that “such an exercise yielded useful material.” In reference to a crucial contribution to the contemporary study of witchcraft in Anthropology (Geschiere’s 2000 [1997]), Hutton observes a contradiction that already manifests itself between the author of the book (Peter Geschiere) and the author of its preface (Wyatt MacGaffey). Geschiere calls for anthropologists to consider “studies of the European trials, which had shown that beliefs at the local level could only be understood in relation to wider historical processes”. MacGaffey, on the other hand, contradicts and explains that “African beliefs in the occult are highly varied and may have nothing more in common than the word ‘witchcraft’ applied to them by English speakers.” (cited after Hutton 2004:417f.) This assertion to Hutton is a “blunt restatement of”, what he calls “the 1980s orthodoxy [...]” (2004:417) The breaking away of Anthropology from History in the 1970s lies in the concern that knowledge about European witchcraft from early modern times, does not automatically further the understanding of witchcraft in Africa as both were perceived as culturally and historically different places. Regarding one such critic there is Crick (1970:343), to whom the term witchcraft is a historical one. Its meaning was derived from another period and culture and therefore could not be applied to other contexts in a meaningful way. The concept should be “dissolved into a larger framework of reference.” (cited after Hutton 2004:415) This statement stands in contrast to what Bond and Ciekawy argue in a major collection of essays in 2001, where they explain that researchers should not confine the topic “to any one region of the world or to any one

⁴⁶ Based on his encompassing reading of studies, Hutton draws a “fairly consistent image of the figure to which English-speakers have given the name of witch [...]” (2004:421-23) There are five characteristics: A witch ...

a) “is a person who uses non-physical means to cause misfortune or injury to other humans. These means fall within the category that English-speakers have traditionally described as ‘uncanny’, ‘mystical’, or ‘supernatural.’”

b) “works to harm neighbours or kin rather than strangers, so that she or he is a threat to other members of his or her community.”

c) “earns general social disapproval, usually of a very strong kind, which is associated with two particular traits of the way in which he or she is supposed to operate.”

d) does not appear as “an isolated or unique event. Witches are expected to work within a tradition, and generally use techniques, or are possessed of or by powers, that have been handed down within the society concerned from time immemorial or introduced into it from the outside.”

e) “can be resisted by their fellow humans [...]”

⁴⁷ Hallen, Barry and J. Olubi Sodipo. 1997. *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft. Analytic Experiments in African Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

historical period [...]” According to the editors, “There is a history of witchcraft beliefs in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa.” (cited after Hutton 2004:418)

1.2.3 More Recent Debates on Witchcraft

More recent approaches to the study of witchcraft, beginning in the latter part of the 1980s, are situated mostly within the postcolonial state as a research context. They discuss witchcraft within a framework of *state power, politics, capitalism*, or more generally *economy, Westernized urban worlds and other aspects of modernity* in Africa. (cf. Shaw 1997:857f.) It is argued that this has given the study of witchcraft a revival. (cf. Moore and Sanders 2001:10; Geschiere 2013:7) For Geschiere (2013:7) the return of the topic of witchcraft was a striking development. It had been popular among anthropologists during colonial times, but after independence it has fallen out of fashion as “anthropologists became increasingly reluctant to address such ‘traditional’ issues” in view of “the emergence of ‘the young states of Africa’ [...]” Moore and Sanders (2001:10) explain that these innovations, i.e. the “new theoretical, methodological and topical twists” in the study of witchcraft, “have come side-by-side with anthropology’s ongoing concern to ‘make sense’ of witchcraft.” Moore and Sanders, moreover, summarize that anthropologists “more vocally than ever before” have tried to shake up Western interpretations of the teleology of social change. The central message is: witchcraft is very well a part of modernity, and it is the task at hand to investigate the complex ways in which modernity and witchcraft are entangled.

In regards to politics and its relation to witchcraft, there is an early account in Geschiere 1988⁴⁸, and Rowlands and Warnier 1988⁴⁹. Geschiere suggests that sorcery has been part of many of the state processes in Africa; in some cases, they might even challenge the authority of the states. Rowlands and Warnier (1988) even claim that “in Cameroon sorcery is not only a mode of popular action but lies at the centre of the State-building process both in the present and in the past.” (Rowlands and Warnier 1988:121) Wealth and political power are put into context with witchcraft, sorcery or “mystical danger” (Rowlands and Warnier 1988:118) to illustrate how the latter becomes a way of resistance against the state. Both the examples, Geschiere, and Rowlands and Warnier, are examples in Cameroon, but they have provided insights into a number of other studies situated elsewhere in Africa⁵⁰. (cf. Ciekawy 1998:122)

Other studies focus more on the impacts of capitalism on local societies and discuss witchcraft as a response to the challenges created by new economies in the post-colonial setting. Here one should specifically mention the 1993 collection by Jean and John Comaroff, and the essays by Apter, Austen, and

⁴⁸ Geschiere, Peter. 1988. “Sorcery and the State. Popular Modes of Action among the Maka of Southeast Cameroon.” *Critique of Anthropology* 8. 35-63.

⁴⁹ Rowlands, Michael, and Jean-Pierre Warnier. 1988. “Sorcery, power, and the modern state in Cameroon”. *Man* 23. 118-32.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Fisiy and Rowlands 1989; Fisiy 1990; Fisiy and Geschiere 1990; Ciekawy 1992; Niehaus 1993; Geschiere and Fisiy 1994; and Geschiere 2000, to mention only a few.

Bastian⁵¹. Forms of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery in the postcolonial setting are thus intimately tied to the workings of modernity itself, and in this way, try to bridge the problem of magic in the West. Since the term “modernity” plays a recurring role in the online debates (see Chapter 3), the focus should zoom in on this context more closely.

1.2.4 “The Modernity of Witchcraft in Africa”⁵²

Much has been written about the *contemporaneity* or *modernity* of witchcraft in Africa in the last two and a half decades. So much that anthropologists, who in regards to the wide coverage of themes, academic impact and, lastly, the sheer number of output⁵³, can safely regard their discipline as the home of the study of witchcraft in Africa. Anthropologists attest “renewed interest” or a “renaissance” of anthropological studies of witchcraft in Africa (Kapferer 2003:1f.; Geschiere 2013:7; Geschiere 2011:233), making it seem like “an almost obligatory topic”⁵⁴ within their field (Geschiere 2013:7). Moreover, one can observe that the topics of magic, sorcery and witchcraft were unpacked to address a much wider range of contexts. Anthropologists find themselves “encourage[d] [...] to engage in the study of modernity” (Englund and Leach 2000:225), which demonstrates in various forms the capability of witchcraft to “easily” address—seemingly without exception—artifacts and discourses which to the Western reader might appear as clearly modern (cf. Geschiere 2000:10). I shall discuss three major contributors to this discourse: Jean and John Comaroff, and Peter Geschiere.

“Witches as Prototypical Malcontents of Modernity” – Jean and John Comaroff

In general terms, Comaroff and Comaroff, specifically visible in the introduction to their 1993 collection⁵⁵ (xi-xxxvii), begin their take on witchcraft by rejecting the notion that global capitalism creates cultural unity. On the contrary, the world now exists in a plurality of systems—hence the use not of *modernity* in singular form, but *modernities* in plural (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xi). Moreover, modernity, which “itself always [is] an imaginary construction of the present in terms of a mythic past”, comes with “its own magicalities, its own enchantments.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xiv) To make their case of about the valid place of magic in modernity, the Comaroffs say what “should no longer need saying” and expose “the self-sustaining antinomy between tradition and modernity [...]” In their view, this dichotomy is a ...

⁵¹ See also van Binsbergen 1981; Geschiere 1988; Meyer 1992, Meyer 1995; Englund 1996; Ciekawy 1997; Crehan 1997; Ogembo 1997; Shaw 1997; and Yamba 1997.

⁵² The title of this Subchapter is borrowed from Geschiere 2000.

⁵³ Geschiere 2013:7 footnote 14 names the following publications (I list only those that refer to the African context): Ashforth 2005; Auslander 1993; Bastian 1993; Bellagamba 2008; Beneduce 2010, 2012; Bernault 2005; Bernault and Tonda 2000; Bond and Ciekawy 2001; Ceriana Mayneri 2010; Ciekawy 1998; Cinnamon 2012; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1999, 2004; Crais 2002; de Boek 2005, 2009; Luongo 2011; Martinelli and Bouju 2012; Moore and Sanders 2001; Niehaus 2001, 2012; Offiong 1991; Sanders 2003; J.H. Smith 2003; Stroeken 2010; van Binsbergen 2001; West 2005, 2007; Yengo 2008a.

⁵⁴ Or “at least a sideline”, as the quotation safely concludes (Geschiere 2013:7).

⁵⁵ *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*.

long-standing European myth” which tells the story of the replacing of “the uneven, protean relations among ‘ourselves’ and ‘others’ in world history with a simple, epic story about the passage from savagery to civilization, from the mystical to the mundane. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xii)

Magic in Africa is therefore not a “retreat into [...] tradition” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:26) but rather it “is often a model of producing *new* forms of consciousness” to deal with the “deformities” of modernity; and it does so by “retooling culturally familiar technologies as new means for new ends” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:284). More pointedly, witchcraft is “new magic for new situations”, as resounds Evans-Pritchard’s assessment⁵⁶. New situations are born from the imbalances that were brought to Africa by the modern economy, which, in addition, reveals a European misunderstanding: modernity, to the Comaroffs, is a “Eurocentric vision of universal teleology”, and carries along its “own historical irony, its own cosmic oxymoron [...]” (1993:xxx)⁵⁷ This paradox can be illustrated by the observation that “the more rationalistic and disenchanting the terms in which [modernity] is presented to ‘others,’ the more magical, impenetrable, inscrutable, uncontrollable, darkly dangerous seem its signs, commodities, and practices.” This inevitably causes “others” to engage in ritual efforts to break through the bounds of modernity, which, as the Comaroffs argue, “typically appears to its practitioners as an entirely pragmatic [and] secular means [...]” (1993:xxx)

In my research trip to Ghana, I was told by one of my informants to look for witchcraft everywhere where there is competition, as for instance, at the markets in cities and towns, in schools and universities, and in sports. My informant made me understand that witchcraft is summoned whenever people suffer and are in need of attributing that suffering to something. On the marketplace this can happen, for instance, when your neighbor’s business excels while you own, for some strange reason, shows less success and, consequently, less income. In the informant’s view, witchcraft would then be summoned as an explanation when other explanations fail to grasp the disappointment of the situation. Comaroff and Comaroff specify the reactions of witchcraft and economy. Witchcraft becomes an immediate reaction to the economic promise and pressure whose purpose it is to “against all odds” and “at supernatural speed, and with striking ingenuity” produce “immense wealth and power.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:284) It is one of the several techniques of occult power that are all primed for production and accumulation; or in their words “the deployment, real or imagined, of magical means for material ends” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:279). Examples of this can be found in “pyramid schemes and other financial scams”, like “chain letter[s], [...] national lotteries and offshore [...] gambling, [and] aggressively speculative investment in the stock markets of the world ...” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:279, 281) For the Comaroffs all these techniques have “a single common denominator, [which is:] ‘the magical allure of making money from nothing’”. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:281) About the alchemist’s endeavor “to weave gold from straw” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:281),

⁵⁶ Evans-Pritchard 1937:513, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:284.

⁵⁷ The teleological aspect of modernity, the belief that European history should be replicable everywhere else in the world, is expressed in the “alibis” that are forced upon the Other in the “name of modernity”. Comaroff and Comaroff refer to the grand achievements of “‘civilization’, ‘social progress’, ‘economic development’, ‘conversion’, and the like.” (1993:xxx)

these schemes “promise to deliver almost preternatural profits, to yield wealth *sans* perceptible production, value *sans* visible effort.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:281)

Following the Comaroffs’ claim, one can understand witchcraft neither as an isolated nor as only an African phenomenon, rather as “just one element popping up in comparable contexts all over the planet”, in different local guises. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:284) Further, the authors maintain that what is right about the West whose “cultures of industrial capitalism have never existed in the singular” becomes even more visible in non-European cultures, where “citizens struggled, in diverse ways and with differing degrees of success, to deploy, deform, and defuse imperial institutions.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xi f.) This struggle is part of the cause for the motivation to engage with magic or witchcraft. With all the enticements of modernity, its “enchantments” and the “contradictory effects of millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:279), the authors point at an environment which literally creates witches. However, not only in Africa, but rather in the form of “dialectical interplay” of “‘the global’ and ‘the local’”. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:279). In this way, *neoliberal capitalism* is cited as the cause for a large number of imbalances in the world, including the magical ones⁵⁸. The authors highlight: “Witchcraft has proven to be every bit as expansive and protean as modernity itself – thriving on its contradictions and its silences, usurping its media, puncturing its pretensions.” (Comaroff 1999:286) Witches, to the authors, “distill complex material and social processes into comprehensible human motives”, and they do so by providing “narratives that tie translocal processes to local events, that map translocal scenes onto local landscapes, that translate translocal discourses into local vocabularies of cause and effect.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:286)

The authors acknowledge that modernity, “being so closely connected to ‘Western’ ideologies of universal development” is not the right analytical tool to describe “European expansion”. Instead they suggest the observing of “a multitude of distinct voices” that have been drawn into a worldwide conversation”, a “multilogue”. (1993:xii f.) At the core of this lies a number of critical questions which Anthropology is invited to engage with:

How [...] do we do justice to the fact that similar global forces have driven the colonial and postcolonial history of large parts of Africa, and yet recognize that specific social and cultural conditions, conjunctures, and indeterminacies have imparted to distinct African communities their own particular histories? How do we describe a set of dialectical processes between center and periphery, ruler and ruled, metropole and margins, whose form is broadly the same but whose content is often very different? (1993:xiii)

The Comaroffs suggest a *Historical Anthropology*, which is capable of dissolving the divide between “synchrony and diachrony, ethnography and historiography”, and which will not disregard “culture from political economy” but instead insist “on the simultaneity of the meaningful and the material in all things [...]”. At the very center of this observation lie the “brute realities of colonialism and its aftermath”.

⁵⁸ The dependence on neoliberal capitalism in the view of Comaroff and Comaroff accounts for a wide variety of magical or super-natural entities and practices such as *witches*, *zombies*, and *occult economies* in general. (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 2001, 2002)

However, instead of portraying African peoples as being robbed of “their capacity to act on the world”, Historical Anthropology centers on “the interplay of the global and the local” in which “transnational signs and practices” are woven into the “diverse cultural configurations” of those late 20th-century, contested spaces. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xiv)

It is in this context where witchcraft emerges. In a thought-provoking statement, which deserves to be presented in full, Comaroff and Comaroff propose:

In its late twentieth-century guise [...] witchcraft is a finely calibrated gauge of the impact of global cultural and economic forces on local relations, on perceptions of money and markets, on the abstraction and alienation of ‘indigenous’ values and meanings. Witches are modernity’s prototypical malcontents. They provide—like the grotesques of a previous age—disconcertingly full-bodied images of a world in which humans seem in constant danger of turning into commodities, of losing their life blood on the market and to the destructive desires it evokes. But make no mistake: these desires are eminently real and mortal. And some people are indeed more vulnerable than others to their magic allure. Nor, it should be stressed again, are witches advocates of ‘tradition,’ of a life beyond the universe of commodities. They embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself, of its inescapable enticements, its self-consuming passions, its discriminatory tactics, its devastating social costs. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxviii f.)

“Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa” – Peter Geschiere

Peter Geschiere’s (2000) account begins, similarly to that of the Comaroffs, by disrupting the image of modernity as an element of creating social and cultural unity around the globe. The opposite was the case, and “the modern world, although often called a ‘global village,’ is marked by increasing cultural heterogeneity.” (Geschiere 2000:8) In reference to one of his field assistants in Cameroon, he then goes on to reject a Western misinterpretation, namely: “where there is light, witchcraft will disappear.” His assistant picked up this ‘optimistic’ notion from “Dutch missionaries for whom he had worked for quite some time” (Geschiere 2000:2). The missionary position resonates with what many Westerners seem to think: a self-evident opposition between witchcraft or sorcery as an aspect of tradition and modernity; and witchcraft will vanish in the process of modernization. This stereotype, however, does not fit in Geschiere’s observations on the “actual developments in Africa today”, as the interconnections of “discourses on sorcery and witchcraft” with “modern changes” can be found throughout the continent, and often reveal themselves in “quite surprising ways.” Moreover, he makes the point that “modern techniques and commodities”, which are often of “Western provenance”⁵⁹, are a vital part “in rumors on the occult.”⁶⁰ (Geschiere 2000:2) The reporting of these rumors, in fact, the “obsession with witchcraft” did not diminish when in the 1970s Cameroon rapidly

⁵⁹ It has been fashionable in the 1970s to order Western artifacts like protective rings via mail order to Cameroon, and to incorporate them into the *djambe* (witchcraft) discourse, where they “were greatly feared precisely because they were novelties.” (Geschiere 2000:59) More recently, new consumption goods have come increasingly from Japan or Korean, and have begun to “play a crucial role in people’s images of modernity”, in Cameroon, as well as in other African countries. (Geschiere 2000:137)

⁶⁰ One example from Geschiere to illustrate the attitude of understanding artifacts of modernity to be witchcraft can be found in the case of a woman who, never having seen an airplane in her life, claims she knew how it was built. “All planes”, she believed, “are in the world of witchcraft, and when the white man gets it from the black man, he then interprets it into real life.” The same applies to “televisions, radios, telephone etc.” (Geschiere 2000:3) In regards to the claim made by this woman, that the ‘black’ man provides witchcraft, while the ‘white’ man conveys it into reality see Subchapter 3.1.3 Case – *Akua Donkor*: “I will use my witchcraft to make everything free”. In particular, see the discussion of the *Devil song* by A. B. Crentsil who underlines the notion that the black man uses witchcraft for negative purposes while the white man uses it to build trains and planes.

expanded its electric mains. Instead, “newspapers increasingly” brought news featuring the “presumed nightly escapades of witches”. *Radio Trottoir* (“sidewalk radio; i.e., gossip”)⁶¹ [Geschiere 2008:220]), was “still the most popular purveyor of news” which brought “spectacular stories about witchcraft affairs in the highest circles of society” to the people. (Geschiere 2000:2)

Geschiere maintains that

[...] rumors and practices related to the occult forces abound in the more modern sectors of society. In Africa, the dynamism of these notions and images is especially striking: they are the subject of constant reformulations and re-creations, which often express a determined effort for signifying politico-economic changes or even gaining control over them. In many respects, then, one can speak of the ‘modernity’ of witchcraft. (Geschiere 2000:3)

Geschiere places his contribution into the larger framework of studies on the modernity of witchcraft, which requires one, he reveals, to emphasize “on the uncertainties and the continuing relevance of witchcraft discourses in the face of modern changes.” *Change* and *ambiguity* play a central role in these witchcraft discourses. They are not to be understood as a “traditional refusal of change”, instead they aim directly at modern developments, as they try to make sense of them. Geschiere makes the important point, that by assuming a perspective like this, one can ...

study the specific implications of witchcraft in a particular setting without, however, falling back on a discourse about the Other as radically different and reducing witchcraft to an odd or exotic obsession. (Geschiere 2000:223)

Witchcraft, viewed from this angle, reveals itself not in the form of African exoticism but instead it bears witness to “a struggle with problems common to all human societies.” (ibid.)

In his survey on witchcraft in Cameroon, Geschiere identifies the well-known causal factors like “illness, death, accidents, and other unhappy events”, for which witchcraft delivers an explanation, and at the same time points at a chance of acting against it. Typically, *djambe* (like other witchcraft discourses) is inclined to explain these unhappy events by making reference to human agency, and by so doing it personalizes adversity, which in turn delivers options to “act against adversity.” However, the notion of *djambe* does not only refer to misfortune; on the other hand, rumors regarding *djambe* are also concerned with “conspicuous successes like sudden enrichment or a spectacular victory”, showing its nature of ambiguity. Witchcraft is a resource for both the powerful as well as a “weapon for the weak against new inequalities.” (Geschiere 2000:16) This regards the context of the close family in rural, as well as in urban contexts⁶², but also pronounces promises of “unheard changes to enrich oneself”, and functions “as a guide to find one’s way in the networks of modern society”, thus regarding a much wider context “than familial relations at home.”⁶³ (Geschiere 2000:24) There are central dimensions to the witchcraft discourse in Cameroon. Ambiguity in

⁶¹ Also see “pavement radio” in Ellis (1989), who gives importance to it as a means of spreading news. Topics on witchcraft and sorcery favorably occur on the *Radio Trottoir* (cf. Bourgault 1995:203) About rumors, and witchcraft and sorcery more generally, see Stewart and Strathern 2004.

⁶² Geschiere speaks of such witchcraft as “the dark side of kinship”, in which its negative imagery is revealed in a context “where there should be only trust and solidarity.” (Geschiere 2000:11) For a recent discussion see Geschiere 2013.

⁶³ *Djambe* allows to bring together witchcraft with “new modes of accumulating wealth and power” that were introduced by modern forms of state and market. The Maka (among whom Geschiere conducted his research) therefore “speak of their witches as entrepreneurs who are always on the alter and ready to appropriate new riches or powers.” (2000:42)

terms of power, means that witchcraft might be used by the weak people of the village as a weapon against the state (which is feared by the *sous-préfet* [district officer]), and, on the other hand, it might be used as an “indispensable support for the new elites” (which is feared by the villagers). (2000:10) These new ways to accumulate power and wealth “seem to rupture old domestic solidarities”, Geschiere refers to it as the *leveling side* (of witchcraft), while explanations regarding the question how somebody became “so scandalously rich and powerful”, can be referred to as the *accumulative side* (of witchcraft). To Geschiere it is the “polyinterpretability” of these ambiguous discourses which “might also be one of the main reasons why [they] still seem to be so easily applicable to explain modern developments.” (2000:10) Or it is perhaps “precisely through this ambivalence that discourses on the occult incorporate modern changes so easily.” (2000:13) In short: “Djambe seduces because it promises unparalleled powers, but it also brings utter vulnerability.” (2000:46) Geschiere (2000:219) concludes:

[...] people may regret that these forces exist, but they are so clearly linked to any form of power that they are indispensable to the proper functioning of society. In this view, witchcraft is basically ambiguous: it is in principle an evil force, yet it must be canalized and used for constructive aims in order to make society work. Moreover, this ambiguity is essential for an understanding of why witchcraft remains so pertinent in modern contexts: it not only offers ways of resisting change and concomitant inequalities, but it can also inspire efforts to gain access to new resources.

1.2.5 Recent Criticism of the Modernity Paradigm

In a recent book, Peter Geschiere (2013:7f.) acknowledges that his publications, as well as those of Jean and John Comaroff, have been singled out to serve as a “punching bag” for authors arguing against the modernity of witchcraft. Moreover, Geschiere rejects the notion that what has been summarized to be, in fact, a *paradigm of the modernity of witchcraft*, has ever existed. The term, he fears, “is increasingly becoming an empty signifier that seems to refer almost to nothing.” (Geschiere 2013:8) Considering the vastness of contributions to the critical study of modernity in Anthropology, and acknowledging the criticism by Englund and Leach 2000 in which they portray the continuing attraction of anthropologists by modernity as a “meta-narrative”, I shall argue that it is, indeed, suitable to speak of a *paradigm* instead of a mere collection of ideas. For the further development of the field of study, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of that criticism.

To start rather generally, one might consider Riedel’s (2014:94f.) observation, in which he states that the publication of Jean and John Comaroff’s major piece on witchcraft (1993) happened before a background of drastic changes that concerned the whole world. The time was characterized by the “short-lived optimism” in reaction to the dissolving of the Soviet Union, while genocides and wars (Somalia, Ruanda, Kongo, Sudan, Chechnya) as well as the collapse of Yugoslavia, and the appearance of world wide Islamism were at hand. Modernity was clearly at stake elsewhere on the planet, and Comaroff and Comaroff do not make clear why this *myth of progress* has to be investigated in Africa and not in Europe.

Der Prüfstein der Modernität wird nach Afrika verlagert. Comaroff/Comaroff teilen hier die Wahrnehmung einer außergewöhnlichen Eskalation des Religiösen, einer globalen, moral panic⁶⁴, sie fragen: 'Why now?' Diese Fragestellung büßt bei einer genaueren Betrachtung der globalen religiösen Bewegung und ihrer ältesten Vorgeschichte an Schärfe ein. (Riedel 2014:94f.)⁶⁴

The question *why Africa* therefore remains unclear.

And why modernity in the first place? Zooming in further to the point of modernity, there are Englund and Leach (2000:225) who observe that anthropologists are encouraged "to engage in the study of modernity", and to "reveal cultural diversity" in a globalized setting, which leads to the notion of multiple modernities. They admonish that such an undertaking draws "upon familiar sociological abstractions such as time-space compression, commodification, individualization, disenchantment, and reenchantment." Referring to modernity in this sense as a meta-narrative, the authors criticize a notion which "preempts social scientific argument by making shifts in analytical scales look natural, as in the alleged need to 'situate' the particular in 'wider' contexts." This procedure poses to them a problem in that it neglects what the ethnographic method actually should be, namely providing authority of determining "the contexts of their beliefs and practices" to the subjects themselves. In this way, the assumptions that refer to modernity are realized through such meta-narratives which often avoid "explicit theorizing [...]" (ibid.)

A number of other points in regards to the *modernity paradigm* are raised by Stroeken's (2012) *Moral Power: The Magic of Witchcraft*. Here the author argues that after the 1970s "phenomenological and interpretive turns" had taken on the "1950s-style functionalism", a new "ism" emerged in the 1990s. This interpretation of witchcraft observes at its core that witchcraft did not vanish in the light of modernity. This is an interesting observation in itself, as Stroeken maintains. However, he goes on to criticize, that instead of following this trace, and "unpack[ing] both 'modernity' and 'witchcraft' to the point where one concerned the other", proponents of this kind of "Globalist studies" have instead chosen "to attribute the ongoing relevance of witchcraft beliefs to the detrimental effects of modernity and the contemporary manifestation of the capitalist economy." Stroeken makes the profound and inescapable observation that in this way, "witchcraft lost nothing of the alterity moderns had always attributed to it." (Stroeken 2012:19) In his view, the "first question" of the ethnographer should be directed at the question "how witchcraft is integrated into a system of ritual traditions, practices of healing and diagnosis, marriage rules, decision-making and eventually the State and wider social systems." Stroeken calls this "an experiential structure", and maintains that it "can hardly have changed overnight with colonization". In this way, he brings up a painful subject in the modernity paradigm: the restrictions of the field of study.

It has done the study of witchcraft no good to limit itself since the 1990s to the public arena of discourse and politics, far away from the obscurity of the healer's compound and the victim's home where the witch actually comes into being. A consensus has come to exist since the 1990s that the reason for 'the modernity of witchcraft' is not the resilience of witchcraft beliefs or the flexibility of magical thought, as in the 'secondary elaborations' described by post-evolutionist anthropologists such as Mauss, Evans-Pritchard (1976) and later Horton (1967). Modernity itself is seen as the instigator of

⁶⁴ The author argues that in analyzing modernity, scholars have moved to the African setting. Comaroff and Comaroff, in Riedel's view, observe the extraordinary escalation of religion in a "global moral panic" and pose the question, "why now?". In consideration of the history of global religious movements, however, their question loses sharpness.

witchcraft, because modernity has political and economic implications creating new inequalities between Africans. (Stroeken 2012:20)

So are the inequalities of modernity indeed the genuine places of witches to emerge? Isn't the witch, despite all the encouraging factors in its environment, first and foremost a product of the immediate family, where "it is still seen as rooted in people's close environment", as Peter Geschiere (2013:xvi) illustrates?

Kapferer (2003:16) in a similar way points at the problem that some of the current authors on witchcraft not merely assess that there is a connection between modern crises and witchcraft (sorcery, and magic), but often go one step further by claiming that these are "inventions of these selfsame crises". In this way, they go beyond stating "valid empirical observations", and instead raise "a point in the politics of a discipline frequently criticised as indulging in exoticism." This is particularly relevant in view of the "postmodern and post-colonial discourse [...] in which anthropologists are anxious to rid themselves of their colonial past." Such an approach, to Kapferer, however, bears the "danger of reintroducing modernist thought" as anthropologists would pay too little "attention to the diverse structures and processes in which differential modernities are constructed and which form various kinds of magical, sorcery and witchcraft practices." Moreover, Kapferer (2003:18) detects "a strong tension" in the analyses of such authors "to reproduce earlier functionalism" by understanding "modern sorcery and occultism" to be "conditioned in contemporary circumstances of vulnerability and uncertainty." This functionalist rationale, in turn, seems to Kapferer too much like earlier understandings of sorcery and witchcraft where they were seen "as pathological indicators of social breakdown."⁶⁵ This could then be understood as a "psychologism of functionalism" that poses an obstacle to thorough analysis in that it hastily puts together any magical phenomenon "under the sign of the irrational which must await the true understanding of the anthropologist, the author of the rational." Witchcraft and sorcery are thus "boxed away" in the confines of "familiar sociological and rational categories", namely "witchcraft as resistance, witchcraft as the folk explanation of misfortune, or witchcraft and sorcery as type of 'social diagnosis'". This obstructs the view on different "dynamics" of witchcraft discourses. (Kapferer 2003:18ff.) Kapferer returns to Evans-Pritchard, and in conclusion of his critical assessment states that while there surely is a connection of magic and rationality, the potential is, in fact, "much greater when released from the prison of reason." Such an approach Kapferer finds in "Evans-Pritchard's path-breaking work" where "magic and sorcery reveal qualities of the human imaginary in dream and in daily waking practice." The imaginary, to Kapferer, however, is not to be understood in terms of the "discourse of truth and falsity", in which the imaginary is freed from only being discussed in relation to what Kapferer calls unreason⁶⁶, instead the author is interested in the force behind the imaginary, revealing "ever-

⁶⁵ Kapferer refers to Redfield, Robert. 1941. *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁶⁶ Concerning the notion of *unreason* the author argues, that "[...] it is possible that different cosmologies, particularly those connected with magic and sorcery, are not reducible in such ways. They may stand radically apart from reason, even outside reason. This is their maddening challenge to a discipline founded in the problem of reason. The labelling of these cosmologies as irrational, or what I have termed 'unreason', is paradoxically a way of forcing them within the bounds of reason, which may deny to magical practices and especially to much sorcery key qualities of their potency." (Kapferer 2003:22)

present and necessary dimensions of human activity whereby reality, as always a human construct, takes shape.” (Kapferer 2003:24)

1.2.6 Witchcraft and Popular Culture in Ghana

Situated in the *modernity paradigm*, there are younger ethnographic works on witchcraft and their appreciation of modern media. Here, especially noteworthy are the works of Meyer (Meyer 2010a, 2008a, 2008b, 2003, 2002b) and the collection by Austen and Şaul (2010).

Witchcraft is a prominent topic in contemporary popular culture, especially in West African (here mostly Nigerian and Ghanaian) video film. Filmmakers from Nigeria, who “have little or no foreign support and training”, draw very directly from “popular urban narratives of romance, wealth gained through witchcraft, and Christian redemption.” (Austen and Şaul 2010:2) Newspaper articles as well as the gossip of people in the vicinity are a source for filmmakers to gather rumors (in particular on witchcraft) (Haynes 2010:17f.), which make their way on the screen. Haynes defines this aspect of contemporary Nollywood⁶⁷ films by reference to “the level of the banal, everyday production of authority, the personal level of gender relationships, witchcraft discourses—all the myriad social tensions and controversies to which the video films have responded with literally thousands of stories whose political valence deserves analysis.” (cited after Okome 2010:36)

In her work on contemporary popular culture in Ghana, Meyer (2008a:228) argues that the motive of witchcraft occurs often in the form of the confrontation of the “evil pastor who secretly depends on [witchcraft]”, and the “charismatic pastor who offers protection against” it. There is a growing popularity of this image, which renders in a “host of tracts, paintings, popular plays, and video films”, representing the Christian view, and through that medium, make available witchcraft discourses to the entire continent. Videos from Nigeria and Ghana can be found everywhere in Africa, where they spread such Christian views “and frame plots in terms of the war between God and Satan” in which also “Christian imaginations of witchcraft have become visualized—and by the same token tend to be codified [...]” In this way, film becomes a vehicle to reproduce Christian perspectives on the “danger of witchcraft as a real force” throughout the continent⁶⁸, “obliging theologians to react.” (ibid.) Meyer summarizes:

Through this circularity that links the popular Christian imagination, modern mass entertainment, churches, and even politics, witchcraft appears as an ultimate reality that cannot be denied, only eschewed. Or, as one participant in the discussion about the BBC World News feature ‘Is Witchcraft Alive in Africa?’ put it: ‘I don’t believe in witchcraft, but I know that it exists’ [...]” (Meyer 2008a:228f.)

Meyer insists, these films with their conjuring up of “fantasy space” are not to be understood as “misguided distortions” but rather are to be taken seriously as a “source for gaining insight into what Marx calls ‘the

⁶⁷ Popular name for the Nigerian film industry.

⁶⁸ A prominent example I shall refer to are the horror films by Helen Ukpabio, e.g. *The End of the Wicked* (1999).

religion of everyday life,” specifically in regards to the intermingling of fantasy and global capitalism⁶⁹ (2003:15). Nor are these films merely “windows” into a world to be watched from a distance. Both spectators and filmmakers are involved in Ghanaian popular cinema which “blurs the boundary between everyday life and its representations”, which shows that this kind of cinema “flourishes in the midst of life and makes deliberate use of Pentecostal expressive forms.” (Meyer 2002b:213)

But why this obsession with “satanic forces” in Ghanaian videofilms?⁷⁰ Meyer goes back to the times of the Bremen and Basel Missions (BRM and BAM) in Ghana in the mid 19th- and beginning 20th-centuries, to demonstrate how the image of the Devil, which “has been quite appealing to African converts” from the beginning of the missionary movement, has made its way into the African setting. Most of the BRM and BAM personnel that went to Ghana came from the rural areas, and therefore still entertained beliefs in the Devil and in demons; a context in which the *liberal theology* of theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher, who tried to “do away with the image of the devil as a separate reality”, has not yet caught on. Devil imagery was thus present at the birth of the “Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana”, and thus was introduced into the discourse. This “diabolizing [of] indigenous religious traditions”, however, simultaneously affirmed “the reality and power of local gods and spirits” which were now perceived as to operate as demons “under Satan’s authority.” The obsession with “the reality of occult forces” and the “strong emphasis on the devil” was therefore an early characteristic of Christianity in Ghana, which endured through the decades. The leadership of mainstream Churches was theologically trained and therefore themselves able to give up the emphasis on the Devil. They tried to create a theological approach which was more favorable “toward indigenous religion and culture”, however, the “link between Satan and the local gods (and witchcraft) remained strong at the grassroots level.” This, in turn, explains the “popularity of the African Independent Churches and, later, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches”, as they were able to combine popular understandings, and address worries and fears regarding the ‘traditional’ gods as well as witchcraft, that continuously reflected in the minds of the people. (Meyer 2008b:14f.) It is imagery like this that continues to be reproduced in Ghanaian popular, as well as ecclesiastic discourses, which through the decades has translated more and more into material culture, where, for instance, images of Jesus, and other Christian pictures “can be bought throughout southern Ghana.” (Meyer 2008b:15)⁷¹

The continuing spotlight on the topic of witchcraft, however, is not equally appreciated by everybody in Ghanaian society. Ghanaian self-trained filmmakers have been criticized since the rise of Ghanaian video films during the 1980s. (Meyer 2010a:42f.) The criticism expresses that other nations, when viewing these films, will get the impression that Ghanaians are superstitious and contentious and have libidos that are “way

⁶⁹ Meyer mentions the film “Women in Love” in which a fantasy space is conjured up that lies at the “bottom of the sea”, and which promises money and commodities which are “generated in exchange for sex and blood [...]” (2003:15)

⁷⁰ This regards not only video but Ghanaian popular culture in general. (Meyer 2008b:15)

⁷¹ I shall return to Meyer’s work on the import of Bremen and Basel notions of the Devil to Ewe society in 19th-century Gold Coast (later Ghana) (see Chapter 2). For the moment it suffices to acknowledge that the success of Pentecostal Churches, which reproduce the idea of “‘tradition’ and ‘heritage’ as devilish legacies from the past that need to be overcome” are flourishing in video films. (Meyer 2010b:7) As I discuss in Chapter 3, ideas like these also apply in contemporary online discourse.

out of control.” Meyer continues to state the criticism that has been expressed repeatedly that besides the frequent portrayal of “men’s sexual escapades with young school girls”, films tend to depict “ghosts, witches, and juju” as well as “spiritual fights in which the Christian God eventually overpowers indigenous deities [...]”. Also in response to such, there is the comment of the former mayor of Accra, Nat Amarteifio, who “at the closing ceremony of the Eighth Pan-African Students’ Film and Television Festival, in July 2007” brought forth the complaint that (Meyer 2010a:43):

Movies that portray superstition, witchcraft and other beliefs make people in the western world [...] think that Africa is still in total blackout and does not know where it is heading towards. (ibid.)

Meyer gives a voice to statements like these that “testify that from the beginning of video up to the present, video movies evoke the constant critique that they affirm ‘superstition,’ thereby keeping people ‘ignorant,’ and that they are ‘misrepresenting’ Ghana to outsiders.” (ibid.) As I discuss in Chapter 3 and the conclusion, people, in a similar way, criticize journalists for reproducing witchcraft narratives on the internet and publishing them. I submit therefore, it is about time to make the transition to yet another medium of communication, and investigate how witchcraft imagery plays a role in online discourses. Before we do so, I shall anchor the topic within the discipline of religious studies, and investigate in how far the topic of witchcraft has been treated by that discipline.

1.2.7 Witchcraft – A Subject for Religious Studies?

The suggestion that witchcraft (in Africa) should fit well into the disciplinary focus of Religious Studies, was stated by anthropologist Lucy P. Mair already in 1964. In her article entitled *Witchcraft as a Problem in the Study of Religion*, Mair argues that despite the fact that witchcraft is “popularly thought of as a subject for students of folklore” (Mair 1964:335), it belongs well into Religious Studies. In her view, the topic has more in common with those beliefs that “are part of the corpus of beliefs that we commonly call religion.” (Mair 1964:336) Witchcraft beliefs thus do not reside in a context of superstitious narratives, deserving only superficial description which has been “a permanent fascination for the general public”, (Mair 1964:335) but are in fact different sets of world views, morality, and a lack of understanding of scientific causation. She argues further that for most anthropologists who worked on Africa, it has been obvious that the belief in witchcraft is a “fundamental part of the world-view” of those people, and the beliefs must be regarded “not as ridiculous superstition, but as a necessary part of their belief in the universe as a moral order.” The beliefs, moreover, bear witness to little (or even a complete lack of) capabilities of scientific reasoning. Otherwise, people would not be “unwilling to recognise the possibility of that accidental conjunction of causal factors that we call chance.” To these people, Mair explains, a universe that is “ordered in accordance with moral law” the lot of suffering “should be deserved”, and the explanation for it is an obligatory part of social

inquiry. To employ the right actions to remedy the suffering, “primitive peoples” commonly resort to conceptualizing the workings of “some non-human personalized being.” (ibid.)

It is obviously the lot of the interested student of Religious Studies⁷² to be reminded by an anthropologist that witchcraft is clearly a case for their discipline⁷³. The more striking it seems that the topic has aroused so little attention in Religious Studies (let alone in regards to Africa, in European history or elsewhere). Anthropology has unarguably made the strongest impact to the study and delivers an indispensable base of literature, I shall, however, take seriously Mair’s suggestion, and expand it into a genuinely Religious Studies approach to the topic. This should not be understood as if I found Anthropology to be in need; on the contrary, the contributions are manifold, deep, and rich. However, following disciplinary borders I shall put forward the notion that in its observations and conclusions Religious Studies may make a distinct difference to Anthropology.

Looking at the most prominent theoreticians of witchcraft, African and European, one can observe that only very rarely proponents of the discipline of Religious Studies have considered the topic. An important exception is *Geoffrey Parrinder*, professor of comparative religion, who compares European to African witchcraft (1963). Another small but noteworthy exception from the underrepresentation of the topic is in Kippenberg’s *European History of Religion*, which shows that scholars of religion consider witchcraft a relevant field⁷⁴. Also in more recent developments in a sub-discipline of Religious Studies, the *Cognitive Science of Religion*, claims are made that “Concepts of witches are among the most widespread supernatural ones.”⁷⁵ Since the Cognitive Science of Religion is strongly focused on supernatural concepts⁷⁶, this claim should arouse wide interest among proponents of that sub-discipline to engage the topic. A survey on respective literature which I conducted in preparation of this project in 2011, and which I partly repeated in 2014, has yielded only little results. I searched through the websites of *IACSR*⁷⁷, *IBCSR*⁷⁸, *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*⁷⁹, *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*⁸⁰, *Journal of Cognition and*

⁷² In terms of brevity, I shall use the term *Religious Studies*, or alternatively *Study of Religion*, only when I refer to the social scientific discipline, which in the German academic discourse is called ‘Religionswissenschaft’.

⁷³ One might feel reminded by Mair’s account of the criticism towards the *modernity of witchcraft paradigm* in Englund and Leach (2000); Kapferer (2003), and Stroeken (2012). All agree that an in-depth analysis is due of the magical phenomena under recognition of the subjects own ways of interpreting them. Reading Stroeken’s (2012:19) reminder, that a study on the modernity of witchcraft should enable one to “unpack both ‘modernity’ and ‘witchcraft’ to the point where one concerned the other”, appears to me like a task meant for Religious Studies inquiry.

⁷⁴ The only article dealing with the subject, however, is written by a historian.

⁷⁵ http://www.csicop.org/si/show/why_is_religion_natural. Accessed March 24th 2015.

⁷⁶ The Cognitive Science of Religion considers religion in thought and behavior to be made possible through evolved cognitive capacities, which are the same for all humans and which thus can explain certain recurring patterns in religious representations. (cf. Pyysiäinen 2002:1) One of the major observations in regards to the cognitive foundations of religion is expressed by Boyer (1999:216) who argues that “cultural symbolism often combines universal, intuitive concepts [...] in counter-intuitive ways [...]”. Humans have a tendency to create narratives about superhuman agents, who can be “nonmaterial and nonbiological”, for instance. (ibid.) A witch, for instance, would be a superhuman agent in that he or she is believed to be capable of making use of counter-intuitive forces such as to *fly* or *shape shift into an animal*, or to *kill by non-physical means*.

⁷⁷ International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion, <http://www.iacsr.com/iacsr/JournalsandBooks.html>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

⁷⁸ Institute for the Biocultural Study of Religion, <http://ibcsr.org/>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

⁷⁹ <http://www.brill.com/archive-psychology-religion>, accessed: July 30th 2016.

⁸⁰ <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10508619.asp>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

*Culture*⁸¹, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*⁸², *Journal of Cognitive Historiography*⁸³, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*⁸⁴, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*⁸⁵. Furthermore, I searched the monographs and edited volumes of prominent figures in the Cognitive Science of Religion discourse, such as Pascal Boyer, Harvey Whitehouse, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, Patrick McNamara, Robert McCauley, Jesper Sørensen, and Thomas Lawson. All this shows that despite the reasonable claim by Pascal Boyer, publications on witchcraft are strongly underrepresented. There are only a few pieces that regard witchcraft and magic more concretely, e.g. Sørensen 2007; Cohen 2007a, 2007b, and Bever 2012.

Apart from the typical sites, i.e. witchcraft in Africa or early modern witchcraft, its modern forms, as well as related subjects, receive some more attention by proponents of Religious Studies. In regards to *Wicca* and other manifestations of *neopaganism*, one should mention authors like James R. Lewis, and his editions of articles (1996)⁸⁶. One strand of the contemporary academic discourse on that subject is expressed by investigations regarding the tradition making in neopagan discourses. As Alder (quoted by Carpenter 1996:44) expresses by the token, “Myth of Wicca”, many practitioners understand witchcraft as “historical evolution of their form of spirituality”. Witchcraft in this context is understood as a religion that goes back as far as paleolithic times, and at its center has the worship of “the god of the hunt and the goddess of fertility.” Christians who came to Europe converted the people, starting with their nobility, however, some people did not cease the worship of the old gods. Through the persecution of the Church the old god, “as is the habit with conquerers”, was turned into the Christian Devil. Thus the “Old Religion” could be continued only underground, where it, nevertheless, survived until in 1951, when the “Witchcraft Laws in England were repealed [and] it began to surface again.”⁸⁷ Especially British anthropologist Margaret Murray has facilitated the notion of a pre-Christian religion in Europe. Through the study of “legal records of the [British witch] trials”, as well as the “accounts of individual witches, and the works of inquisitors and other writers”, Murray claims there had been “beliefs, organization, and rituals of a previously unrecognized cult.” (44f.) Murray’s (and other writers’) suggestions, lacking historical data, were soon discarded. Today, many witches do not accept Murray’s thesis anymore. (Carpenter 1996:46)

With Mircea Eliade there is another scholar of religion, who touches upon the issue. He shows himself “impressed by the amazing popularity of witchcraft in modern Western culture and its subcultures.” He calls it a “craze” which is ...

⁸¹ <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/brill/jocc>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

⁸² <http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0021-8294>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

⁸³ <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/JCH>, accessed: July 30th 2016.

⁸⁴ <http://www.brill.com/journal-phenomenological-psychology>, accessed: July 30th 2016.

⁸⁵ <http://www.brill.nl/method-theory-study-religion>, accessed: June 2nd 2011.

⁸⁶ Lewis, James R (ed.). 1996. *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*. Albany: State University of New York Press. For Wicca see also Rensing 2007.

⁸⁷ For the basic historical sketch of the myth see: Gardner, Gerald B. 2004 [1954]. *Witchcraft today*. New York: Kensington Publishing Corp; Gardner, Gerald B. 2004 [1959]. *The Meaning of Witchcraft*. York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser; Graves, Robert. 2013 [1948]. *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Leland, Charles G. 2007 [1897]. *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*. New York: Cosimo; Murray, Margaret A. 1921. *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Murray, Margaret A. 1931. *The God of the Witches*. London et al.: Oxford University Press.

part and parcel of a larger trend, namely, the vogue of the occult and the esoteric—from astrology and pseudospiritualist movements to Hermetism, alchemy, Zen, Yoga, Tantrism, and other Oriental gnoses and techniques. (Eliade 1976:69)

More interested, however, in the history of Western witchcraft, Eliade also responds to Murray, and the “countless and appalling errors that discredit” her work on European witchcraft. (Eliade 1976:73)

Also conceptually related to forms of magic is the notion shamanism. Here one should mention the work of Graham Harvey (2014, 2010, 2003, 1998), who observed that the topic has moved from the anthropological inquiries into indigenous forms to Western ones that “are firmly rooted in modernity’s own otherworldly (if globalised) ‘cyberspace’ – especially by the addition of new technologies of ecstasy – and in more suburban therapeutic forms.” (Harvey 2003:16) Here one can find an interesting blend of academic, as well as popular interests, which “have evolved together so that a consideration of what academics have said about shamans might map the shifting obsessions of Western cultures and their countercultures.” (Harvey 2003:17)

Yet another example of the interest on varieties of magical thinking can be found in the study of spirit possession. The research of Katharina Wilkens is focused on East Africa, where she, amongst other things, presents research in the context of music as well as percussion, and dance which induce cases of possessive trance, where the boundaries between spirits and human beings become blurry, and which have therapeutic meanings. (cf. Koch, Luchesi, Wilke, and Wilkens 2015:77) Performance and magic are in the foreground in these ritualized contexts.

A list of magic- or witchcraft related notions could be continued. If one looks for witchcraft, specifically in the African setting, however, there are not many suitable examples. The topic seems to have been largely overlooked thus far.

1.3 Studying Witchcraft on the Internet

1.3.1 Approaching the Online Setting from a Religious Studies Perspective

It is the central aim of this thesis to shed light on the question, what role witchcraft discourses play in the online setting. Such an endeavor will further the understanding of the relationship of modernity and witchcraft. Considering the fact that there is hardly another technology of recent development that has yielded as much impact on human social interaction, research in this area seems long overdue. The central question is: *can one find a genuine Ghanaian sense of a modernity of witchcraft in the online setting?*

The focus on online material in Religious Studies is a fresh but not a pioneering endeavor. German scholar of religion, Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, in her PhD dissertation on Wicca contributed to the opening of research on the internet for studies in religion. Radde-Antweiler compares the hesitation of engaging with online material to the slow but gradually increasing interest of German speaking scholars of religion to

engage with fictional literature as a field of study. Moreover, she points out that working with such material requires one to submit special reasons and legitimize the decision. However, regarding at least the impact of the internet on the public discourse, such reservation seems questionable. (Radde-Antweiler 2008a:2) In reference to Reichmuth and Werning, Radde-Antweiler goes on to state that considering this reservation, media on the internet may be a good example of so-called *neglected media*, which “exhibit strong popular appeal and economic relevance contrasted by a lack of cultural prestige and scientific coverage. Often, they have profound impacts on the collective imaginary although this ‘passive’ knowledge is seldom accepted as culturally relevant.”⁸⁸

In addition, other authors from Religious Studies have also contributed to studies on the internet. In regards to the high online presence of alternative Western religious movements, Krüger (2012:338f.) attests that especially neopagan traditions like Wicca and Celtic neopaganism were researched. The questions that are addressed at such a topic regard the formation of social relations and identity in the new media setting, as well as the changes in ritual practice. The analysis of private home pages receives an important focus, as is referenced in the study of Radde-Antweiler⁸⁹.

I follow this new trend of research on the internet and declare the primary interest of this thesis is to investigate the *living online discourse on witchcraft in Ghana*. Therefore I shall abstain from preliminarily defining magic and then applying it to the African context. The lively debates I am interested in are situated in mostly uncensored online contexts, and carry their own semantics and logic. I follow Otto (2009:8f.) in desisting from defining witchcraft⁹⁰ and carrying it into my material. The notion has to remain empty, but can be filled with meaning through historicization and contextualization which implies that any historical analysis stands for itself and shall not be sorted into a “monolithic and superordinate” concept of the meaning of magic. This would also help to overcome the “modern reader’s, and specifically the social scientist’s” idea to have intuitive knowledge of what is meant by magic in a certain historical context. (Otto 2009:14)

This assertion becomes even stronger when considering the fact that dealing with witchcraft in online discourses confronts the researcher with different kinds of text production procedures. In reference to Howard (2008:491), I shall argue that the internet lacks “monologic texts”, and therefore “many of the models that have been conventionally used by rhetorical critics and analysts will need to be adjusted for the Web environment.”⁹¹ Internet texts are “coproduced” and distributed in the internet through “network communication technologies”, and thus they extend beyond the “possibilities of vernacular discourse.” Howard (2008:429) goes on to state that mass media “have long been recognized” by culture critics to “often

⁸⁸ Reichmuth and Werning quoted after Radde-Antweiler 2008a.

⁸⁹ See also Miczek 2009. Moreover there is research on ritual practice in the online context: Cowan 2005; Bowman 2003; Krüger 2004; Berger & Douglas 2004. And there are further miscellaneous studies situated in the online setting like those of Prebish 2004; Kurzke 2009; Bunt 2000; Larsson 2002; Mayer 2008, and Krüger 2005; Meier 2008; Martinez-Zárate, Corduneanu & Martinez 2008; Radde-Antweiler 2008b; Robinson-Neal 2008; Miczek 2009; Radde-Antweiler 2007; Miczek 2008.

⁹⁰ Otto 2009 writes about *magic*, but I submit that the notion of witchcraft is affected by the same problems.

⁹¹ Howard cites from Warnick 2007:121 at this point: *Rhetoric online: persuasion and politics on the World Wide Web*. New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

serve the interest of institutions instead of local communities [...]” ‘Participatory Websites’, on the other hand, “have the potential to be more empowering [...]” as “they offer network locations where local agents can express themselves.” And while the technological background is delivered by such institutions, users gain access to the discussions and thus emerges a “hybrid” discourse that combines “local and institutional interests.” In this way, these communication processes make possible “what postcolonial culture critics, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995), have termed ‘zones of contestation’ where ‘national, mass, and folk culture provide both mill and grist for one another.’” (ibid.)

The example Howard gives to illustrate this contestation stems from research on a website, *Homosexual Extremists Catholic Space*, in which an “amateur blogger took part of an official document from an institutional Website, placed it at a non institutional location he controlled, and then commented on it.” (Howard 2008:502) Howard rightly points out that:

In another era, Catholic authorities might have sought to silence vernacular voices that diverge too far from the institutional doctrine by judging their discourse heretical and seeking to punish the heretics. [...] In the vernacular web of the 21st century, however, alterity can emerge not just at one or even a few institutionally authorized locations. Instead, it emerges in a vast interconnected web. Here, discursive performance cannot be essentialized to a single specific intentionality, agency, or location. Instead, pulses of electricity dance in changing shapes rendered from digital bits imbued with significance. Among the network nodes where such shapes emerge, the possibility for transformation is held open because the vernacular web is not just a set of technologies. All its vectors originate from and return to the lives of real individuals, and these vectors carry the potential of transformation all the way from a myriad of everyday expressive moments into the official discourse of powerful institutions.

It is this contestation of the mainstream opinions that I am interested in, and wish to apply to Ghanaian online witchcraft discourses. Giving the main focus to the online context, and thereby underlining the importance of mass media and its meaning in modernity, allows one to support this material choice yet from another angle. Appadurai (2005 [1996]) understands that the “break with all sorts of pasts” (3) which has gone through the contemporary world is not “identified by modernization theory” but reveals “two major, and interconnected, diacritics”, namely *media* and *migration*. “Such media transform the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds”, and in their “sheer multiplicity of [...] forms” of appearance and speed of penetrating “daily life routines”, they “provide recourses for self-imagining as an everyday social project.” (Appadurai 2005:4) While Appadurai published the first printing in 1996⁹², the statement regarding the transformative power of mass media in regards to society remains true. I would like to underscore Appadurai’s observation that the break with the past requires one to consider new forms of media⁹³. Ethnographic studies on witchcraft have begun considering modern media as another context in which to study the topic⁹⁴. Thus, they have moved the field forward from situating research on witchcraft only in Churches, witch camps or other sites of daily life. I suggest it is now a consequent step to move forward and also include the newest media scape that has opened during the last decade: the internet. I submit, there is a new discourse space which

⁹² Which may account for the fact that the term *internet* only occurs twice in the book (195, 197).

⁹³ The second “diacritic”, as Appadurai calls it, *migration*, cannot be considered in this thesis.

⁹⁴ cf. Subchapter 1.2.6 *Witchcraft and Popular Culture in Ghana*.

reveals a number of critical voices that balance previous research, while previously researchers focused on closed spaces like Churches, the street, the village or similar social contexts. In such spaces, one predominantly finds either religious experts or people who are concerned by witchcraft attacks or accusations. My sample, on the other hand, is built from an open space, which presents a natural cross section through Ghanaian society, and allows virtually anybody to participate who has access to the internet, privately, through universities, schools, Internet Cafés or similar. The Ghanaian online context is formally a secular space as the online newspapers from which I draw my data have no official religious agenda, and, more importantly, generally do not engage in censorship⁹⁵. It is possible for the first time to make a contrast to previous research, which has always been conducted with religious people. Thus the study of witchcraft can be emancipated from this bias.

Authors like Adinkrah have highlighted that a “powerful influence in the acquisition of local witchcraft ideology” can be found in mass media, where internet plays an important role.

Through these media, Ghanaians are exposed to their society’s conceptions of who witches are, what they do, and what society does to control them. Ghanaian media messages are suffused with witchcraft ideology and phenomena. (Adinkrah 2015:112)

This again highlights the pivotal role of the online setting for modern witchcraft discourses. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, I agree with Adinkrah in underlining the importance of the internet as a new channel in witchcraft discourses; however, I do not only see the function of the online setting to ‘educate’ Ghanaians on witch beliefs and rumors, but I also highlight the online setting as a space of contestation. This is expressed in the reader’s comments which are part and parcel of the online newspaper articles that make up the material.

The main questions regarding the online material is to find out *what journalists, free authors as well as commentators on Ghanaian online newspapers refer to when they make use of the English language term ‘witch’ as well its derivations (e.g. bewitch, witch-hunt, witchcraft). Can one identify central motives regarding the image of the witch in this context? What are the major themes of the debates, how are they structured, what concepts and motives of witchcraft are there, and, what meaning to society could all this have? Is it so that the online discourse rather perpetuates the belief through sensationalism (cf. Adinkrah 2015:112) or does it undermine it like Igwe claims (2016, to be published).*

I follow the notion that Religious Studies assumes a distinct perspective in the analysis of African discourses on witchcraft through its disciplinary self-understanding in reference to the role of comparativism (cf. Freiburger 2009:21ff.). According to Freiburger to account for a study in religion (Religionswissenschaft)

⁹⁵ Censorship on the Ghanaian newspaper websites used here exhaust in the truncation of single (‘offensive’) words. This is different from German online newspapers, for instance, like Zeit Online (<http://www.zeit.de/administratives/2010-03/netiquette/komplettansicht>, accessed July 25th 2016), Frankfurter Allgemeine Online (<http://www.faz.net/hilfe/redaktion-lesermeinung-leserbrieft/>) or Spiegel Online (<http://www.spiegel.de/extra/spon-forum-so-wollen-wir-debattieren-a-1032920.html>). On these websites the comment section is moderated which means that comments which are deemed inappropriate are erased completely, while the website of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* does not even publish automatically but first assess comments and, if they are found suitable, publishes them manually.

the comparative aspect is not mandatory, however, the analysis and description of a subject is conducted cognizant of the fact that its religious aspects are not unique or unparalleled in history. (cf. Freiburger 2009:21) I shall, moreover, follow a three-sided pattern of religion by highlighting the “stock of symbols”, the “individual” and the “community”, and relating them to one another in the form of a triangle (Bochinger and Frank 2015:349ff). I submit that any reflection on witchcraft in the Ghanaian online context should reflect these three aspects.

1.3.2 Internet Use in Africa—Ghana in Particular

In the following I introduce my approach, i.e. what sources there are, which ones I used, how I collected my data, and how I organized my corpus. I shall begin, however, with a short overview of the online situation in Africa, and in Ghana in particular, to further strengthen the relevance of involving online discourses into the study of witchcraft in Africa.

Considering internet use in Africa, Njogu and Middleton in 2009 (xi) argue:

The internet reaches only a minute proportion of African urban dwellers and virtually none outside the elite of the larger cities. Radio reaches the majority, newspapers and films reach a fair part of the total population, and religious works also affect the majority. However, newspapers, radio, and television are today also initiated within Africa itself, frequently for very small, local audiences. The situation is far more complicated than has often been assumed [...].

Considering the figures provided by Zeleza, also from 2009 (28f.), one can see that South Africa, with an internet penetration rate of 27.2% of the population, had the largest number of internet users. This was followed by Egypt (20.9%), “which gives these two countries almost half of the continent’s total number of internet users.” Zeleza goes on to explain that “Africa’s internet usage grew faster than the world average between 2000 and 2005 – at 186.6 per cent compared to 125.7 per cent for the rest of the world [...].” (Zeleza 2009:28f.) The following list shows the highest ranked African countries with most access to the internet:

Table 1. Internet Use in Africa (comparing int. penetration of % population)⁹⁶

#	Africa	Population (2015 est.)	Internet Users 31-Dec-2000	Internet Users 30-Nov-2015	Penetration (% Population)	Internet % Africa
1	Morocco	33322699	100000	20207154	60.60%	6.10%
2	Mauritius	1339827	87000	803896	60.00%	0.20%
3	Egypt	88487396	450000	48300000	54.60%	14.60%
4	Seychelles	92430	6000	50220	54.30%	0.00%
5	Senegal	13975834	40000	7260000	51.90%	2.20%
6	Nigeria	181562056	200000	92699924	51.10%	28.00%
7	Mayotte (FR)	220300	n/a	107940	49.00%	0.00%
8	South Africa	54777809	2400000	26841126	49.00%	8.10%
9	Tunisia	11037225	100000	5408240	49.00%	1.60%
10	Zimbabwe	14229541	50000	6759032	47.50%	2.00%
11	Reunion (FR)	867687	130000	380000	43.80%	0.10%
12	Cabo Verde	545993	8000	219817	40.30%	0.10%
13	Saint Helena (UK)	4513	n/a	1800	39.90%	0.00%
14	Gabon	1705336	15000	670197	39.30%	0.20%
15	Libya	6411776	10000	2400000	37.40%	0.70%
16	Uganda	37101745	40000	11924927	32.10%	3.60%
17	Botswana	2182719	15000	620000	28.40%	0.20%
18	Algeria	39542166	50000	11000000	27.80%	3.30%
19	Swaziland	1435613	10000	389051	27.10%	0.10%
20	Angola	19625353	30000	5102592	26.00%	1.50%
21	Sudan	36108853	30000	9307189	25.80%	2.80%
22	Rwanda	12661733	5000	3216080	25.40%	1.00%
23	Sao Tome & Principe	194006	6500	48806	25.20%	0.00%
24	Cote d'Ivoire	23295302	40000	5230000	22.50%	1.60%
25	Namibia	2212307	30000	470000	21.20%	0.10%
26	Ghana	26327649	30000	5171993	19.60%	1.60%

Within a couple of years South Africa, despite its growth from 27.2% to 49.00%, has been overtaken as the country with the highest number of internet users by seven other countries. Egypt, which ranked second place in 2009, now ranks third, and it grew to astonishing 54.60% within six years. This demonstrates how fast internet use grows in Africa and predicts the increasing importance of it as material for studies. Ghana, which in this selection is on the 26th place regarding percentage, with 19.6% is still fairly high, and a reasonable target for Religious Studies inquiry. The object of research in Religious Studies is very often not the majority religion but the smaller ones. One can, for instance, conduct research among 71.2% of the Christian population of Ghana, but no student of religion would hesitate to research Ghana's Muslim population which make up only 17.6%, or even Traditionalists with only 5.2%. (cf. Nrenzah 2015:2)

Following Radde-Antweiler's study from 2008a I understand this work as a project with a clear interest in witchcraft discourses on Ghanaian websites, emphasizing on this particular, previously neglected medium.

⁹⁶ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>, accessed April 21st 2016.

1.3.3 Sources, Collection and Material

This study is focused on the internet. When dealing with research on the internet one has to consider the ‘giants of social media’ such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Youtube*. These are very popular and highly frequented by users to engage in social and medial exchange on the internet. *Facebook* can be understood as the world’s biggest social networking service, with (in August 2015) “over 1.18 billion monthly active users”⁹⁷. However, in reference to the inquiry it turned up only few and rather one sided examples. There are two sites on *Facebook*, one is a public group and the other is a non-profit organization, which specifically deal with witchcraft in Ghana. Both sites are entitled “Movement against witch camps in Ghana,”⁹⁸ but on first sight seem to be unrelated. As of 2013, when I gathered my material, the two sites seemed to be the only places where the topic of witchcraft in Ghana was discussed on *Facebook*, and both sites, moreover, seem to follow the same humanitarian aims of closing down the witch camps. The second possible source is the video-sharing service, *Youtube*⁹⁹. But again, there are only few results when it comes to the discussion of witchcraft in Ghana. Most of the videos which are tagged “witch” and “Ghana” link the viewer to documentaries about the witch camps, which limits the inquiry to a certain context. *Twitter*, another social networking service, allows users to broadcast messages of 140-characters. Such ‘tweets’ can be read, linked and commented on by anyone ‘following’ (i.e. having subscribed to) a certain topic¹⁰⁰. Entering the search keys ‘witch’ and ‘Ghana’ into the search bar will, for the most part, lead to linked newspaper articles on the subject.

In summary one can say that these three social networks represent the topic of witchcraft in Ghana rather in terms of its humanitarian challenge. This is rather one-sided and shallow in comparison to the depth in which the topic is represented when searching Ghanaian online newspapers, as I shall discuss in the ensuing chapters.

Ghanaian Online Newspapers

The corpus of this thesis is for the most part composed of the content of Ghanaian online newspapers, which in the first data survey as described above, has proven to be a fruitful context¹⁰¹. Adinkrah (2015:120) supports this view and claims that *Accra Mail*¹⁰², *Ghana Crunch*¹⁰³, *Ghana MMA*¹⁰⁴, *Ghana Review*¹⁰⁵, *Ghana*

⁹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook#cite_note-Q1_2015_results-7, accessed January 28th 2016.

⁹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/155960151107758/?fref=nf> and https://www.facebook.com/Movement-Against-Witch-Camps-In-Ghana-106066352792563/info/?tab=page_info.

⁹⁹ Youtube has “800 million unique users a month”, according to <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube> (accessed January 28th 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Twitter, “[a]s of May 2015 [...] has more than 500 million users”, from which “more than 332 million are active”. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰¹ There are a few exceptions in regards to the material I use in this thesis. At times I enrich certain contexts by use of videos (YouTube) and interviews from the program of Ghanaian radio stations.

¹⁰² <http://accra-mail.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰³ <http://ghanacrunch.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰⁴ <http://ghanamma.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰⁵ <http://ghanareview.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

*Web*¹⁰⁶, and *My Zongo*¹⁰⁷ are “Ghana-based Web sites that have given visibility to witchcraft-related violence in the country.”¹⁰⁸

For this study, however, I have expanded this selection to cover as much virtual space as possible.¹⁰⁹ Since the phenomenon of witch belief, its social causes and reactions may take different shapes depending on the region—especially when it comes to the impact of witchcraft accusation in the North and the South—it is urgent that the list of sources refer to websites that are home in the South as well as in the North¹¹⁰. Furthermore, to qualify for a good source, the website needs to be easily accessible and be well organized in their news-archives to enable the researcher to reliably date the findings¹¹¹. It needs to be mentioned that not every website’s news-archive goes back to 2009. Ghana Web and its archive which allows to go back to 1995 is an exception.

How was the data retrieved?

The procedure of eliciting and collecting data is straight forward: via a news-archive most newspapers allow the reader to search articles featuring certain topics. For the entire search only the key term ‘witch’ was used and thus the last six years (2009 until 2014) were searched. Since the term ‘witch’ functions like a truncation of a number of variants, the search engines will turn up every article in the past six years that reports about ‘*witch*’, ‘*witches*’, ‘*witchcraft*’, ‘*bewitch*’, ‘*bewitching*’, ‘*witch-hunting*’ and so forth. Any text found which at least once shows the key term was downloaded and marked with respective date and source data.

What kind of data was found?

Dealing with Ghanaian newspapers or with the news websites of Ghanaian radio stations one should expect to find short news-reports, articles of varying size, and rejoinders. The average article is about two to three pages long, i.e. about 1,400 – 1,800 words. This makes up the vast majority of data that was collected. Some of the websites further allow readers to comment on articles, which (if existent) was also collected. Hence, there are two broad types of texts: a) the primary source text (written by a journalist or a free writer), and b) readers’ comments which sometimes entail debates that continue for days and even weeks.

¹⁰⁶ <http://ghanaweb.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰⁷ <http://myzongo.com>, accessed January 28th 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Note that some of these websites are regularly inaccessible or might even have been taken offline.

¹⁰⁹ The following websites make up the source of the articles used in this Chapter: <http://thechronicle.com.gh>, www.citifmonline.com, www.dagbon.net, <http://ghanadistricts.com>, www.ghanamma.com, <http://www.ghanaiantimes.com.gh>, www.ghanaweb.com, www.ghananewsagency.org, <http://www.graphic.com.gh>, <http://www.dailyguideghana.com>, <http://www.modernghana.com>, <http://edition.myjoyonline.com>, <http://www.northernghana.com>, www.peacefmonline.com, www.ghanatoday.com. From this selection only the following have no commentary function: www.dagbon.net, <http://www.graphic.com.gh>, www.ghananewsagency.org, and <http://www.northernghana.com>. All websites were accessed January 28th 2016. I would like to mention my colleagues at BIGSAS, Leo Igwe, and Matthew Sabbi, who being more familiar with internet use in West Africa helped me in my early phase of data collection. They pointed me to specific websites they deem important for Ghana. Further, I am grateful to Dr. Onyinah Opoku who together with his assistant compiled a list of Ghanaian radio stations and websites which regularly cover the subject of witchcraft.

¹¹⁰ Some news websites rather focus on the south and others (a much smaller number) on the North.

¹¹¹ Some websites have been taken offline during this study, or show other problems caused by a lack of maintenance, e.g. *Northern Ghana* (<http://www.northernghana.com>, accessed January 28th 2016), *My Zongo* (<http://myzongo.com>, accessed January 28th 2016), *Ghana Review* (<http://ghanareview.com>, accessed January 28th 2016).

GhanaWeb in particular provides a section for such readers' comments, which is sometimes used extensively. The tone of discussions in these sections can become rather rough but seems to be largely unmoderated and uncensored. Only rarely one can find indicators that certain words have been removed. Usually, such a word will be replaced with the token '***barren word***'. *GhanaWeb* and other websites erase the content more or less regularly.

How much data is there?

The entire number of articles collected for this study is 2172. Every article in one or the other way deals with the notion of witchcraft. This makes very roughly 6000 pages of text. One should note that some of the articles are duplicates that were published repeatedly or in different newspapers. This concerns 17,5% of the total number of articles. The repeated publishing of the same article is not understood as redundant but can in some cases be a display of the importance of a subject. Therefore the duplicates will not be omitted but interpreted as emphasis to a certain subject.

Table 2. Collection of Online Newspapers used in this Research Project

Name	Address	Number of items	Archive goes back to ¹¹²
The Chronicle	http://thechronicle.com.gh	110	2010
Citi FM Online	http://citifmonline.com	42	2014
Dagbon	http://www.dagbon.net	7	2009
Ghana Districts	http://ghanadistricts.com/home/	17	2009
Ghana MMA	http://www.ghanamma.com	360	2013
Ghana Times	http://www.ghanaiantimes.com.gh	12	2013
GhanaWeb	http://www.ghanaweb.com	1210	1995
Ghana News Agency	http://www.ghananewsagency.org	20	2009
Graphic Online	http://graphic.com.gh	107	2012
Daily Guide	http://www.dailyguideghana.com	23	2014
Modern Ghana	http://www.modernghana.com	126	1995
My Joy Online	http://www.myjoyonline.com	62	2009
Northern Ghana	http://www.northernghana.com	16	2009
PeaceFM online	http://www.peacefmonline.com	63	2009
Ghana Today	http://www.ghanatoday.com	6	2012

Authorship and modes of publication

When dealing with online data one is always confronted with the problem of anonymity. For a study which aims at contributing to the discussion of genuine Ghanaian witchcraft discourse it should be pivotal to verify the source of the material. Being faced with the fact that not every website provides ample information on

¹¹² Some websites regularly erase the content in their archives. These dates display the situation by November 2015.

the author of the article, one can only rely on checking samples and making educated guesses. In the list above, the website *GhanaWeb* assumes a central role in that it not only yielded most findings and has the most encompassing news-archive but it also delivers more information on the authors than most of the other websites¹¹³.

The typical article on *GhanaWeb* provides information on the genre, the date of publishing, a headline, the name of the source or the author, and the text body. Further, they provide a webpage for all contributors where their publications are listed. This helps the researcher to get an impression what subjects certain authors publish on. Indeed, some authors regularly produce pieces on witchcraft, mostly from a skeptical perspective.

In 2009 there are 90 authors for 247 publications, 18 of these authors have published twice or more times. Certainly, people are free to choose names and *GhanaWeb* does not insist on any type of verification before it allows people to publish their work. However, further investigating into these names via *google* shows that authors of the same names have published on other Ghanaian websites too, and sometimes also show activity on other social media like *Facebook* and *Twitter*¹¹⁴. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the names listed are of Ghanaian origin, and almost all of them are male. Also, the wide majority of names could be verified to have been used at least in one other online network, be it *Facebook*, *Twitter* or other newspapers or their own blogs. Roughly less than half of the people also added their location, according to which the authors are situated mostly in the United States, Ghana, UK, Germany, Canada and Japan. There are adequate reasons to understand these authors as fitting participants in Ghanaian online witchcraft discourse. Investigating their engagement (in some cases continuing over years) to take part in the witchcraft debate in Ghana, one can see that the participants show competence over Ghanaian politics. Also, they regularly make use of Akan or other Ghanaian languages.

Language

Dealing with a subject set in a multi-linguistic environment requires one to consider the language competence of the contributors. Generally, in regards to literacy, Adinkrah (2015:23) writes that according to a recent census 74.1% “of the population aged eleven years and older is literate”, while about 67% of the “population is literate in English”, another 53.7% “is literate in at least one Ghanaian language.” While there are at least 29 radio stations which broadcast in either Akan, Ga, Ewe, Dagbane, Dafaare, and Gurenne, (cf. Akpojivi and Fosu 2016:138), the websites used in this study do not offer a function to switch into other Ghanaian languages. They seem to be entirely in English, and articles on those websites in languages other

¹¹³ The sheer number of articles on witchcraft that can be found on *GhanaWeb* in comparison to other websites underline the importance of this website for this study. Felix Riedel (2014:158), who also worked on witchcraft in Ghana, comes to a similar conclusion and states emphasizes its “outstanding role”.

¹¹⁴ Among them, one can find the names of public figures such as investigative journalist, Anas Aremeyaw Anas, or well known public health physician, Dr. Sodzi Sodzi Tettey.

than English could not be found; however, commentators rarely make use of Akan, Ewe or other Ghanaian languages.

Considering the presence of the topic on the internet and the fairly high number of penetration in regards to the population (19.60%) together with the wide accessibility and use of the English language, one should be optimistic that the following data displays usable material for a study like this.

Organizing the Data

Firstly, in regards to the citation system I suggest an approach which shows the name of the newspaper, the date and title of the article, the date when the online resource was accessed, and finally the URL, e.g.

Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b. Pastor Whips Church Member To Death. Accessed February 12th 2015: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/artikel.php?ID=166843#>.

In regards to ordering the material, I began by identifying structures in the collection, and providing suitable topics to label its content, and thus develop an understanding of the topics people create when they talk about witchcraft. Since it is not possible to put the entirety of 2172 articles through qualitative analysis, a selection had to be made which best reveals the narratives and allows one to enter the discourse. I began by producing encompassing lists for every year (2009 until 2014), collecting the entire amount of articles, providing space for title, date, source, and, if available, the author. Further I collected witchcraft-related concepts and the number of applications, and provided space for noting down observations. To determine the topic into which an article belongs, I analyzed the content and developed from it a new category. Some websites provide additional information on articles, and tag them by topics like *Politics, Sports, Art & Culture, Spirituality & Religion*, etc. This has to some extent informed my creation of categories. During the process of working with the material, I had to rework the categories a few times until I arrived at a satisfying result, which leave as little residual cases as possible.

To provide a visual example, a list of a year of articles looks like the following:

Table 3. Example of Data Organization from the year 2012

#	Date – Title	Author/Source	Concepts used/ Observations	Topic
1	01.01. “Fairness in 2012 Polls – Our responsibility my cooperation”	Avornto, Bright Selasie Yao for GhWeb	Witch-hunting (1)	Politics
2	01.08. “Hosni Mubarak/ Egypt prosecutors seek death penalty”	Chronicle	witch (2)	Politics
3	01.09. “CPP Elders should resolve problems in the party”	GNA	Witch-hunt (1)	Politics
4	01.10. “I Am A Witch – Kyeiwaa confesses”	GhWeb	witch (8), witch-related movies, witchcraft (3)	Celebrities and Popular People
5	01.11. “Girl spends 4 years in ‘hencoop’, accused of witchcraft”	myjoyonline.com	witchcraft (3), witch (1)	Witchcraft and Violence
6	01.11. “The Non-Returnees”	Sakyi, Kwesi Atta for GhWeb	Bewitched (1)	Miscellaneous
7	01.12. “JHS Pupil Rescued From Prayer Camp”	Daily Graphic	Witch (1), witchcraft (2)	Witchcraft and Violence
8	01.12. “NDC..Boils As Volta Defies Witch Hunting Attempt”	GhWeb	witch hunting (2), witch hunt (1)	Politics
9	01.17. “Fraud At Birth And Death Registry/ Muntaka?’s Man Fingered”	GhWeb	Witch-hunting (1)	Politics
10	01.17. “Mr President, Can You Deny The A.G’s Claim?”	Koduah, Reagan Adomah for GhWeb	witch hunting (1)	Politics

It was my aim to let the topics be rather broad and not allow them to branch out very much into the specific. Thus I suggest there are mainly the following wide topics (arranged in reference to where the notion of witchcraft occurs the most):

1. *Witchcraft and Politics, and Economy*
2. *Witchcraft and Illness*
3. *Witchcraft and Violence*
4. *Witchcraft: Celebrities and Popular People*
5. *Witchcraft and Sports*

There are two kinds of approaches in illuminating the topics in the following part applied here. They consists in a) *broader summaries that are drawn from a larger collection of articles, which give an entry point to*

each subject so that one can then, b), present single cases which narrate certain events to further specify the nature of respective subjects.

In regards to the materiality, I shall emphasize at this point that the texts are comprised of both the reports by journalists as well as columnists, and readers who write comments to the articles. I view especially the latter group as a valuable addition to the material as they create lively debates.

Presenting the Data

I proceeded by first providing a dense summary of a larger number of articles to a certain topic (illustrating these by quoting from a choice of statements), and then further enriching the understanding by presenting single cases. To give an example, in case of the topic of witchcraft and politics, and economy, I present some general assumptions about the subject in reference to what major contexts emerge from the data. Then I moved on to present particular cases which further enrich the topic. The larger view, as well as the focused view on certain cases, are enriched with quotations by journalists as well as readers. If necessary for the understanding, I also provided background information on crucial parts of the reports. This may concern popular people or institutions, cultural practices, or Ghanaian politics in general. An article is qualified to be presented here if it has accumulated enough comments (or if it provides helpful background information to understanding the cases). This is due to the fact that merely the report of a witchcraft related incident will not help one to understand people's attitudes, opinions and reasoning in regard to the subject. There are a number of reports on witchcraft where the author has only given the plot but no other voice commenting on it.

The guiding question in regards to the presentation of readers' comments is *what are the main topics readers refer to when they engage in discussions about witchcraft*. This represents one of the central questions of this thesis, and from there it is possible to go one step further by also asking for the personal evaluation of the commentators. Comparing the spectrum of opinions, I relied mostly on readers' commentary, and indicated how many comments there are. Moreover, I provided information which opinions are in the majority across the material.

Finally, I shall mention that in terms of use of quotations, errors in typography and orthography, as well as capitalization, is left as in the original¹¹⁵, and only in cases where the meaning is distorted a correction is added in brackets. Punctuation errors are corrected in terms of better reading.

1.4 The Historical Data Collection

The second material horizon I offer in this thesis is historical, and refers to the contact situation of the Portuguese in West Africa with witchcraft (beginning in the late 15th-century), and the Bremen missionaries and their endeavors with witchcraft (beginning in mid 19th-century). Both material backgrounds feature the

¹¹⁵ This also regards the names of commentators who sometimes capitalize their names.

same questions: *was the phenomenon of witchcraft observed and documented in the contact situation between Africans and Europeans? What role did it play for either side, and how did it relate to the central interest either side followed (e.g. mission- and trade-related)?*

Since the Portuguese documentation of witchcraft in contact situation with Africa does not show many results, I relied on the research of historians or other experts of Portuguese history¹¹⁶, and presented and discussed some narratives gathered from an English translation of original early modern Portuguese sources by Malyn Newitt (2010).

The Bremen material, on the other hand, consists of a larger corpus which I gathered in the *Staatsarchiv Bremen* from November 10th to 28th 2014, and it amounts to a sum of 18309 words, stretching over the years 1858 until 1932. The texts are almost entirely handwritten, only very few pages were produced by typewriters.

Before moving on to investigating the material in great detail, and evaluating its meaning for contemporary witchcraft discourses in Ghana, it is necessary, in terms of overview of the subject, to assume a historical perspective. I shall inquire whether there are changes in the understanding of witchcraft from the African as well as European perspective which are still tangible today and inform the current views. Further, taking such an outlook onto the subject allows one to more effectively break open conventional modes of thinking, and stereotypes about the subject of witchcraft in Africa—more and more dethroning it as the ‘continent of witchcraft’. The following chapters underscores the fact that Europe has been involved in African witchcraft discourses by no means only as observer but rather as participant (cf. entanglement of histories), carrying with it its own changes in understanding witchcraft in response to the African encounter.

¹¹⁶ e.g. Calainho 2008, Green 2012, Pietz 1987, Sweet 2003, Thornton 2003.

2 Historical Background: Early Modern and Modern European Encounters with West African Witchcraft

The Entanglement of Histories

One of the major shifts in the study of witchcraft in Africa is certainly expressed by what in the previous Chapter is discussed under the notion of *the modernity of witchcraft*. While the European pioneers of the study of witchcraft understand it as *primitive thinking*, identify *multiple rationalities* (cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard) or interpret it as a means of *sanctioning antisocial behavior* (Max Gluckman) or the *mediating other social dynamics* (Mary Douglas), more recent approaches postulate *multiple modernities* to introduce witchcraft to a modern setting (Jean and John Comaroff 1993, cf. Peter Geschiere 2000, et al.). The strength of such an approach, I shall emphasize, lies, first and foremost, in that it forces the European observer of witchcraft in Africa to engage in critical self-reflection upon their own conceptual systems. By thoroughly questioning one of central tenets of Western civilization, i.e. the “self-sustaining antinomy between tradition and modernity”, the Anthropology of Comaroff and Comaroff (cf. 1993:xii) is able to dissolve an antiquated view on witchcraft in Africa.

Other recent accounts of witchcraft similarly evaluate the subject in a context of economy—a view which even allows to go back into history. As is demonstrated in Rosalind Shaw’s (1997) article entitled “The Production of Witchcraft/Witchcraft as Production”, there seems to be a continuation of concepts in contemporary witchcraft beliefs that originated during the times of the slave trade. The investigation is situated among the Temne people of Sierra Leone, where Shaw aims at tracing those aspects back to early European contacts, upon which the author claims that witchcraft “in some areas may also be [...] a product of the history of the Atlantic slave trade.” (Shaw 1997:856) This is a significant observation for this project in that it corroborates the productive entanglement of *African as well as European witchcraft* beliefs and *European economy* by showing that this entanglement has existed long before colonial times, which, in turn, would relativize the tight connection of witchcraft and the “contradictory effects of millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism” as Comaroff and Comaroff claim (e.g. 1999:279). It seems that African and European ideas of witchcraft, on the one hand, and economy, or more precisely, the changes that are brought by it, on the other, have been able to form productive connections ever since the very early endeavors of Europeans and Africans. In the African setting both economy and witchcraft have been creatively *entangled*, not only since the post-colonial setting, as shall be illustrated on the following pages.

Entanglement here is meant in the sense of *entangled histories* as popularized in the German speaking discourse by Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria (2002). Making use of this new way of conceiving of history, I want to search for and emphasize the possibility of mutual influences in historical settings, which, as I shall discuss further below, free one’s own views from the bias of perceiving the African context as only the recipient in historical exchange. This is an important perspective which counteracts the critically simplified view that modernity (which came from the outside) stands as the “instigator” of witchcraft (cf.

Stroeken 2012:20) as if African contexts were somewhat dependent upon external stimuli to bring together witchcraft and economy. In a similar movement of opening up for cultural variety as influencing factors in history (like has been done with the pluralization of *modernity* into *modernities*) *entanglement* allows one to go beyond the view of a monolithic *history* of the totality of the world, and instead investigate *histories*:

Die Betonung der Gemeinsamkeiten und der Austauschbeziehungen der Welt impliziert, die moderne Geschichte als ein Ensemble von Verflechtungen aufzufassen, als *entangled histories* [...]. Das Konzept zielt auf die Überwindung des Tunnelblicks, der die Geschichte einer Nation/Europas im Kern aus sich heraus erklärt. (Conrad and Randeria 2002:17)¹¹⁷

This “relational perspective” allows us to focus on the interactions between Europe and the non-European world and asks what constitutive role it has played for the specificity of the modernity in respective societies. Thus one can proceed without substituting the model of a national history by an “abstract totality of the ‘world’” (as has been done by most ideas of world history or theories of a world society [*Weltgesellschaft*]). Conrad and Randeria instead emphasize that Europe, not least, originated from its “imperial projects while colonial encounters were shaped by inner-European conflicts.” (Conrad and Randeria 2002:17f.)¹¹⁸ If one takes focus from this angle and zooms in on the pluralization of modernities, as for instance exemplified in the works of Comaroff and Comaroff, one is usually presented with ethnographic data on the variety of “hybrid outcomes” that originated from the “creative and selective appropriations” of Western modernity in different non-European contexts. Pluralized modernity in this sense becomes accessible for analysis regarding divergences from the “ideal-typical historical experience of Western societies.” Randeria suggests to replace the notion of a “more or less” imperfect appropriation of Western modernity by the rest of the world with “a more messy and complex picture of [...] disparate and divergent but uneven and entangled modernities [...]” (Randeria 2007:216) Randeria further argues that one should, instead of conceptualizing “multiple or alternative modernities [for example] in terms of ‘cultures’ or religions (African modernity, Islamic or Confucian modernity)”, explore “uneven modernities within a society.” The “universal language of modern social theory” conceives of the “history of the West” as world history, and while globalizing factors, such as capitalism and imperialism, to some extent support such a view, discourses on the plurality of modernities in a paradoxical way “cement rather than destabilize the categories of Western modernity” in the form of a “universal narrative” in which they become a tool of measurement for divergence from non-Western societies. Randeria proposes, instead of engaging in such a “history of absences” to pursue “a relational perspective that foregrounds processes of interaction and intermixture in the entangled histories of uneven modernities.” She further elaborates that such a perspective would have the advantage of not favoring “Western historical experience of trajectories”, but instead it “would be sensitive to the

¹¹⁷ “The emphasis that lies on the commonalities and exchange relationships of the world implies to conceive of modern history as an ensemble of interconnections, as *entangled histories*. The concept was devised to facilitate the overcoming of the tunnel vision which explains the history of a nation/Europe only through itself.” (Translation Riahi)

¹¹⁸ The authors also point out, that this interactional paradigm should not lead to idealize the relationship, which does not express itself in equality and equivalence. On the contrary, contacts regularly happened on the basis of uneven prerequisites and interactions were often structured “hierarchical or even repressive”. The emphasis on entanglement does not address the modalities of the interactions. (Conrad and Randeria 2002:18)

particularities of the non-Western society under study.” (Randeria 2007:215f.) Such an expansion of the understanding of the modernity of witchcraft allows one to move forward from the criticism as phrased and summarized by Englund and Leach (2000); Kapferer (2003); and Stroeken (2012). Following Randeria (2007:215f.), one can engage in an analysis of the interconnection of witchcraft and modernity by neither favoring Western investigatory language and bringing a pre-defined set of terms to the discussion. Instead I suggest that the entire terminological inventory of this study shall be developed from the data, and not be projected onto it. (cf. Otto and Stausberg 2014, and Bergunder 2010). Nor shall I follow the idea of a “universal narrative” of the history of the West as template for all other histories. This would consequently always highlight the deficit or divergence on the non-Western part. Instead, one might rather focus on uneven modernities of witchcraft and ask how these emerge from the entangled setting and through “processes of interaction and intermixture [...]” Such an approach, I submit, is a feasible response to the criticism regarding contemporary studies on the modernity of witchcraft as I discuss in the introduction. An approach like this avoids the paradoxical situation of reconfirming the “alterity” of witchcraft by presenting it “as a symptom of postcolonial disorder” (Stroeken 2012:19), and, in the same move, indirectly pathologizing magic (Kapferer 2003:18; Stroeken 2012:19). Following this criticism, the aim of Anthropology actually should be to unpack the seemingly curious survival of witchcraft belief in the African setting. I shall discard any idea of the history of the West as a template for non-Western history, and, simply but effectively, focus on the entanglement of European and African histories.

I submit that such an understanding of the entanglement of history is an invitation to go back further into the history of witchcraft in Africa. To understand contemporary witchcraft in Africa, like the online debates I discuss in Chapter 3, it is worth following the traces of European intervention in Africa, however, not only viewed from the outlook of European supremacy but in terms of a possible mutual change of histories. In that sense I shall ask how did encounters between Europeans and Africans look like in history and what role did witchcraft play, and can one find traces of that interaction still today?

There are two historical sites which I find suitable for this, being the most influential settings in the history of West Africa: first, in regards to the earliest, pre-colonial and pre-enlightenment encounters conducted by the Portuguese in West Africa, beginning in the 15th-century. Secondly, in regards to the colonial and post-enlightenment setting as in the activities of the North German Mission among the Ewe people of (what is today called) Ghana and Togo. One of the guiding motives of this thesis is to always reflect European notions when talking about witchcraft in Africa. I submit that the study of witchcraft in Africa (and certainly other fields of studies in other part of the world as well) has been in entanglement with European views ever since their first journeys. Depending on the observers own set of religious and social views, the topic of witchcraft either seems to be a dominant part of the social life of Africans, which partly shines through the North German material, or it appears to be almost non-existent as will become apparent in the discussion of Portuguese material. This way of under- or over-representing witchcraft in Africa, always in dependence of one’s own views, still continues today, and it has dominated the study of witchcraft during

the last two decades. To allow for a new view, I would like to begin the empirical part of this thesis with a historical perspective to illustrate my claim that European views, necessarily always reflect their own discourses.

Whenever Europeans visited Africa they have found it suitable to label African religion as *idolatry*, *fetishism*, *Devil worship* or *witchcraft*. The Portuguese, as well as the North German missionaries, are no exception. The Portuguese came at a time when Europe found itself immersed in witchcraft beliefs, witch panics and persecutions. Witchcraft, however, was not conceptualized in equal fashion all over Europe. It was regarded to be much less scandalous by the Portuguese than by the North Germans. They depicted witchcraft belief, as well as other traditional 'African' religious beliefs, as a great obstacle to their mission efforts (cf. Meyer 1996, 1999; Greene 2001). The discussion around the Portuguese and Bremen people thus adds to the main question which asks, which aspects of African witchcraft can either be *highlighted* or *hidden* when European ethnologists or proto-ethnologists (like the Portuguese or North German missionaries) engage in describing them?

Which Histories?

The view from a perspective sensitive to entangled histories allows the researcher to read the history of witchcraft in Africa in a new way, i.e. carefully observing alternative routes of transfers of culture. As shall be discussed in the following part, one can see that the malevolent picture of witchcraft is not only part of the repertoire of inventions of Africa from the Western perspective (cf. Mudimbe 1988), but the prejudice also existed the other way around, i.e. from the African perspective projected onto the white slave traders. Fear of *white witches* and *white cannibals* is a striking example that the mystification of *the 'other'* is not only a European attitude but an African too. Other evidence from that era further corroborates criticism regarding the obsolete paradigm of the "strict opposition of colonial rulers and the colonized": a dichotomy of "us" and "them", which is a binary, and not very useful perspective that follows the notion that everywhere where Europe went, it caused drastic changes but at its own core remained the same. (cf. Conrad and Randeria 2002:25) The engagement with witchcraft (*feiticaria*) by Africans during the slave trade and later in the African diaspora in Brazil helped to create in some instances small independences from slave masters. At times engagements with magic were even ordered by masters to solve issues among the slaves, which relativizes the strict opposition between the supposed *active* and *passive roles* in the slave trade.

In regards to African historiography, there is, of course, a huge gap. So I argue with MacGaffey (1996:249) that one can only assess questions indirectly, which means to rely on the reports of, in this case mainly, Portuguese historians.

2.1 Early Modern, Pre-Colonial Encounters: The Portuguese in West Africa

2.1.1 Portuguese Expansion to West Africa in the 15th-Century

Prerequisites to the Portuguese Exploration of West Africa

The period in Portuguese history, at focus here, can be described by three waves of mass migration or diasporas. The first regards the exodus of the Sephardic Jews from Portugal, the second the formation of Portuguese communities in West Africa and the islands, as well as the third diaspora of Africans, who were “sold as slaves by their compatriots on the mainland and taken to Portugal, the islands and the Americas.” These people who were forced into migration made up a substantial part of the population of the Portuguese Atlantic, while the other part of the settlers came from mainland Portugal, so that the area in the 16th- and 17th-centuries became a “creole world”. People of different heritage populated the countries in the Portuguese South Atlantic, they spoke creole dialects of Portuguese, practiced “religions heavily coloured by African as well as European ideas”, and they developed “a texture of culture that owed its richness to European Judaic and African traditions.” (Newitt 2010:2ff.) Expeditions and raids as conducted by Portugal during that time were aimed at the Canary Islands, and thus competition between the Portuguese and Castilians ensued. Also, the Portuguese Crown, as well as military aristocracy, conducted expeditions in Morocco. All of these activities “were strongly backed by the Infante Dom Henrique (‘Henry the Navigator’).” (Newitt 2010:5f.)

At the same time the engagement of Portuguese privateers and slavers led to a stabilization of “commercial links with the African mainland”, as it was “privateers who first discovered the commercial potential of what appeared to be a barren Sahara coastline.” (Newitt 2010:7) By early-mid 15th-century sailors started to attack villages along the coast, “carrying off women and children and ransoming men of importance.” The promise of gold was one of the main driving forces in the motivation of the people of that time, but it remained a risky undertaking, considering the speculative nature of such voyages. This changed when in 1444 a “raiding expedition commanded by Lançarote” returned to Lagos¹¹⁹ with “a large consignment of slaves [...]”¹²⁰ (Newitt 2010:8) The excitement by Portuguese nobles and merchants for gold and slaves grew and Portugal began to secure rights for trade in Africa, resulting in the success of the Infante Dom Henrique “who secured papal Bulls, which recognized the exclusive rights of the Portuguese crown.” These documents also granted the right to “license and tax traders going to west Africa”, which were held by the Portuguese Crown until the death of Dom Henrique in 1460. The first actual landing on the Gold Coast was in 1471 due to the “unrelenting efforts of the Portuguese navigators”, which, from the Portuguese perspective, has paid off remarkably, since in the following years they obtained “gold in quantities larger

¹¹⁹ Newitt refers to the Portuguese town of Lagos, south of Lisbon; see map in Newitt 2010:xiii.

¹²⁰ It has been argued that “this open display of the slaves” by Infante Dom Henrique “was a deliberate public relations exercise” to nourish the attention of “the nobility and fidalgos”, and thus “to increase support for the west African expeditions.” (Newitt 2010:148)

than they had ever seen before.” (Fage 2007:452) Ongoing conflict between Portugal and Castile worked as a driving force behind the explorations, and in 1479 Portugal was able to have Castile acknowledge their “sovereignty in four of the five island groups so-far discovered, as well as its exclusive right to control west African trade.” With this victory, the Portuguese, still represented through Dom João, were able to build “a fortified settlement in the centre of the gold trading region” and this make the “gold trade a royal monopoly.” (Newitt 2010:8f.)

The Fort of Elmina and further Exploration

January 19th 1482 a 600 men strong Portuguese expedition, led by Don Diogo d’Azambuja, comprised mostly of masons and carpenters, carrying with them “quantities of timber, bricks, lime, and [...] stone” (Agbeti 1986:3; Thomas 1997:77), landed at West African shore near what is today called Cape Coast in southern Ghana. In the morning hours of the next day, the 20th of January 1482, the Portuguese crew “suspended the banner of Portugal from the bough of a lofty tree” and at its foot “they erected an altar [...]” (Groves 1964:123) Further adorning this significant moment, “the whole company assisted at the first mass that was celebrated in Guinea¹²¹, and prayed for the conversion of the natives from idolatry, and the perpetual prosperity of the Church which they intended to erect upon the spot.” (ibid.) This day marks the “traditionally acknowledged” date when Christianity was first introduced to West Africa in modern times.

Besides the task of building the fortress, Don d’Azambuja, who counted as “one of the most distinguished servants of the Portuguese Crown” (Newitt 2010:37), was able also to persuade the Chief of the region to accept Christianity over “purely materialistic” benefits in the form of “profitable trade relationship”. Taking over the new faith, the king allowed a fort and a Church to be built; the Portuguese explorers dedicated it to St. George¹²². (Agbeti 1986:3) In the following years the Portuguese sent an embassy further inland “reaching as far as the Mandingo capital” (1483)¹²³, and further down along the coast to Nigeria. The King of Benin “requested, around 1485, that the Portuguese send missionaries to his kingdom” to baptize him. (Agbeti 1986:4) The baptizing, however, was postponed six years, as the motives of the first call were rather aimed at soliciting “Portuguese armed help” (Agbeti 1986:3)¹²⁴. Meanwhile, the Portuguese settlers continued to build several forts around the region, and by 1486 Elmina received the status of a Portuguese city. The African kings received payments for the land, and the Portuguese aimed at maintaining good trade relations. (Fage 2007:512f.) Economic endeavors began to fuse with missionary

¹²¹ *Guinea*, as well as *Ethiopia* (see below in the narratives of João de Barros and Manuel Álvares), are old names for what is today called Africa. The first dates back as far as to the ancient Greeks. (cf. Wright 2002:94ff.)

¹²² It is worth mentioning that the Portuguese did not build on terra incognita. The capturing of the North African port city of Ceuta in 1415 from the Muslims brought about a strategically fortunate situation in which the Portuguese were able to establish an important entry point for much of the further exploration. One of the results from this was the establishing of a “fortified trading factory at Elmina” in 1482. (Newitt 2010:90)

¹²³ Agbeti does not specify how far exactly the distance to the Mandingo capital was. One interpretation of sources leads to conclude that it refers to a place in Western Sudan, whereas another situates the place near the “junction of the Niger and the Sankarani” rivers. (Labouret 1993:203f.) In both cases, those are quite large distances; one—the Sudan route—being significantly longer.

¹²⁴ Concerning the aim of Portugal to Christianize this part of Africa one should take note that it took another century without significant progress until in 1591 another King of Benin became baptized. (Agbeti 1986:4)

efforts. The amount of gold they were able to retrieve from Elmina and send to Lisbon amounts to over 400 kilograms per year, and it was collected over a period of about half a century after the Portuguese first set foot on the shore. By the second half of the 16th-century the flow of gold began to dry out as the Portuguese had to enter into growing competition with other European nations such as England, France and the Netherlands. The Portuguese lost their trade monopoly when competitors were able to put forward better conditions to the Africans. (Fage 2007:453)

Some of the Portuguese's religious motivation was driven by myth also. The search for the legendary Christian King, *Prester John*, can be seen as one of the motivational narratives. (cf. Debrunner 1967:7) Together with their assumption the Moshis were Christians¹²⁵, and efforts to localize "western Christian neighbors of the Nubians" (Debrunner 1967:8), there are three examples which express Portuguese hopes for Christians in that part of the world. Evidence is scarce, and moreover, addressing the question of the existence of pre-Portuguese Christian missions in West Africa, Debrunner (1967:13) argues, there seems to be only "very doubtful reference". Nevertheless, the motivation bears witness yet to another driving force in the Portuguese undertakings: to establish a safe trade route through territory not controlled by the Muslims (e.g. Middle East and North Africa). This guided them around Africa's West, Cape of Good Hope, and Africa's East coast so that finally they were able to make contact to the "Christian state of Ethiopia." (Clarke 1986:7) Moreover, the policy of alliance-making was aimed at enabling them to "combat more effectively any Muslim expansion". (Clarke 1986:7) Concerning economic advantages, the Portuguese soon realized how plentiful gold and slaves could be obtained from this part of the world, which played a prominent role in their decision to aim for the establishment of Christian kingdoms there. Clarke (1986:7) argues, that in theory such kingdoms could become allies and trading partners to Portugal, but

in reality they would be client states [...] and enable Portugal to limit the political, economic and religious influence on the Muslim world while at the same time ensuring that she [Portugal] enjoyed a monopoly over the trade in gold and slaves.¹²⁶

The Portuguese made "little distinction between religion and politics" (Clarke 1986:8), and Dom Henrique pushed forward the agenda of the advancement of Christianity together with the exploitation of land and people¹²⁷. Dom Henrique's own endeavors in terms of christianization, however, were rather unsuccessful. The explorations, whose foundations he contributed to, continued nonetheless, so that one of which should later lead to the aforementioned establishment of fort and Church at Elmina. (Agbeti 1986:4)

Benin was later visited also by Spanish Friars (1655) when they baptized the King at that time. "Bitter political conflict" between Portugal and Spain during the period, however, "nipped [...] in the bud" the fruits of Spanish effort in terms of evangelization which just had started to sprout so that missionaries had to be

¹²⁵ Possibly also "Mossi", as an Upper Volta society is called, who were visited by the Portuguese during the time of Dom João. The king was convinced by his ambassadors that the Mossi were Christians—an idea upon which he attempted to establish contact with them. (Skinner 1964:139)

¹²⁶ At that time, during the years circa 1450 until circa 1550, sometimes as many as 2,000 African captives were carried to Portugal. (Clarke 1986:7)

¹²⁷ A papal document commended their endeavor of "the destruction and confusion of the Moors (Muslims) and the enemies of Christ and for the exaltation of the Catholic faith." (Clarke 1986:8)

withdrawn. (Agbeti 1986:4) Later, in the 17th-century, Protestant missionaries also began their work, so that by the end of 1617 and the beginning of 1618, the ground, which thus far had been plowed by Catholic explorers exclusively, gained a new contestant. In the same year, other European nations began to embark on exploration and missionizing. The English “Company of Adventurers of London Trading to Africa” were the first to build two forts, one in The Gambia, the other at Cormantine (Gold Coast). (Agbeti 1986:5) They were followed by the Dutch, in 1637, who, as mentioned before, engaged in conflict with the Portuguese and by 1642 had taken over their forts at Elmina, Fort St Anthony in Axim and more. The French, Danes, Swedes and Brandenburgers (Germans) followed, and the Danes, in the middle of the 17th-century, built the famous fort at Christiansborg (Osu Castle) near Accra. Swedes and Brandenburgers had built as well, but needed to withdraw and leave their forts to be taken over by the Danes and the Dutch. (Agbeti 1986:5)

In summary, the two driving forces of early European endeavors in West Africa, economy and religion, were successful to different degrees. In terms of economy the Portuguese were able to tap enormous resources (gold and slaves), and furthermore they established forts and trade routes to strategic sites. Regarding the conversion of people to Christianity, however, efforts were visible but not of comparable success to later attempts¹²⁸.

2.1.2 Early Portuguese Encounters with African Witchcraft

Regarding the earliest contacts between Africans and Portuguese there are only very few sources. Like Shaw (1997) and Pietz (1987) argue, Portuguese reactions in regards to witchcraft (or any African religious phenomenon) were in general much dominated by their economic and exploitative ventures. The following findings corroborate the interpretation that the Portuguese view on African religious phenomena are on the bottom always determined by their economic interest.

From another perspective comes some indication that witchcraft offenses, even though they occurred not very often in Portugal, were still part and parcel of the spirit of the time. The Portuguese Inquisition has been active in West Africa quite early in history. The main reason for it to send inquisitors there was because of the persecution of so-called *Judaizers*¹²⁹. The role of the Inquisition in the diaspora of the Sephardic Jews is clear, as indicated in the beginning of the Chapter, and the pressure it exerted on the *New Christians* (converted Jews) brought its persecution even to West Africa, where the New Christians had fled¹³⁰. After its formation in 1536 the Portuguese Inquisition by 1546 began to “export its idea of prosecution” outside of the

¹²⁸ Mission history speaks of a second wave, a revival of missionary interest in West Africa (1790-1840). While the first period was orchestrated by the Catholics, the second (and more successful) wave mainly was put forward by the Protestants. (cf. Clarke 1986:29) It was “Religious, as well as humanitarian, social, economic and political interest, and medical and technological advances combined to make possible this revival [...]” (Clarke 1986:29)

¹²⁹ A term used by the Inquisition to designate Jews who had converted to Christianity but were “accused of illicitly practicing the Jewish religion” (Kamen 2014:466; Gijswijt-Hofstra 1999:129).

¹³⁰ New Christians settled especially in Cape Verde; communities grew fast after the escaping from Portugal, “instituted by papal bull in 1536”. (Green 2012:135)

homeland, following a number of complaints, that more remote parts of the empire were used as safe places for *heretics* and *fugitives* from the Inquisition¹³¹. By 1551 the Inquisition reacted and “the Tribunal of Lisbon was extended to cover Portugal’s Atlantic colonies, taking responsibility for the island of the Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde and São Tomé, for Angola and Guiné on the African mainland, and for Brazil.” (Green 2008:96)

However, not only New Christians were investigated in the Portuguese possessions: there is the case of an inquisitor-general of the inquisition, Gaspar Vogado, “a rich, mestizo merchant from Cape Verde”, who in 1661 traveled to the Guinean coast where he received complaints against people from a group mostly consisting of Christianized Africans who were accused of “sorcery, superstitious faiths and adoration of the fetishes.” (Santos 2013:50f.) This is an interesting finding in consideration of the fact that the Portuguese Inquisition has been much more reluctant to address magical offenses in comparison with other European nations during early modernity¹³².

Moving on in time and into the new world setting, however, one finds that in later decades the Portuguese Inquisition shifted its focus more and more on magical offenses. In fact, in Brazil the “majority of the cases against Afro-Brazilians involved the suspicion of sorcery. As I shall present in more detail below, these accusations aimed at the using of charms, ritual practice “as a pan-African religious instrument.” There was a “shared cosmology among Africans and African descendants.” The Inquisition in Brazil counts 119 cases of “the crime of sorcery” which were recorded between 1590 and 1780. (Santos 2013:55) In regards to punishment, historical inquiry does not know of any records of “Brazilian witches [...] executed” (despite “a steady stream of complaints about witchcraft and magic”). (Burns 2003:237; cf. Behringer 2000:65) It is noteworthy at this point to add that during that time ...

Brazilian magic cases shifted from European-derived witchcraft and magic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to a focus on African-derived practices in the eighteenth century [...]. Inquisitors sought unsuccessfully to assimilate African magical practices to European concepts such as the sabbat. (Burns 2003:237f.)

I shall come back to witchcraft offenses during slave trade and in African diaspora in Brazil, however, before I take a look at a few instances of early Portuguese records of Africa witchcraft.

In a recent edition of Portuguese sources from West Africa (1415-1670)¹³³ there are three brief references to witchcraft, and one relatively larger comment.

1. 1506: The earliest piece is based on a report by João de Barros, the author of “*Décadas da Ásia*”, which appeared in 1552. Barros who is “widely recognized as the most important Portuguese historian of the early days of overseas expansion” (Newitt 2010:106), addresses in his account events that take place in the Kongo

¹³¹ In 1546 the council of Ribeira complained via letter, addressed to the “inquisitorial officers of Évora”, and denounced “many of-ficials of the island as New Christians.” (Green 2012:140) The denouncements seem to be grounded both in economic competition, as well as religious affiliation. (Green 2012:140f.)

¹³² I shall return to the role of the Portuguese inquisition in the discussion of this Subchapter.

¹³³ Newitt, Malyn (ed.). 2010. *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670. A Documentary History*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press.

kingdom, preceding “the accession of Afonso I in 1506”. (Which is 24 years after the significant point of the building of the fort of Elmina and thus the earliest source in this Chapter) Barros narrates events in which one can also find, “barely concealed [...] the realities of Kongo power politics.” At the religious core of the narrative there is the motive of witchcraft¹³⁴. The Portuguese clearly were motivated to secure a Christian lineage, and install a Christian king; also they advised the king in religious matters. The Portuguese priests insist on one point in particular which is that the king should keep only one wife, which, of course, would entail that all his other wives lose their statuses. This, amongst other conflicts¹³⁵, to the ruling elite poses an infliction of traditional values; a conflict which in the end is won by the Portuguese, who have Afonso in his accession as *Manikongo* break with tradition, and are thus able to secure a Christian ruler. (Newitt 2010:111f.)

Barros describes the conflict as follows:

The prince, Dom Afonso, was firmer in matters of the faith and, as he was not happy with this change, he defended what he believed with all his might. Those he denounced began to turn the king against him until they expelled him from the [king's] favour and replaced him with the pagan son, Panso Aquitemo, with the objective that, if he should become king, they could continue to live according to the customs of the past. And as all the people of this part of Ethiopia are much given to witchcraft, in which they put all their faith and belief, these servants of the devil who plotted these things told the king that it was certain that Dom Afonso, his son, by means of the magic which the Christians had taught him, came flying every night from the Cabo do Reino where he was some eighty leagues distant, and went in to those women, who had been removed from him [the king], and had intercourse with them and returned immediately the same night. And apart from this injury which he did him, he knew how to dry up rivers and spoil the crops, all so that he could prevent him having so much income from the kingdom as he had had previously, and would therefore not have enough to give to those who served him faithfully, with the result that the kingdom would rise against him. (Newitt 2010:112)

2. (about) 1615: The following two examples are recorded by the Jesuit Father, Manuel Álvares, who was born 1573, joined the “Jesuit mission in upper Guinea in 1607”, and worked at a number of trading ports until his death in 1616 or 1617. (Newitt 2010:83) The source at hand is entitled “Etiópia Menor e Descrição Geográfica da Província da Serra Leoa”, and was “probably written before 1615”. The piece reports the growing “activity of French and Dutch interlopers, who were directly challenging the commercial monopoly which Portugal had enjoyed for over one hundred years.” (ibid.)

The first reference to witchcraft in Álvares' narration is situated at the “kingdom of Bussis”, an “island at the mouth of the Mansoa river, near modern Bissau.” The king exploited the slave trade to increase his power, “as it gave him access to prestigious imports and enabled him to sell into slavery those who in any way went against his wishes.” (Newitt 2010:85) Álvares goes on to describe in great detail the riches and enormous powers possessed by the “tyrant” (Newitt 2010:86), seemingly offended in his position as missionary. Thus he also “tries to locate and define the moral basis for action in defining certain types of trace as ‘illicit’.” His discussion on prohibited good reflects this moral discourse:

¹³⁴ Barros uses the word *feitiço*, “which the Portuguese used to describe many different African religious practices and beliefs. In the Kongo, belief in *nkisi* was strong. These were images or objects which were endowed with supernatural power.” (Newitt 2010:115)

¹³⁵ As for instance the reluctance of one of the king's sons, Panso Aquitemo, to receive baptism. (Newitt 2010:112)

For only goods meeting this test are licit and the others are illicit, which have a single use and that [is] a diabolical one, in idolatry for instance. Hence the sale of paper is not licit, nor is the sale of animal horns or heads, since these are ingredients for their magic medicines. (Newitt 2010:88)¹³⁶

Those who secure such good for “the heathen are accessories to their actions”, as much as those who engage in trading slaves that were “procured unjustly”. A hint at what an ordinary topic witchcraft must have been, and how tightly it was intertwined with the slave trade can be found in the following extract. Here Álvares quotes what must have been a typical excuse expressed by his compatriots at that time when they had bought a slave that actually was “procured unjustly”: “But if I don’t buy them, their own people will kill them, because they are witches!”, which to Álvares “is a poor argument, for as long as witches are sold they will be uncovered daily.” (Newitt 2010: 88)

3. (about) 1615: This report was also provided by Álvares’ “Etiópia Menor” (before 1615). This is the longest section in the sample which deals with witchcraft from the earliest encounters. Álvares in his function as missionary tried to understand “African religion and magical beliefs”, and he equated, as was usual for missionaries of the time, the African beliefs with “European notions of witchcraft”, interpreting “the different manifestations of maleficium, as it was understood and even practised in Portugal.” Beliefs that Álvares understood as the “living proof of the work of the devil.” (Newitt 2010:174) The text refers to practices in Cape Verde and illustrate “the extent to which the slaves taken to Santiago had brought with them from the mainland religious practices”. Practices and beliefs which in Álvares’s view “undermined the orthodoxy of what was supposed to be a Christian society.” (Newitt 2010:175) Just like the narrative by Barros, the maintaining of Christian beliefs much addressed the topic of sexuality, which oscillates between misogyny and imagery of witchcraft. His interpretation of the “sexual attraction of women as a form of witchcraft” makes this point quite clear, and instances that seemingly deal with “the recruitment of young girls into prostitution becomes for him another manifestation of African maleficium.” (ibid.)

Álvares cites examples of the detriment of people resulting from witchcraft, and speculates on places in Guinea “where this vicious and diabolical art reigns”. Álvares first gives a definition of witchcraft (he calls it by its Latin name, maleficium): “Maleficium is the art of doing ill to others by the power of the devil. The ways in which the ill is done are called maleficium.” (Newitt 2010:175) He then continues to define two types, one, *amatório*, which harms people by creating a “sensual feeling in individuals” to captivate their sexual interest “so that they will wish to perform the sexual act with certain partner and will refuse to do so with others.” This type of witchcraft, or maleficium, Álvares explains, is widespread “among the heathen of Serra [Leoa]”, and it causes “strife between married couples.” Other causes of it can be sexual sterility. (Newitt 2010:175) The other type of magic is called “*venefacio* or poisoning”, and is harmful to people as

¹³⁶ Paper counted as *illicit* because it was used in amulets which contained verses from the Quran (Newitt 2010:89)—a practice which the Portuguese observed already early-mid 15th-century when they first met black societies around the area of the Senegal river. Those were ruled by “Islamicized groups” who displayed such amulets; a concept also known from medieval Europe where Bible texts were used. (Pietz 1987:36f.)

well as things. It can make people very ill or even kill them. Álvares inquires: “How frequent is this in Ethiopia! How many deaths result! How many incurable illnesses develop sooner or later, bringing poor pilgrims to their deaths!” He then narrates the story of a “young and strong” man, healthy appearing, who was “damaged by the cursed poison” which has turned him “into a cripple”, forcing “his mouth to make certain contortions and grimaces [...]” The other application of *venefacio* harms things like “destroying vines and trees, tearing down houses in storms and killing animals [...]” All this is achieved by the “work of evil spirits” who serve the poisoner (the witch or wizard?). (Newitt 2010:175f.) Álvares describes an interesting arrangement between the evil spirits, the “poisoner” (later referred to as “witch”) and the Devil:

These wretches are such miserable beings that, even when they want to do evil, they cannot do it without the help of their masters. They pay dearly for that service, in that when they make images of wood or other material and beat them or stick pins or needles into them so that the poor wretch feels the blow or the torture in those parts of his body where the image is ill-treated, the feeling of pain does not come from the image which the witch so treats, but from the devil, who by imitating the action, subtly carries out the same on the human body. The truth is that the devil deceived the poisoners themselves. (Newitt 2010:176)

It follows another narrative of two women at the Cape Verde Islands who was “skilled in diabolical art”. a “Jolofa women” who persuaded poor girls by promises of an increase in status, whom she consecrate them to the Devil, initiating some kind of diabolical “novitiate”. “This business”, as he calls it went of for seven years. The narrative ends without conclusion. The second “diabolical women” is described as a “renowned sorceress” and allegedly has done “great evil in this island”. However, she was burned, and during the execution, “when the fire was consuming her whole body, this creature of the Lord made haste to touch her secret parts, which caused great astonishment, since even animals are loathe to touch the abominable parts.” (Newitt 2010:176f.)

4. 1625: The next text where witchcraft is mentioned is significantly smaller but also interesting in illuminating the Portuguese perspective. It is reported by “André Donelha who was “probably born in the Cape Verde Islands sometime between 1550 and 1560 and went to school in Santiago. His father traded in slaves and he himself made at least three voyages to Guinea in the 1570s and 1580s.” (Newitt 2010:79) The setting is the Guinea coast among the Baga people who lived along the cost of what is today Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. In his account Donelha describes the “barbarity” of the people, and he begins to describe two kinds of ants, “black one which live in holes under the ground and in the trunks of trees, and red ones called *bagabagas*.”¹³⁷ Apparently very aggressive insects the bagabaga are even used for capital punishment: “One of the greatest punishments that kings inflict on witches or robbers is to place them alive, bound hand and foot, in one of the *bagabaga* mounds and within an hour their flesh will be consumed and only cleaned bones will be left.” (Newitt 2010:228f.)

¹³⁷ Newitt (2010:228) argues that “The juxtaposition of the account of the bagabagas and Bagas may not have been merely incidental – the former being a metaphor for human social interaction, as well as a description of the insect world.”

2.1.3 African Witchcraft during the Slave Trade

Shaw 1997 suggests that there is a strong connection between contemporary notions of witchcraft among the Temne of Sierra Leone and the times of the slave trade. In fact, Shaw claims, that to some extent witchcraft emerged as “production” from the slave trade. Sweet (2003:162f.) concurs with the assessment that the “arrival of Europeans in Africa [...] marked a significant shift in the meaning of malevolence in Africa”, i.e. before contact Africans understood “religious malevolence through a micropolitical prism that allowed for familiar religious antidotes.” With the Atlantic slave trade, however, the “Europeans introduced a new form of social and economic malevolence”, which “transformed the cosmological balance” of good and evil, which before had been “part of the same [...] continuum [...]” As “symptoms of this unprecedented misery”, Sweet names factors such as war, and disease, as well as forced migration, and other misfortunes, and makes clear that all of which came about with the slave trade.

Generally speaking, the slave trade was the “single most important economic activity” that was pursued by Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese in West Africa. Together with the trading of gold and sugar, the trading of slaves became “the most profitable commercial activity of the whole south Atlantic complex”, constituting an immense attraction to the upper classes of Portugal as well as to the Church to engage in the profitable undertaking. Also, New Christian and small traders found in the slave trade the mainstay of their commercial activities, and, moreover, it became the “principal source of commercial wealth for African rulers and middlemen who were increasingly becoming participants in the south Atlantic economy.” Through the slave trade the island groups of São Tomé and Cape Verde were peopled, in that it provided “wives and mothers”, and “it gave rise to the communities of free black ‘Portuguese’ who controlled the affairs of the coastal towns.” (Newitt 2010:22)

White Witches and White Cannibals

It is the doubtful merit of the Capuchin friar Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi to have shaped Western imagery of Africans with such lasting effect. Cavazzi wrote an account of the region of Congo, that was first published in the Italian language in 1687, and in a “chapter dedicated to the ‘natural and moral defects of the inhabitants’”, emphatically warned of the “strange things” and the “barbarism” of these “abominable” people. Besides “defects” like “arrogance, shamelessness, laziness, ineptitude, refusal to work, lack of initiative, incapacity for inventing anything new”, and numerous other vices and bad characteristics, he also extensively depicts *human sacrifice* and *cannibalism*. These Christian stereotypes of black Africans not only “would last until the twentieth century”, but it was also employed to “justify three and a half centuries of the Atlantic slave trade and the scramble for Africa of the 1880s.” (Bethencourt 2013:87)

In a remarkable shift of perspective, one can verify that on the African side existed similar fears and terrors of white cannibals. When Italian sailors reached the Gambia river in 1455 they were told that the locals “did not want to enter into friendship with the Europeans since they had learnt that the ‘Christians ate

human flesh and the [they] bought blacks only to eat them.” (Green 2012:87) This “accusation of cannibalism”, Green argues, “was symbolic of the fear with which the new European traders were seen.” Since in West Africa there is a relation of cannibalism and witchcraft the Europeans were perceived as witches: “Here were white witches who had come literally to ‘eat’ others by taking them away.” (Green 2012:87) Narratives of this kind in “West and West-Central Africa” until today show the “metaphor of cannibalism”¹³⁸, and people see “groups such as witches”, and other entities assumed to possess destructive powers, as a threat to society¹³⁹. (Green 2012:237)

The fear of being ‘eaten’, i.e. being taken away by “white cannibals” is also known from East Kongo. Jose Monzolo, a slave who resided in Cartagena reported (mid 17th-century) about the fears of his fellow slaves who believed the Spanish, “whom they called witches”, would kill them and “make the flags for the ships from their remains”, explaining the colors in the red flags¹⁴⁰. (Thornton 2003:273) Olaudah Equiano¹⁴¹ also reported from this terror in his well known account of such stories “from among Igbos in what is now southern Nigeria,” and so did Isabela Folupo a slave from what is today Guinea-Bissau, when she testified in the “same inquest as Jose Monzolo.” She reported further that also fellow slaves “she met from Allada (now Benin)” believed the stories of the white cannibals. The fears of “being killed, eaten by white cannibals, crushed to make oil, or ground to make gunpowder” were so terrifying to some that they even jumped into the sea; or in case of a young Kongolese woman, “slave to a Kongolese master in a village of the marquisate of Damma”, led “to take her own life in July 1695.”¹⁴² (Thornton 2003:274) These fears were also observed by Alonso de Sandoval, a Jesuit priest in the 17th-century who served by Jose Monzolo in Cartagena. Through his experience with slaves, meeting them on the ships at Cartagena harbor, he reports that they “all believed [...] that the ocean voyage was a ‘type of witchcraft’ in which upon arrival, ‘they would be made into oil and eaten.” (Thornton 2003:281f.)

But how did it come to these fears in the first place? The answer, Thornton suggests, lies in the relation of witchcraft with cannibalism. According to African beliefs of that time, the notion of witchcraft was tied to *selfishness* (in political, social as well as personal dimensions): “West Central Africans used both analogy and literal description to make all forms of exploitation into manifestations of witchcraft.” (Thornton 2003:277) In reference to examples from Kikongo, Thornton observes that “sin, greed, evil and witchcraft were all related, both conceptually and semantically [...]” (Thornton 2003:280) Despite the fact that

¹³⁸ *Metaphor* is meant in the sense that the “accusations were clearly exaggerated and their prime function within travel accounts composed for a European audience was to satisfy preconceptions regarding others.” (Green 2012:237)

¹³⁹ Today people in “Gambia and Senegal frequently use the term ‘eat/manger’ from their respective languages of colonization to describe the destructive corruption of ruling elites in their countries.” (Green 2012:237)

¹⁴⁰ Sweet (2003:161f.) further adds to the gruesome list of fearful expectations among the African slaves who believed the red wines of the Portuguese to be “the blood of their African victims”, and cheese “African brains”.

¹⁴¹ Equiano was born “around 1745” in what today is called Nigeria (and where he was enslaved by the age of 11), and died in 1797 in England. He became the “most famous member of a small contemporary black community” which during the 17th- and 19th-centuries had emerged in response to the “massive expansion of Atlantic slave trading.” (Walvin 2000:xi)

¹⁴² As reported by Capuchin missionary Luca da Caltanissetta upon hearing she might be sold to a Portuguese merchant feared to be transferred to America together with “her infant son, still nursing at her breast.” According to the report, she threw the child against a stone and then seized arrows “from the hands of a man” with which she penetrated “her own breast” causing her death in despair. (Thornton 2003:274)

“cannibalism was not the only activity of witches, it was the one that was diagnostic. Eating people, symbolically or literally, was one of the ways that witches worked their evil” (Thornton 2003:280), and the consuming of bodies through enslavement “was but one of the many symbols of avarice and selfishness, and in the context of the slave trade could clearly be applied to or expected of the Europeans who manned the slave ships and delivered the Africans to their American masters.” (Thornton 2003:281)

Witchcraft and Divination in the African Diaspora

In Portugal, as well as the Portuguese possessions of the 16th- until 18th-centuries, Africans and their descendants (slaves or not) brought rituals from Africa to Europe and into the new world, which, “in most cases, were considered heretical by the Roman Catholic church”, and “condemned as witchcraft practices by the Portuguese Court of Justice”. (Calainho 2008:21) The kinds of rituals and habits range from “healing practices, individual or group idol worship,” to the use of “protective talismans” (Calainho 2008:21), or divination which helped to predict and control the world. (Sweet 2003:119) The motivations behind the use of those kinds of magic was diverse, however, there are two aspects that stand out: *love* and *easing the strain of slavery*. In regards to love magic, Gilberto Freyre argues that ...

[...] love was the main cause for witchcraft in Portugal. There were warlocks, witches, sorcerers and specialists in aphrodisiac spells in an almost depopulated Portugal that, in an extraordinary effort of strength, settled in Brazil. Witchcraft was one of the motivations which helped to (il)legally create in the scarce Portuguese population a sexual overexcitement created by breaches derived from wars and plagues. (cited after Calainho 2008:22)

In Portugal of the 17th- and 18th-centuries such practices were popular especially among afro-descendants and mulattos to induce marriages, sexual intercourse or keep a partner under spell. This also attracted the attention of white “clients” as well. (cf. Calainho 2008:22) The other aspect that drew people to witchcraft was caused by the harshness of slavery. In Portugal slaves made use of witchcraft to avoid the anger of their masters and to alleviate tensions since violence was an aspect of the daily lives of slaves. These attempts even show in legal statistics: considering all blacks, male and female, mulattos and mulattas who were sued for witchcraft, “48.4% were slaves while 18.3% were not.” (Calainho 2008:24)

The use of magic—divination in particular—, however, was not only practiced among the slaves. There are quite a few instances in which African magical practice was ordered by white people or even religious authorities; Sweet (2003:145) assumes that they believed that “African ‘witchcraft’ would respond only to African cures.” The first case I would like to present here is from the late 1730s where a number of slave masters in Bahia sought help from the Carmelite priest Luís de Nazaret. Their slaves had apparently been possessed by demons which were making them ill. After examining the slaves Father Luís decided that “they were infected with *calundús*”¹⁴³, however, he did not try to cure the slave himself in the “manner prescribed by the Catholic Church”, but he “ordered the masters to take their slaves to African *calundeiros*.” Father Luís

¹⁴³ Calundú is a “corrupted” version of a Kimbundu used in Brazil, which defines rituals that involve “human possession”. (Sweet 2003:144) Find a more specific definition.

“admitted that ‘exorcisms did not remove that caste of *feitigos* because they were a diabolical thing,’ and that ‘only the Negroes were able to remedy’ the *calundús*.” Sweet comments on this:

This admission by a Catholic priest was revealing. Not only was an official of the church acknowledging the power of African spirits, but he conceded that the church’s most powerful weapon against witchcraft—exorcism—was impotent against the strength and power of ‘diabolical’ African spirits. As the reputation for African spiritual strength grew, some whites became impatient with the ineffectiveness of exorcisms, as well as with the bleedings and purging that were the common medicinal remedies for most ailments in the Western world. Looking for stronger remedies, whites began to tap the strength of African healing powers, especially *calundús*. Despite the occasional acknowledgement of African spiritual powers by Catholic clergymen, most priests viewed the white embrace of *calundú* with a great deal of scorn.” (Sweet 2003:145f.)

As indicated by Calainho (2008:24) the resource of magic was not only tapped by slaves and slave masters, but also by ‘regular’ white people in Portugal and its possessions. Sweet (2003) illustrates this observation with a case of 1721 in Brazil: Barbara Morais, a white woman, who tends to her “bed-ridden” husband has “exhausted all pharmaceutical remedies” for the “mysterious illness” he suffered from, and considered that he “must be suffering from *feitigos* (witchcraft).” Consulting Domingo João Pereira, an “Angolan”, to perform divination to identify the condition, revealed, upon a “ritual with a calabash and other objects while casting some blessings on top of it ‘in the language of Angola’” that it indeed was “*feitigos*”. Pereira informed the husband that the *feitigos*

were given to you by a woman who you had a relationship with before marrying this one; and the cause she had for this was because she wanted to marry you, and since you left her and married with another, she made this for you to suffer. (Sweet 2003:125f.)

There are occasions where even the ‘master class’ “accepted the power of African divination”, when, for instance, a thief or a witch or the whereabouts of a runaway slave had to be identified. The potentiality of divination was accepted by most slaves and was therefore “almost always accepted as valid” within the community even when the subject of the divination was often from the peer group. (Sweet 2003:120) This arrangement is interesting in that it cracks open the notion that there is a clear opposition of power between the active master class and the slaves. While one could argue that the support of the master in finding the perpetrator clearly shows a reinforcement of the institution of slavery, one should not overlook that, firstly by “embracing the institution of divination” the master class admits to a foreign cultural technique for “mediating social unrest”, and, secondly, “African diviners always maintained control of the outcome of the divination and were ultimately accountable to the slave community.” A fact which sometimes even allowed Africans to “seize control of social and judicial inquiries that directly impacted the slave community. (Sweet 2003:120) This can be illustrated by a case of the supposed use of a malign form of witchcraft in Bahia 1685, where a freed slave “named Simão was accused of murdering fifteen slaves through the use of witchcraft.” Through the divination of Gracia, “a slave in the parish of Cotegipe” it was determined that Simão was a witch. Gracia’s ritual achieved two things: it did justice to both worlds in that it acknowledged African religion and Portuguese colonial rule:

In spite of this mutually satisfying remedy, Gracia’s divination ritual should not be viewed as African capitulation to the colonial order. There clearly was an element of acquiescence in meeting certain Portuguese ideals, but this acquiescence

was a pragmatic response to the Brazilian slave setting. As we have already noted, African diviners were mediators during periods of social transformation, and the oppression of chattel slavery in Brazil demanded new divination strategies. Gracia created an ingenious synthesis from the differing Portuguese and Central African sociocultural imperatives. By finding a mutually satisfying solution for both master and slaves, Gracia was able to reassert the importance of African divination, even under hostile circumstances. [...] In the final analysis, Central African divination continued to function in Brazil just as it had in Africa—as a ‘dynamic reassessment of customs and values in the face of an ever-changing world. (Sweet 2003:120ff.)

The following case shows that the outcome of a divination did not always satisfy the expectations of the white clients, and sometimes had negative consequences for the diviner as well: “Domingos Alves da Costa in Minas Gerais” owned a property on which in 1728 many slaves died. The deaths were attributed to witchcraft, and to find the *feiticeiro*, “a slave named José Mina was called to divine.” Upon the ritual José Mina informed the master that “he did not have a *feiticeiro* in his house”, and, moreover, told him to release the slaves “he had jailed as suspects for the crimes [...]”. In the eyes of Domingos Alves da Costa, there was no way that José Mina could have known about the suspects that were incarcerated. The revelations of José Mina convinced Domingos Alves da Costa that “José was an agent of the Devil”, and so he “denounced him to the Inquisition.” (Sweet 2003:134)

In other cases diviners orchestrated their revelations either “in favor of their enslaved brethren” or even took advantage of the masters’ ignorance towards the functioning of the “rituals to their own advantage.” (Sweet 2003:134f.) They even sometimes “seized outright control” of divination and outcome to take “economic advantage of their masters by accepting payment without performing divination.” Above I describe a case, where a slave “divined against [his] master’s expectations” in that he declared suspects innocent; and other “African diviners determined that the masters themselves were to blame for particular crimes.” Sweet, interestingly, adds that in “all” such cases, “the master class ceded judicial power to their slaves and provided space for slaves to resist their condition.” (Sweet 2003:136f.) Sweet identifies the use of divination by the slaves as an “opportunity to transform religious power into resistance to their enslavement”, and the “very act of consulting Africans was an admission of African spiritual potency, resulting in small cracks in colonial power and the slave regime.” (Sweet 2003:136f.) In Portugal the religious and secular authorities had learned that “witches operated alone rather than in groups”, and therefore witch panics never broke out (cf. the element of the Devils pact as described above). In the same way the notion of witch was perceived in the new world. However, later “African witches” became present in large numbers in Brazil and were soon perceived as being “capable of using their religious powers to physically harm their masters and threaten the Catholic faith.” This set the battleground for a religious conflict Sweet refers to as “witch versus witch”.

Africans, who understood their enslavement to be the result of Portuguese religious malevolence, countered with their most powerful religious antidotes, which were recognized and feared by the Portuguese as ‘witchcraft.’ In their attempts to counter the slings and arrows of slavery—mistreatment, malnutrition, disease, kinship instability, and so on—African slaves (and freed Africans) mounted a steady religious assault against the white witches who were causing them such grave misfortune. In its most benign forms, African religious power was used simply to protect slaves from their master’s assaults.” (Sweet 2003:163f.)

The conflict never rose to the “epidemic levels” of the witch-crazes in Europe, however, there was the kind of “Brazilian witchcraft accusation” in the 17th and 18th-centuries, which was “certainly more pronounced and widespread than the Portuguese variant, with Africans being the prime suspects in the murders of their fellow slaves.” Thus the selling away of slaves who had become suspects of witchcraft was not an unusual thing when masters feared the religious powers of their slaves. (Sweet 2003:170)

2.1.4 Contrasting Views on Witchcraft in History—African and Portuguese

To gain a better overview, I shall summarize and organize the Portuguese sources, also taking into consideration the few records of African voices referring to *white witches* and *white cannibals*. If one considers the beliefs and expectations of what a witch *can do*, how he or she is *described*, and what are the *social repercussions* of being a witch, one receives a list like the following.

Table 4. Beliefs about *African* Witches from the (Early Modern) Portuguese View

Witches can ...	Source
fly	Barros 1506 (Newitt 2010:112)
dry up rivers	ibid.
spoil crops	ibid.
do “ill to others by the power of the devil”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:175)
generate sexual urges in people	ibid. ¹⁴⁴
destroy “vines and trees”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:176)
tear “down houses in storms”	ibid.
kill animals	ibid.
summon the “work of evil spirits”	ibid.
cause the Devil to bring pain to other people	ibid.
increase the status of people by “consecrating them to the devil”	ibid.
cause “strife between married couples”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:175)
cause sterility	ibid.
make people ill or killing them	ibid. ¹⁴⁵
Witches are perceived to be ...	Source
“servants of the devil”	Barros 1506 (Newitt 2010:112)
“living proof of the work of the devil”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:174)
a threat to “the orthodoxy of [...] Christian society”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:174)
“miserable beings”	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:176)
“diabolical”	ibid.
The social repercussions of ‘being’ a witch can result in being ...	Source
sold into slavery or killed	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:88)
deceived even by the Devil	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:176)
arrested	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:177)
burned at the stake	Álvares 1615 (Newitt 2010:177)
eaten alive by ants	Donelha end 16 th or beginning 17 th (Newitt 2010:228f.)

¹⁴⁴ Regarding love magic in Portugal see Calainho 2008:22.

¹⁴⁵ See also Sweet (2003:125f.; 134; 145f.), who reports on a number of cases from early 18th-century Brazil.

Table 5. Beliefs about *African Witches* from the (Early Modern) African View

Witches can ...	Source
make flags from the remains of black people	As testified by Jose Monzolo in 1659 (Thornton 2003:273)
eat black people	Reported by Olaudah Equiano (1745-97) (Thornton 2003:274)
crush black people to make oil	Thornton 2003:274, 282; Sweet 2003:162
ground black people to make gunpowder	Thornton 2003:274; Sweet 2003:162
travel over the ocean by witchcraft	Thornton 2003:282
make wine from African blood	Sweet 2003:162
make cheese from African brains	ibid.
Witches are perceived to be ...	
“white cannibals”	Thornton 2003:273

These two lists are built upon the admittedly small content of witchcraft related notions that emerged from the first earliest Portuguese-African encounters (early 16th-century) until well into the times of the slave trade and the African diaspora in Brazil and elsewhere in the “New World” (18th-century). In terms of the otherwise one-sided view of what African witches mean to Europeans, I submit it is worth, despite the small scope and the lack of African documentation of African history, to put into direct contrast what either group of people thought of one another. Taken this into consideration, it is quite remarkable to see a Portuguese perspective charged with magical expectations and fears whereas on the other side there is a rather rational African view on the actual fear and terror caused by slavery. In fact, if one breaks down both views into one sentence each, merely stating what is at the core of each side of the belief, one could submit: the Portuguese were alarmed by reports on sexual and other moral perversion, weather magic (e.g. destroying crops, causing storms, etc.), as well as Devil worship, which is all posing a threat to Christianity¹⁴⁶ while the Africans had the quite more reasonable fear of being eaten, and to be turned entirely into foods and commodities like oil, wine, cheese, gunpowder, sailcloth and so forth. In regards to the fearful imagery of white cannibals and slavery, William Piersen¹⁴⁷ argues that stories like those above had the function of “collective folk wisdom that distilled the exploitative business of slavery and the slave trade” into a “mythopoeic analogy”, portraying slavery “as a kind of economic cannibalism [...]”. In that mythic sense, it is argued, “stories of white man-eaters were true enough.” Thornton (2003:257) thus concludes, that “what might have struck their masters at the time as an example of African irrationality or naivete turns out to be an important, and perhaps even radical, folk ideology.” These stories can therefore not be understood as full-fledged beliefs as they

¹⁴⁶ These notions seem to resonate much with the picture of witchcraft as it can be found in publications of that time like the *Malleus Maleficarum*.

¹⁴⁷ Piersen’s work is focused on slaves who were brought to the Americas. Piersen, William. 1993. *Black Legacy: America’s Hidden Heritage*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, and same author 1977. “White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide among New Slaves”. *Journal of Negro History* 62. 147-59. This reference to Piersen is taken from Thornton 2003:275.

miss an element that is central to all witchcraft beliefs, which is the basic question: how to deal with a witch? I submit, this is an outstanding difference between the African tales of white witches and any other witch belief that has been dealt with so far in that there is no counter-magic, no witch-finder, no witch-hunting: white witches are therefore the only witches that have to be suffered without any consequence for them whatsoever.

If one shifts the attention to the Portuguese side, one can also find divergence from the usual witchcraft setting in regards to the sanctioning. Whereas in the larger part of the rest of Europe masses of alleged witches met their ends at the inquisitorial and secular pyres, gallows, execution blocks and other means of capital punishment, Portugal at home, as well as in its possessions, did not persecute and punish witches as severely. Pietz (1987:35), in a rather gloomy expression, points out that in the Portugal of 15th- and 16th-centuries, “witchcraft was not a burning issue [...]”; thus providing one of the historical arguments for why the existence of witchcraft in the new possessions was not such a moral obstacle to Portuguese interests. As I have mentioned before, despite the fact that people continuously complained about witchcraft and magic, there seems to be not a single case of the execution of a witch in Brazil. (Burns 2003:237; Behringer 2000:65) This is different regarding the other Portuguese possessions. As I discuss above, Álvares’ narrative speaks of perhaps one execution of a witch in Cape Verde (Newitt 2010:177).

The question remains, why so little interest on the side of the Portuguese? This is a noteworthy fact, since the first engagements of the Portuguese in West Africa coincide with the beginning of the times of the European witch-crazes (roughly 1450). Both witch-craze and Euro-African encounters continued to occur simultaneously until the end of the witch-crazes (roughly 1750), when Portugal is already fully engaged in transporting slaves to the Americas¹⁴⁸. Looking at the scarcity of sources one can find in the Portuguese documentation of African witchcraft, one might assume that there simply has not been much effort on the Portuguese side to actually focus on magical issues¹⁴⁹. To illuminate this, comparably surprising disinterest¹⁵⁰, I shall discuss the early modern attitude towards witchcraft in Portuguese society, and also take into consideration Pietz’s commendably rich discussion of the conceptual history of *fetish theory*.

Portuguese Perceptions of Witchcraft

In point of fact, the entire Iberian and Italian history of the prosecution of witchcraft differed remarkably from the majority of European countries. To show the variety of attitudes towards witchcraft persecution, within only one country, one can see that witchcraft in southern Spain, for instance, shows different trials from those in northern Spain, the latter are more similar to those of southern France. Knutsen (2014:175)

¹⁴⁸ The Portuguese transported slaves to southern Europe from mid 15th-century until the end of the 16th-century, and then to the Americas from the 16th- until the 19th-century. (Bethencourt 2013:64)

¹⁴⁹ At this point, I have no means of determining in how far my account is complete regarding the representation of Portuguese sources on witchcraft during that era. However, I submit, it is striking that the major publications on the relevant source material provides only these few findings.

¹⁵⁰ In comparison to the attitude of the North-Germans, who also came as missionaries and colonizers, one can see that witchcraft may very well be a topic of central interest to Europeans.

explains this through the strong presence of the Muslim population in southern Spain who rejected the “demonological conception of witchcraft”. This is a significant implication which challenges the popular modern bias of making the Inquisition responsible as the organizer of the major part of early modern European witch-hunting, which is an incomplete view, as one must not underestimate the impact of a popular image of witchcraft in regards to witch panics. In point of fact, Portugal (together with Spain and Italy) was under the power of the Inquisition for the longest time in European history—the inquisition, which (until today) is “the most durable symbol of witchcraft prosecutions” (Levack 2006:237). However, no other country than Portugal saw as little witch-hunting (Burns 2003:237). The Portuguese Inquisition, which was “set up in 1536, and abolished in 1821”, invested much more effort into dealing with ‘Judaizers’ than witches (Gijswijt-Hofstra 1999:129; Burns 2003:237). If they put “witches and other magical offenders such as cunning folk, and preparers of love potions” on trial they proceeded much more “leniently”, so that the accused were “seldom tortured”, and in terms of punishment received publicly staged humiliations like “whippings and penances, such as being made to stand in the church door” (Burns 2003:237), rather than the death sentence, which was passed only very rarely by the Portuguese Inquisition. Regarding numbers, one can say that for the witchcraft trials of secular courts, unfortunately not many documents are preserved. There are only a “handful of cases” which were “punished at Lisbon in 1559 and 1560”, so that the “non-ecclesiastical involvement with maleficent magic” anywhere in Portugal and in its possessions remains a mystery. (Monter 2013:277) In regards to the other force, the Portuguese Inquisition, one can see that their interest in “illicit magic” only by the 18th-century reached its peak, which in consequence explains that executions with the label *witchcraft* occurred very seldom. From 818 “formal trials for superstitious magic” only four death sentences were passed (between 1626 and 1744), and “fewer than five witches” were sentenced to death at “Lisbon in 1559 by secular justice.” Additionally, there are 27 inquisitorial prisoners who were charged with illicit magic, and who died in prison. (Monter 2013:278) What emerges from the main studies conducted on the Portuguese material is the image of a “skeptical Inquisition”, which stands in spite of the fact that demonological literature was accessible and known by Portuguese Inquisitors¹⁵¹, who otherwise made extensive use of torture by the Inquisition.

There are a number of reasons to assess this difference, one lies in the lack of a notion of the Devil’s pact¹⁵², which was taken far less serious than elsewhere in Europe, and which in Portugal featured only in 36 of 818 trials. (Knutsen 2014:179) Another difference between Portugal and the rest of Europe concerns the belief in *weather magic*. Wolfgang Behringer (1995) has pointed out that escalations of witch-hunts correlate with unusually bad weather conditions and the resulting poor harvests and famines. Typical examples refer to

¹⁵¹ The entirety of Portuguese demonological literature consisted of three books of which only two remain. A notable characteristic of the two books is the “absence of worry and fear of the witches”, which “matches the lack of urgency of the Portuguese witchcraft trials [...]” (Knutsen 2014:179) Apart from this, there was also knowledge of the “demonological model” as construed by inquisitors like Bernard Gui, Jacob Sprenger, and Heinrich Institoris, which partly guided the interrogation of prisoners. (Bethencourt 1990:407)

¹⁵² Despite the missing of a clear notion of the *Devil’s pact*, the idea of the Devil as an empowering, as well as, deceiving entity, did exist nonetheless (see the description of witches and *poisoners* by Álvares in Subchapter 2.1.2 *Early Portuguese Encounters with African Witchcraft*).

undesirable weather phenomena which can threaten crops or livestock like “hail or torrential rain” (Schulte 2009b:58), “thunderstorms”, (Schulte 2009a:248) “heavy showers, downpours, snow and frost” (ibid.:219)¹⁵³. This kind of magic, even though mostly attributed to women¹⁵⁴, was also attributed to male witches¹⁵⁵. Raising the question of how exactly these people were believed to conjure up hailstorms one might refer to a case from Lorraine, France, where “sorceresses” believed they could “cause hail by beating water with a stick”, (Bever 2008:154) or as is depicted in a woodcut from Ulrich Molitor’s *De Lamii et Phitonicis Mulieribus* (Cologne 1489) one can see two peasant women who “are conjuring a hailstorm by adding a rooster and a snake to a flaming cauldron.” (see illustration two in Pavlac 2009) Monter (2013:277) claims that it is one of the “Portuguese peculiarities” that there was a “complete absence of weather magic [...]” A point to which I cannot fully agree considering the examples of the *drying up of rivers* and the *spoiling of crops* (see Table 4. *Beliefs about African Witches from the (Early Modern) Portuguese View*, p. 71). Such phenomena could well be believed to have been brought about through use of weather magic.

In regards to the Devil’s pact, one can summarize that Portuguese churchmen were no less “obsessed” with the idea of people making pacts with demons than “their counterparts elsewhere in Christendom”, and the possibility of people inflicting “physical harm through magical means” neither was doubted. However, Portuguese “inquisitors paid so little attention to reports of physical harm inflicted by witches that when they captured a suspect who had been accused of murdering fifty people, they question her *only* about her dealings with the devil.” (Monter 2013:277) Moreover, the Portuguese Inquisition “had considerable trouble imposing this idea [of collective Devil worship] on Portugal’s largely rural population.” There were only 42 confessions in regards to “illicit magic” where such gatherings were mentioned, and only “about half of those [...] admitted [to] some form of diabolical pact.” It is noteworthy, that the word *sabbat* cannot be found anywhere in the Portuguese trial records, while “in a land full of ‘New Christians’ of Jewish ancestry, *sinagogas* does.” (Monter 2013:278f.) Notably, neither one of the aforementioned people who were executed for diabolical magic during history on mainland Portugal “had been charged with inflicting any physical harm on either people or property.” Apparently, they were punished as “relapsed apostates” after confessing “on two separate occasions to making pacts renouncing Christianity [...]” (Monter 2013:278)

¹⁵³ The belief in weather magic (together with other aspects of *maleficia* like the sudden inability of cows to give milk, accidents or the dying of infants) was ordinary to “[m]ost common people through the Middle Ages and into the early modern age”. (Pavlac 2009:48f.)

¹⁵⁴ In the view of Lutheran preacher Kaspar Huberinus, women were weaker and more vulnerable to “their ‘insatiable’ lust, and also” to “anger and desire for revenge [...]” He held such “evil women” capable and responsible for poisoning, shooting, and corrupting people, and also to practicing “magic to make hail storms [...]” (Bever 2008:410) So it was that in southwestern Germany by the 1550s and 1560s the “pace of prosecutions” gained momentum when “hailstorms” were attributed to witches, resulting in “the first mass trials in the region.” (ibid.:384) As another example of weather magic one might refer to Trier as an example of “[r]uthless hunts” that “ravaged” in the territory from 1581 to 1593. Having suffered from inclement weather there is an “often cited case from 1589” regarding a village in which, “after a hunt”, “only two women were left alive”. In further corroborating the female prejudice in regards to weather magic, one needs to mention that none of the men of that village were harmed. (Pavlac 2009:63)

¹⁵⁵ Schulte (2009a:237) refers to several cases, one of which is an execution in 1575 “Mittersill, present-day” Austria of an over 70 years old parson, Ruprecht Ramsauer. He was accused together with his housekeeper, “of having worked for decades together with the Devil to produce hail and weather magic.”

Brian Levack (2006:238) specifies the observation and points out that the demonic pact did show “in most witchcraft prosecutions, but not the sabbath.” Burns (2003:237) adds: “Popular belief in Portugal usually credited witches with inborn power rather than that derived from a satanic pact”, and concludes that “the full-fledged European stereotype never developed” in Portugal where people thought of the pact “as a way for a witch to increase the magical power he or she already possessed.” Levack (2006:238) attributes this to the “widespread belief in classical forms of witchcraft” present in Spain, Portugal and Italy (Levack 2006:238)—a belief that rather involved ideas of “love magic, fortune-telling and divination” than the flying to witches sabbaths of e.g. the German Swiss witches. (ibid.) Another point in regards to the imagery among inquisitors, may be connected to the popularity of Eymeric’s *Directorium Inquisitorum* (1376). Levack (2006:239) suggests that the form of witchcraft depicted there was “ritual magic”, and while it featured the Devils pact it did not address the “sabbath or, for that matter, maleficium.” (ibid.) A further point that helps understanding popular Portuguese witchcraft imagery lies in the difference that is made between witch and sorcerer/sorceress. According to a saying, which is still in use in contemporary Portugal, “Witches are born, sorcerers are made.” Bethencourt (1990:414) argues, there are thus “two types of agents of magic in popular imagery.” While witches are “endowed with powers (innate, or obtained by transfer of power from dying witch),” a sorcerer or a sorceress has acquired her or his powers “through long apprenticeship.” These suggest “completely different modes of procedure”, in which a sorcerer or sorceress has “acquired knowledge that operates through technical mastery of magical rites”, while a witch “is prescient and operates directly and spontaneously.” Therefore the witch’s crafts are expressed mainly by curses and evil eye, but also things like “bad harvests and losses of livestock”, which are all forms of magical aggression that were feared by people. Bethencourt remarks also that the picture is still ambiguous in that a witch could also do positive things like “unveiling the future” or assume the role of a cunning woman by diagnosing “illness, exorcising evil spirits, and effecting thaumaturgical cures.” (ibid.) The witch as well as the sorceress was feared when she “lived in the midst” of the community because her “unchecked communication with the supernatural could cause collective disasters.” But still the consultation of a “wise woman in a faraway place was common practice.” Myths of the witch that is “identified solely with the forces of evil, with which she establishes a connection (a pact with the devil)” did exist and it was believed that she “periodically renewed [these pacts] in ritual ceremonies (sabbaths).” However, the “connection was not decisive [...] in characterizing the witch”, not to those people, at least, who believed the witch’s innate powers.

In summary, I can maintain, that both the lack of a Portuguese notion of collective Devil worship, as an obligatory aspect of witchcraft as well as the differentiation between the sorceress and the witch as two ambiguous but sufficiently different agents of magic informed their perception of witchcraft in West Africa. It is therefore not surprising that the early Portuguese sources on African religion (as in de Barros, Álvares, Donelha) show that exactly those characteristics of witches which were known from home (e.g. spoiling the crops, drying the rivers, flying, bringing diseases) were also applied on the African witches; and once more, the witches’ sabbath, a key motive in the rest of Europe, is neither to be found in the African context.

Fetishism Theory

The second point I shall make in regards to the Portuguese material addresses the idea of *fetishism*. The notion originated within “mercantile intercultural space” during the 16th- and 17th-centuries along the coast of West Africa (specifically at what today is Ghana and Nigeria), and it was intellectually fueled by “ongoing trade relations between culture so radically different as to be mutually incomprehensible.” The notion of fetishism is neither proper to “West Africa nor to Christian European culture” (Pietz 1987:23f.), rather is it a product of building theories across cultures. Pietz underscores the significance of the notion also in later European academic discourses, where it was appropriated “as a theoretical term by many of the major social thinkers of the nineteenth century (a ‘long’ nineteenth century extending from Kant to Freud that is, from Enlightenment to Modernism).” (Pietz 1987:23) He continues to emphasize the meaning for the “human sciences” which “constituted themselves in this period (sociology, anthropology, psychology)”, and “did so in part by taking a position in the ongoing debate over the explanation of the history and nature of religion proposed by the theory of fetishism”, which by the 1800s “was fully established in European intellectual discourse [...]” (Pietz 1987:23)

One could argue, that the notion, in a way, forms a conceptual bridge beginning with the first European endeavors in Africa over the circulation in Western social scientific discourse in the 19th- and early 20th-centuries until it falls out of fashion in the latter context but it still can be found in popular contexts, as for instance in both the terminology of the Bremen missionaries¹⁵⁶, and the online context¹⁵⁷.

The Portuguese who encountered African cultures soon replaced the notion of *idolatriy* by the notion of *fetish*, as they came to understand that religion in West Africa “did not in fact center on idols, but rather on material composites that were supposed to produce concrete, material results.” (MacGaffey 1996:264) What lies at the bottom of the Portuguese understanding of idolatry, according to Pietz (1987) can be traced back to Church Fathers like Tertullian and Augustine¹⁵⁸. The notion idolatry involved “either the vain worship of mere material things and external forms or the use of a material idol as the medium through which demonic spirits were invoked and conversed with.” (Pietz 1987:30) The conceptually competing notion of witchcraft (*feitiço*), in contrast, was much less accurate and not easy to differentiate from idolatry, at least in the beginning. This can be illustrated by the fact that the two notions constantly appear in “conjunctive phrases like ‘idolatry and witchcraft’ (*idolatria y feitiçari*) [sic!] in the Portuguese voyage accounts and ‘superstition and witchcraft’ (*supersticiones y hechicerias*) in sixteenth-century Spanish treatises on witchcraft”, which, as Pietz (1987:31) concludes, “indicates the conceptual failure of the theory of idolatry to determine the discourse about ‘witchcraft’ (much less to explain the actual phenomena being designated.” The word *fetish*,

¹⁵⁶ See Subchapter 2.2.3 *Witchcraft in Bremen Missionary Correspondence*.

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter 3, where readers (e.g. *Bechemiiba* (Paris), comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, August 1; *SARPONG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, June 13) as well as journalists make reference to so-called fetish-priests (e.g. *Fetish priest jailed 20 years for rape*, Gh.Web. 2009, June 13).

¹⁵⁸ While Augustine understood *idol* to denote “any manufactured cultic image not addressed to the true God”, Tertullian went further and more general with his “new Christian supercategory of idolatry” which covered crimes as well as wrong actions in the sense that they “at the least, [...] violated the will and commandment of God, and, at the most, they served the will of some false god, one of the fallen angel or their chief, the Devil.” (Pietz 1987:27)

which first occurred in its pidgin form, *Fetisso*, derives from the Portuguese words *feitiço*, *feiticeiro*, and *feitiçaria*, which were all part of 15th-century vocabulary of Portuguese sailors who applied it “to the objects, persons and practice” they deemed connected to witchcraft. The Portuguese terms, moreover, are taken from the “Latin *facticus* or *factitius*, an adjective formed from the past participles of the verb *facere*, ‘to make.’” (Pietz 1987:24) It was used for a “wide array of African objects and practices under a category that, for all its misrepresentation of cultural facts, enabled the formation of more-or-less noncoercive commercial relations between members of bewilderingly different cultures.” (Pietz 1987:23) MacGaffey notes, however, that it took some time for the “associated theory [...] to develop.” In the beginning “African fetishes were not sharply distinguished as to their nature from Christian sacramental objects”¹⁵⁹, however, the later distinction which becomes introduced more and more reflects also the politics of that time. While objects that were “consecrated by the church [...] were approved, similar objects related to rival hierarchy were disapproved.”¹⁶⁰

Further, progress was made in the theory of fetishism, when the Dutch arrived in the first half of the 17th-century and took over West Africa from the Portuguese. The presence of Dutch merchants, whose religious affiliation was Calvinist, led to the identification of both African amulets and Catholic relics as false religion. (MacGaffey 1996:265) The protestant merchants, moreover, were engaged in trade and tried to develop “a general explanation of African social order as being based on the principles underlying the worship of Fetisso.” The Europeans struggled with the “alienness of African culture” and were, in particular, bewildered by the African “resistance to ‘rational’ trade relations”, which by the theory of fetishism could be explained. The Portuguese before the Dutch had already believed that Africans seemingly made intellectual errors by misattributing “causal relation to random association”, i.e. “understanding causality through principles of chance encounter and personification”, or in more general terms “anthropomorphization”. These conceptual flaws were given as explanation for the supposed “distorted manner” of African superstition in their religious practices, “their perverse social order”, which to the European observer seemed to be built upon “fear, credulity, and violence.” (Pietz 1987:24) Moreover, the supposed propensity of the primitive “to personify technological objects” conjoins with the “mercantile perception that the non-European gives false values to material objects” in the fetish discourse, and in the eyes of Europeans explains “the false estimation of the *value* of material objects.” This lay the grounds for a “general discourse about the superstitiousness of non-Europeans within a characteristically modern rhetoric of realism, which recognized as ‘real’ only technological and commercial values.” (Pietz 1987:42)

In the 15th- and 16th-century of Portugal, the witchcraft discourse did not, as discussed above, evolve into a full-fledged witch-craze like in other European countries. According to Pietz, this could to some

¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, in Kongo both were called “nkisi” by the missionaries themselves. (MacGaffey 1996:264)

¹⁶⁰ To illustrate this with another example from Kongo: “Capuchin missionaries called nganga, was were the local magicians, whose prescriptions the missionaries matched point for point: women about to give birth should wear Christian relics instead of the magicians’ mats; instead of binding their infants with superstitious cords made by magicians, mothers should make cords from palm leaves consecrated on Palm Sunday; instead of planting a magic guard to save their corns crop and make it fertile, people should use consecrated palm branches.” (MacGaffey 1996:264)

degree account for the Portuguese imperialists characterizing African religion as *feitiçaria*, in that after they had failed to conquer Guinea, they sought to exploit it through trade, and they “would not have traded with ‘witches’ conceived in the strong sense of the word proper to the witch craze.” (Pietz 1987:35) The novelty in the notion of Fetisso, and consequently the moving away from *idolatria* and *feitiçaria* was also made possible because what emerged from the “cross-cultural interaction on the West African coast was utterly alien to the ideas of the Christian theory of idolatry.”¹⁶¹ (Pietz 1987:45) Early accounts of Portuguese voyages show that both notions were used as “distinct but paired terms” and applied to the “superstitious practices of black African societies.” Over time the “greater descriptive accuracy of *feitiço* over *idolo*” in addressing “the sacramental objects of African religion” caused the Portuguese to rather classify African religion as *feitiçaria* rather than *idolatria*. (Pietz 1987:37)

Summary

In summary, I can maintain a few points: there is a scarcity of secondary sources of Portuguese interactions with witchcraft. This can either show that historians thus far have not shown much interest in the topic, or, what I think is a better explanation, the Portuguese themselves have not given much effort to reporting on witchcraft. The Portuguese throughout early modern times never perceived witchcraft to be such a scandalous thing as other early modern European nations did, and consequently carried this attitude into the new possessions and later in the colonies. This attitude is partly grounded in the fact that witchcraft never was perceived to become a larger threat for society. Portuguese witches operated alone rather than in groups that convened at witches’ sabbaths. Even in the African context, when African religion (which was conflated with Devil worship or witchcraft) posed a real threat to Christianity¹⁶², the Portuguese admonished and complained but never incited witch-hunts of any kind. Neither did they do so during the African diaspora in Brazil, where despite the intensifying attention of the Portuguese Inquisition (upon a growing number of complaints) regarding magical offenses, there is not a single execution because of witchcraft.

In regards to the comparison of African and European views (despite the small scope of the material) I can maintain that in direct comparison the picture of what constitutes an African witch for the European viewer is much more ‘colorful’ and ‘magical’ than the more realistic, and perhaps rather metaphorical image of what constitutes a European witch for the African eye. While the comparison has shown that from the perspective of the Portuguese witches can fly, dry up rivers, spoil crops, and do numerous other magical things, the African perspective on European slave traders simply was the fearful expression of being eaten by white cannibals. None of the constituting elements that form this brand of ‘witchcraft belief’ is based on

¹⁶¹ In the Christian theory of idolatry there are two distinct entities, “the material idol and the demonic spirit invoked through it”, while the notion of Fetisso identified a “deluded personification of material objects whose true efficacy lay in physical and psychological rather than spiritual causality.” Pietz argues that the relations that form the basis of “Fetisso” rather taking the form of metonymy as in the use of amulets to “affect personal health and fortune”, instead of the “metaphoric logic of idols.” (Pietz 1987:45)

¹⁶² As illustrated by João de Barros and his reference to the accession of Afonso I as the king of Kongo in 1506. In regards to Devil worship, it is well to acknowledge that this too was an African allegation towards the Europeans. Africans held European inventions for things of the Devil as reported by a Venetian merchant named Cadamosto in the 15th-century, who “mentioned that the blacks marvelled at the Europeans’ guns and said they must be ‘an invention of the devil’s.’” (Pietz 1987:41)

anything that requires much more metaphysical thinking than is needed for the idea of turning African brains into cheese, draining their blood for wine or grinding their scorched bones into gunpowder.

The final point I would like to make regards the notion of fetish which bears witness to one of the many attempts of Europeans to capture African religious and cultural phenomena, and which is still in use today. Despite the fact that it has fallen out of fashion in academic contexts, it still is in use as a concept of popular witchcraft and magic related terminology, and it thus connects contemporary popular parlance in the African context (Ghana) with the times of the first European attempts of describing African culture. There are two points in the history of term fetish, as so minutely reviewed by Pietz (1987), which I want to highlight: a) firstly, the trade and commerce related character of the situation in which the term originated as well as the politics that follow from it, and, secondly, the explanatory background for the European observer why Africans reacted so ‘strangely’ in trade relations:

a) regarding the *trade and commerce related context* that drove European engagement in West Africa from the beginning on, I can corroborate that Europeans have not only imposed their world view on Africans, but they have also clearly changed their own views and evolved central religious tenets (from idolatria to feitiçaria) in contact situations with Africans. Moreover, one can assess what potential the economic context has in shaping the Afro-European understanding of witchcraft up until today (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1993).

b) in regards to the explanatory power of fetish theory to account for ‘African otherness’ I would like to underline that it builds upon observations one could to some degree understand as psychological explanations. By resting the theory of fetishism on on differences in the mental perception and the conceptualizing of *causality* as well as *personification*, and declaring categorial errors in African thinking by assuming wrong associations between the *randomness of chance* and *intentionality* with simple cause and effect relations, the Portuguese deliver an explanation which at its core builds on differences in cognition.

2.2 Modern, Colonial Encounters: The Norddeutsche Mission in Ghana

Similarly to what is presented in the preceding part, I raise the question what images and concepts constitute the understanding of witchcraft in the contact situation between Ghanaians and the missionaries from Bremen. I suggest to zoom in on one of the most shaping events in West African history, the christianization during the 19th- and 20th-century. Firmly situated within, and connected with the social changes to the societies and their religions, that were brought about by colonialism, the topic of witchcraft emerges from this particular European and African contact situation. Showing its potential of change while posing a continuing theological and practical challenge to the Missions’ theologians, the topic of witchcraft, in fact, is part of the missionary correspondence.

The BRM has conducted one of the most ‘successful’¹⁶³ missionary endeavors in Ghana. Of course, other missions to Ghana (as for instance Basel and Wesleyan) were equally ‘successful’, and thus are as likely to have shaped the ideas of witchcraft as they can be found in contemporary Ghana. One of the rationales to specifically decide to focus on the BRM is based on the fact that the German speaking missionaries (both Bremen and Basel) were very interested as well as talented linguists, and comparatively more successful in documenting language than missionaries from other European mission. (cf. Hastings 1994:341) Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect the BRM (as well as BAM) to have been in deeper contact with African world view as the work of a linguist includes in-depth analysis of the foreign concepts. A second reason to focus on the BRM lies in the fact that Birgit Meyer (1996 and 1999) through her research provides an intriguing and very helpful background in which I can situate my own research. Meyer demonstrates that the Ewe notion of the Devil originated in the Bremen missionary contact situation. It seems therefore reasonable to ask the question if some of these obviously important images of the Devil (or of witchcraft) are still detectable today in the online setting.

The general purpose of this Subchapter is thus to gain an overview of the early Bremen missionaries’ perspectives on, and experiences with the topic of witchcraft among the Ewe people (situated in what today is referred to as Ghana and Togo) by giving special regard to Birgit Meyer’s work. This can then be used a basis on which the findings from the Bremen missionary correspondence can be discussed. In the final part of this Chapter, the findings from both the Portuguese part with those from the Bremen part shall be discussed to generate further questions for the online material discussion in Chapter 3.

Mission and Colonialism

Indeed, as Njoku (2005:218) argues, the colonial enterprise, on the one hand, and the Christian mission, on the other, have possibly been the two most important events in history that have shaped to a considerable part the Africa of today. The third major event is discussed in the part before under the notion of Atlantic slave trade. Mission and colonization occurred almost at the same time, and both events have shaped the economic, political landscape of Africa, and changed its original borders and demarcations. Also, as the missionary endeavors are concerned, the changes have affected the religion and culture of African societies and introduced new world views. Colonialism and missionary activity both has been present in Africa long before the Berlin Conference of 1884/5, however, the latter event marked a significant role in the “formalization and structuring” of colonial endeavors.

It was at that conference that European powers, hell bent on getting a piece of the huge cake that was Africa, held talks to declare for themselves ‘spheres of influence’ and authority and put some civility and ‘legitimacy’ into the scramble for Africa. Like the World Missionary Conference that was to follow about two decades later (Edinburgh 1910), the Berlin Conference was geared towards saving the European powers the necessary shame, damage and wastefulness that would arise from waging wars with one another in order to acquire and consolidate colonies in Africa. (Njoku 2005:219f.)

¹⁶³ The word ‘success’ is, of course, to be treated carefully, since a ‘successful’ mission is bound to the replacement of African traditional religions. The notion ‘successful’ therefore describes solely the Bremen perspective and makes no general statement.

At the same time the Berlin Conference gave “clear form and order to the scramble for Africa”, and in that way also “indirectly” prepared the way for “stability and order” in regards to the missionary endeavors. (Njoku 2005:220)

The fight between Protestantism and Catholicism as theological backdrop of 19th- and 20th-century missionary enterprise in Africa

Njoku (2005:224) argues that even though the actual reformation seems to lie “in the dim past”, the echoes of the event build the “most important theological backdrop” to the mission endeavors of the 19th- and 20th-centuries. In his view, the “resourcefulness, the liturgical creativity and the administrative autonomy”, which had emerged from the reformation has not subsided in the 19th-century but instead it “found a new battle front, a new seemingly virgin arena for self-recreation, for self-glorification and for recruiting new membership into an epic battle for supremacy.” This struggle for supremacy is expressed in terms of “beliefs or doctrinal heritage” and power, considering that “Rome was still seen by nations that had opted out of the Catholic Church as a foreign power exerting overarching influence and authority over their national affairs.” But also there was struggle outside of Christianity and in regards to “Islam as a rival religion.” So that for some Christian missions, Catholic and Protestant alike, it was understood to be the task to root out Islam from Africa¹⁶⁴, or at least to stop its spreading, by converting the “pagans” before Islam could do so. (Clarke 1986:87) In regards to the ‘traditional’ religion/s of Africa, one can see that there was hardly any exchange whatsoever between the latter and the varieties of new Christian missionary Churches; there was almost no attempt of bringing in dialogue the Christian faith and its way of ritual and worship together with the ones found in the ‘traditional’ African setting. The Christians almost by default assumed in triumphalistic way that anything ‘traditional’ was inferior, and “had no theology worthy of the name”, but instead was diabolical¹⁶⁵. In a questionable continuation of the creation of pejorative labels for African phenomena, the Christian missionaries in the 19th and 20th mapped the African religious setting in a similar way like the Portuguese. The “visible leaders, custodians and [...] chief priests”, as well as “sacred objects, [...] spaces, places and shrines, [...] observances, rituals, totems and taboos of the traditional religions”, were equally disdained and disrespected as devilish. (Njoku 2005:226f.)

Indeed flouting these observances and taboos, violating these sacred places and objects, were the rule rather than the exception among the Christian missionaries both Catholic and Protestant. Such sacrilegious acts against the traditional religions were ways of demonstrating the supremacy of the Christian religion over them, of interiorizing them as publicly, as vocally and as scornfully as possible their visible representations, their main religious rival in most parts of Africa where the Islamic influence had not yet penetrated.” (Njoku 2005:227)

¹⁶⁴ Njoku gives the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) as a “classic example.” The Christian missions were determined to stop the spreading of the rival religion, and even moved into space in which Islam had already established itself, attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. The rivalry between Christianity and Islam was apparent at a time when dialogues between religions or ecumenism were not yet practiced. (Njoku 2005:226)

¹⁶⁵ The work of Birgit Meyer (1996, 1999) and the discussion on the Bremen sources (Subchapter 2.2.2), illustrate how ‘traditional’ African religion is seen as the work of the Devil, which has been accepted by the BRM and by the Ewe Christians alike. It is noteworthy to see, however, that it has not only facilitated the acceptance of Christianity among the Ewe but also in consequence led to an indirect reconfirmation of the ‘old’ (African) religion, as it allowed the Christian Devil to re-enter the daily lives of Ewe Christians through the ‘old’ gods.

But Christianity was not the only source that fueled the European superiority complex. Keeping in mind that these events took place at a time when European discourses were absorbed by what Comaroff and Comaroff (1993:xii) refer to as a “long-standing European myth”; or as Njoku calls it “epiphanies of the material culture of the Western civilization”, and its discoveries in science, technology and the industrial revolution, one can see how this all “translated into an unprecedented cultural pride [...]” This also reflected in the spirit of the missionaries, and, as Njoku (2005:228f.) argues: “It is therefore not surprising that the missionaries fully embraced the idea of a ‘civilizing mission’, the idea of being heirs of a culturally superior people going to share the riches and glories of their culture with people from cultures generally assumed to be inferior to their own.” This, in Njoku’s view also shows in the attitudes among the Europeans themselves in regards to “cultural battles, namely, who was the more superior as a distinct civilization: the French? Or the German? Or the English? Or the Irish?” (ibid.)

2.2.1 The Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft and its Activities Among the Ewe Society in the 19th- and early 20th-Centuries

The “Norddeutsche Mission”, in West Africa known as ‘Bremen Mission’ is the Bremen branch of the Norddeutsche Missions-Gesellschaft, formed 1836 in Hamburg which by mid-century “had taken over management of the missions” (Ustorf 2011:72). According to its contemporary statutes it is an incorporation of Churches of equal rights with office in Bremen, involving the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo as well as Ev.-Luth. Kirche Oldenburg, Ev.-Ref. Kirche, Bremische Ev. Kirche and Ev. Landeskirche Lippe. (Ustorf 2003:383) Its missionary ideals, movements and reactions to events are reflected in several phases of its history, as can, for instance, be seen in its interweaving of mission and overseas trade, its ambivalent stance towards imperialism, reactions to markedly historical and social/cultural events such as World War I, the increasing loss of importance in Africa in the mid 20th-century or its reactions towards the “Pentecostal Rebellion” (Ustorf 2003:383). The religious orientation of the mission was of pietistic nature, and entailed an “interpretation of culture by standards that were believed to be biblical.” (Ustorf 2011:73) Franz Michael Zahn, theologian and BRM Inspector for almost 40 years, and, as Sundkler and Steed (2004:115) describe him, a “Church leader with a mind of his own”, declared the mission’s standpoint to be “neither in Wittenberg nor in Geneva nor in Rome but Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives.” This conservative movement expressed itself, amongst other things, through vehement opposition of “both the routinization of church life and the modern, post-enlightenment liberal Protestant theology” in its attempt of reconciling “faith with modern science”. (Meyer 1996:202) In regards to the organizational structure, BRM Board included “five pastors and six businessmen” (Sundkler and Steed 2004:115), therefore wealthy people, while the missionaries themselves were “recruited from the lower classes.” Most of them came from southern Germany, “especially from Württemberg, which was known for

the vitality of its Priests tradition” (Meyer 1996:201).¹⁶⁶ They were trained at BAM Seminary, which provided the prospects of higher education for people of financially less fortunate background. (Ustorf 2011:73) The missionaries usually, however, received not much more than “basic education” and were trained as “farmers, craftsmen, or petty traders”, which also reflects the Pietist ideal of “life and work in a well-ordered rural setting.” A skeptical attitude towards modern developments in this sense also functioned as an incentive to bring the word of God to the “heathens” who appeared to be in a pristine condition in regards to modernity. (Meyer 1996:202) Birgit Meyer compares the missionaries’ concept of the modern world to the “Broad Path” that leads to damnation, which can be found “in the popular lithography, ‘The Broad and the Narrow Path’. Satan’s Broad Path is expressed by the worldly pleasures and its temptations in regards to sexuality, the enjoyment of alcohol, gambling, and other “forms of entertainment”, which were made accessible to an “increasing number of people [...] in the course of industrialization and urbanization.” On the other side, however, the missionaries saw the “Narrow Path”, which rewards its pilgrims with “salvation and eternal enjoyment in the Heavenly Jerusalem.” (Meyer 1996:202)

The mission worked “in close, though not always peaceful, proximity to Bremen overseas merchants” (Ustorf 2011:72), and they realized David Livingstone’s formula of “Legitimate trade and Christianity” unlike any other mission in Africa. (Sundkler and Steed 2004:115) The establishing of contacts to German trading houses, like that of the Vietor family in particular, supported the mission financially for decades, and thus enabled both sides to connect the spreading of the Gospel with trade at the West African ‘Slave Coast’. Mission personnel as well as property were transported by ships of the Vietor company, also providing “Togo and West Africa with commodities”, which due to their Pietist orientation excluded products like “schnaps, weapons and gunpowder.” In sum, the cooperation between the mission and the trading families can be expressed in “how the mission could help trade and how trade helped the mission’.” (Sundkler and Steed 2004:115)

November 14th 1847 the BRM began its activity among the Ewe people in an area which today belongs to southeastern Ghana and southern Togo. Bremen missionary Lorenz Wolf had a mission station built in Peki (a small town in southeastern Ghana), which only six years later (1853) had to be given up due to local disputes. The headquarters was then relocated to the coast of Ghana, in the very south of the country, from where the mission “expanded over the years back into the interior and eastward.” (Greene 2002:19) The next approximately 100 years (1850-1950) brought profound changes to the “Ewe-speaking peoples of Anlo”¹⁶⁷. Besides being confronted with German Pietism through the missionaries, the Anlo people had to deal with

¹⁶⁶ Njoku (2005:229f.) claims that it was this lower class background that to some extent also shaped the motivation in the missionaries to seize the chance of missionary work in Africa to enrich one’s own identity. In this way, the “poor missionary” could “etch his or her name in the sands of time.” In the mission they could be “creative” and “be in charge and in authority in a way that could possibly never have been available to him or her at home.”

¹⁶⁷ The Anlo people belong to the Ewe-speaking peoples, occupying land at the West African coast between the two rivers Volta and Mono of contemporary Ghana and Togo. The “major entrepôt in the Anlo Traditional State” is Keta. (Akyeampong 2001:1) Below it is argued, that the contemporary cultural identity of Ewe is based on interference by German missionaries in the 19th- and 20th-centuries. Therefore, it is not always clear whether an instant (as for instance a historical event) concerns the Anlo or Ewe exclusively or both. I shall speak of *Ewe*, while keeping in mind to refer to the linguistic group, and not necessarily an ethnic or cultural identity, with the exception of referencing the work of Sandra Greene (2002), which clearly refers to the Anlo people.

the “political, economic, and cultural consequences of their incorporation into the British empire.” Both occurrences had a strong impact on Anlo society and their cultural identity.

European colonialism did more than accelerate changes in the Anlo political and economic institutions, which were already altered by centuries of contact with other African communities and the West. And it did more than generate changes more rapid than had ever been seen before in social relations and religious beliefs. European colonialism destabilized the very terms by which the Anlo had come to understand themselves and certain elements within their physical environment. (Greene 2002:1)

One of the fundamental changes in society was enforced by the German missionaries of the BRM: the building of Ewe cultural identity upon linguistic affiliation. Basel as well as Bremen missionaries “were excellent linguists and more adaptive than the British.” Particularly, one missionary named Johann Christaller stands out in this respect as he produced “a series of outstanding translations in Twi in the 1850s and 1860s.” (Hastings 1994:341) Considering Anlo Ewe as “the purest form” of the language, the missionaries saw it as the basis of written Ewe as well as the Ewe language which was spoken in the missionary congregations, which fostered the standardization of the language. In the eyes of the missionaries such a standardization would facilitate the “reunification of the scattered Ewe ‘tribes’ speaking various ‘dialects’ as one ‘people’ with one ‘language’.” (Meyer 1999:59) The Bremen missionaries followed the 19th-century Protestant myth regarding the “evolution of heathendom” (Meyer 1996:210). They were convinced that “originally all people on earth had been united by one language and the worship of one God.” However, the people were punished by God upon building of *the tower*, and the contesting of the power of God, which who dispersed them and made “them speak different languages.” This scattering of people had caused “religious and linguistic degeneration” in the form of polytheism when linguistic unity was destroyed. (Greene 2002:19) In their view, “all descendants of Noah’s cursed son Ham had turned into Devil worshippers”, which portrayed the Ewe as “heathens”, belonging to those people who have become detached from God. Over the course of time and due to their continuous worship of the Devil¹⁶⁸, Ewe language and culture had “degenerated”, and it was now the main “task of the mission to lead them away from Satan back to the Christian God.” (Meyer 1996:210) The emphasizing of the power of language should lead the Ewe to reconnect with their “monotheistic past”, so the missionaries defined the “various Ewe-Speaking peoples in the region as a linguistic community.”¹⁶⁹ By taking the “coastal Anlo dialect as their guide”, and creating a written language upon it, the missionaries proclaimed a “worthy container for the accommodation of the Gospel”, and forced “all Ewe who attended the schools and churches,” that were built by the BRM, to learn the language; a fact which enabled the building of Ewe identity “where none had existed before.” (Greene 2002:19) To cope with a “rather messy situation”, as the Bremen missionaries did not understand the organization of the Ewe in regards to their central places, “they simply ignored divergences in the origin traditions [...] and published this refurbished history in their quarterly mission magazine in 1877.” (Greene 2002:20)

¹⁶⁸ The Devil in Ewe is *Abosam*.

¹⁶⁹ Add into the text the disregarding of cultural centers, like Notsie, to illustrate the ignorance of the missionaries towards Anlo, Akan, Ewe culture, lumping all together for linguistic reasons. (Greene 2002:19ff.; Akyeampong; Meyer)

The artificial lumping together of social and ethnic identities actually worked out, so that by 1914 “local Ewe-speaking elites embraced the concept” of a single Ewe identity, “unified by language, culture, and history”, and they “encouraged others to embrace it as well.” (Greene 2002:22)

With the beginning of the first World War, the “end of direct German missionary activity in the area” was marked. By then “53 Europeans and 215 local assistants attended to 8,274 Christians in eight mission centres and 160 outstations throughout the region.” (Greene 2002:19)¹⁷⁰ In the same year (1914) the “mission-educated Anlo paramount chief Togbui Sri II offered 10,000 men to the British government” to support the “defeat of the Germans who had exercised colonial control over Togo since the 1890s.” (Greene 2002:22f.) After the war the former German colony was “occupied by both French and British forces”, and chiefs as well as local elites (latter had been educated by the BRM) negotiated with British forces the

inclusion of all Ewe-speaking people into the British colony of the Gold Coast in order to mitigate the social and economic difficulties that resulted from the severing of family, village, and economic relations through incorporation into the colonies of two different European powers. (Greene 2002:23)

However, the endeavor failed, “and the League of Nations formally recognized French and British control over the former German colony of Togo.” (ibid.)¹⁷¹

Anlo and Missionary Conceptions of Body, Soul and Illness in the 19th-century

One of the points which bears conceptual similarities as well as divergences regards how the Bremen missionaries and Anlos understood what is body and soul. To better understand in how far witch beliefs were perceived by either side, one needs to develop an understanding of the basic Anlo and Bremen conceptions of body, soul and illness.

In regards to the beliefs about the body, both groups, the Ewe and the missionaries, understood it to be more than just “a mechanical entity composed of blood, organs, flesh, and brain”, and it was clear to both that the body “was also a site associated with the spiritual.” The Anlos saw the body as “intimately connected” to “spiritual components” which they called “*luwo* and *gbogbo*” and which suffused the physical body with “life and a personal self.” The Bremen missionaries, on the other hand, saw the body as “animated or enlivened by ‘the guiding purposive power of a soul’, or *anima*, which was the “agent of consciousness [...]”, a God-given “prime mover of human actions.” (Greene 2002:92) In terms of differences, one can see that for the Anlo “the soul was an inherently powerful entity”, which was believed to be able to “induce illness in the physical self”, and “influence others even after the body’s death”, when for instance “its power was not recognized in those ceremonies associated with the belief in reincarnation.” The Bremen

¹⁷⁰ As the war has broken out many missionaries had to work in the armed forces, e.g. as chaplain, and therefore to leave Africa, while the number of remaining German missionaries in what is today Nigeria, Togo and Cameroon, were deported by the ‘enemy’ governments of Britain and France. This reduced the number of European missionaries and consequently brought about a stronger presence of “African partnership and leadership [...]” (Clarke 1986:87)

¹⁷¹ The arrangement lasted until 1956 when through a plebiscite held in the United Nations, the “residents of that section of the former German colony of Togo”, who “had been separated from Togo after World War I” were asked if they “wished to join formally the Gold Coast” (“which was in the last stages of becoming an independent Ghana), or if they wanted to “continue under British trusteeship”. The result was that those people concerned (then in British Togoland) joined Ghana. (Greene 2002:23)

missionaries, in contrast, rejected the idea that “one did not have control over one’s actions”, but instead found it important to stress that the “status of one’s soul” also determined the “nature of one’s actions”; it was therefore not only possible to “influence the soul [...] but also [to] control it.” One was responsible in so far as to choose that path of one’s life, which pleased God: a righteous path, in which one controls those impulses upon which one might do harm to others; an idea which was shared to some extent by the Anlo. This view, however, was different in one point: while the Anlos saw “unchangeable aspects of one’s character”, the Bremen missionaries expected one to “exercise mastery over those personality traits [...]” (Greene 2002:93f.) Differences like these also regarded the “relationship between the body and the soul.” The Anlos believed in a more dialectic relationship of body and soul in that “actions taken by the body implicated and influenced the soul while actions taken by the soul necessarily implicated the physical self.” The Bremen missionaries, on the other hand, saw body and soul as separate, and did not conceive of the soul as “an entity that operated as a consciousness separate from yet intimately linked to the physical self.” They believed the “soul could not directly influence” one’s body, not to mention the “health of anyone else [...]”; sickness, they believed, was largely “caused by natural causes.” (Greene 2002:95) The Anlo believed, moreover, that the “spiritual content of one’s self” could be strengthened in way that “gave the body enhanced spiritual power”, which, in turn, could be used either for the welfare of society or to harm others, “as witches did.” While not all, but most, illnesses were understood to be due to “sacred intervention” (like “the spiritual aspect of the self, various deities, other spiritually powerful individuals, or the souls of the dead”), the Bremen missionaries mostly discarded such notions. Souls of individuals, alive or dead, could not affect oneself or other, neither did they believe in the Existences of the Anlo’s many deities.” The work of God and the Devil and “their ability to influence the body”, was, besides a growing acceptance for “European scientific ideas” of the 19th- and 20th-centuries, the only way available to missionaries to explain the existence of diseases¹⁷². (Greene 2002:97f.) Where there was no trained medical personnel, the missionaries had to treat whom they could by themselves, but recognizing the limitations of their capabilities, the missionaries “requested medical practitioners from Bremen to treat the physical ailments that afflicted those whom they served.” In regards to what they perceived as “spiritual illnesses”, such as “lust, gluttony, greed, and other anti-social and egoistical excesses” the missionaries reserved those for themselves. Diseases like that were brought about by the Devil, and only through the deliverance of the Anlo people was it possible to teach them how to differ between which disease is caused by physical or spiritual causes, and thus had to be treated with the appropriate techniques. While physical ailments had to be treated with “purely physical treatment” (e.g. through “herbal remedies or treatments designed by scientists”), spiritual illnesses would be engaged with a cleansing of the soul; and in both cases it was important to recognize the power of God as well as that of the Devil. (Greene 2002:98)

¹⁷² Explanations included the notion that diseases were caused by “miasma, and, later, parasites and germs.” (Greene 2002:98)

In regards to the Anlo Ewe notion of witchcraft in the 19th-century, Greene (2002:89) explains that people are not born with witchcraft powers or even have the ‘natural’ wish to harm others, but instead must receive witchcraft from other witches, most of the times even without consciously knowing about it. (Greene 2002:89) From the perspective of the Bremen missionaries witches were human beings who were the vessel of a “mysterious power” that could sometimes leave the body and hurt others or even kill them. Signs which give away that one is a witch can consist in the dreaming of specific dreams, for instance if one saw oneself as a dog “eating piles of garbage [or] believing oneself to be a bat”. Becoming conscious that one possess witchcraft, one can consult a person with spiritual powers to free one from the spirit of witchcraft. However, it is only possible if one has not yet used their witchcraft to kill somebody else. If one has already killed, it would be too late to be saved. In the reported belief of the Anlo Ewe a witch kills by first assuming the appearance of a flame and then “lying on the chest of the victim while exerting great pressure.” The victim, mute and paralyzed, has to wait until the witch has sucked the blood, which is then spat into a pot and hidden; the victim will finally die from blood loss. (Greene 2002:89) It was expected from those “unwittingly infected with the witch spirit” to “manage their situation once they became aware of it by turning to somebody who can help to clear out the ‘witching spirit’.” Those, on the other hand, who became victims to the witchcraft attacks of others went to a healer “who would remove the spiritually induced illness that might be manifested in the body as ‘magic strings’ or cords, worms, cowry shells, or small stones.” (Greene 2002:90)

The Devil as Common Tongue?

In her work on Ewe society, Birgit Meyer (1996, 1999) focuses on the imagery of the Devil, which, as she argues, “is a product of the encounter between Africans and Western missionaries, a hybrid form which helped to constitute the reality in which both parties came to terms with each other.” Meyer goes on to state, in reference to Comaroff and Comaroff (1993), that the imagery of the Devil and its social implications bear similarities to that of the *witch*, as it “embodies ‘all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself, of its inescapable enticements, its self-consuming passions, its discriminatory tactics, its devastating social costs’ [...]” (Meyer 1999:xxiii) To develop a basis for a discussion of the survey of Bremen missionaries’ correspondence and its implications for contemporary witchcraft discourses in Ghana, one needs to further the understanding of Ewe religious concepts, and introduce Meyer’s insightful work on the Devil.

The Devil did not only play a crucial role in the world view of the missionaries, who exported the Christian version of it to the Ewe, but it was also readily accepted by the Ewe, in fact, providing a conceptual “building block” which facilitated an Ewe understanding of Christianity. At the core of it lies a central dichotomy, which was equally shared by the Bremen missionaries, and their Pietist world view; a view which was “continuously communicated” to the Ewe. This allowed the latter to “dissociate themselves from the old religion”, when the old religion was perceived as “pagan and backward.” The dichotomy between good and evil, i.e. God and Devil, had two dimensions: a) *socially*, in that it entailed the “diabolization of

traditional practices” allowed the “new [Christian] elite” to conceive of themselves as different from others, and allowed them to look down on others by considering themselves as “more advanced”; and b) *spatially*, in that it allowed to ‘make a complete break with the past’¹⁷³. In regards to the spatial and temporal metaphor, one needs to understand that the Ewe associate God with the *future*, and the Devil with the *past*. Time is perceived as an “epistemological category” and it enables the Ewe to “draw a rift between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘now’ and ‘then’, ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’, and, of course, ‘God’ and the ‘Devil’. As the “Lord of all heathen gods and spirits” the Devil referred to the “matter of the ‘past’” and as a Christian one should break away from anything related to that. This, however, denies the fact that Ewe religion was actually coeval with Christianity, and thus had to be conceptualized as something “existing somewhere back in time, yet still threatening to manifest itself in Christian lives.” (Meyer 1999:214) This brought the so-called “old gods and ghosts”, now conceived of as “agents of the Devil”, to the present of both Ewe and missionaries. For the Ewe this relating to the Devil and demons was not merely a conceptual problem; they perceived the threat as a real threat as they “had experienced their presence in their own lives”—a fact which had initially contributed to the Ewe’s attraction to Christianity, as the place which should supposedly save them. (Meyer 1999:214f.) Belief in the existence of traditional powers continued even for the second and third generation of Ewe Christians, so that despite the turning to the Christian God, and moving away from traditional religion “Christians had to dissociate themselves continuously”, which, as Meyer (1996:215) suggests, “was the basis against which, and hence also with which, Ewe Protestant identity was defined.” The missionaries, Meyer observes, were surprised by the “success of their own argumentation.” The conceptualization of the Devil from the Ewe point of view, however, went too far for them. For the missionaries it would have been enough to convince the people that the old religions were diabolical, backward and pagan. The Ewe Christians, however, did more than that. They did not only avoid the old religion, but they “continued to fear the same powers as the non-Christians.” (Meyer 1996:215)

Witch Belief in Missionary Context

On a general note, it is quite striking, that the BAM, which helped to enable the cocoa industry in its beginnings in early 20th-century Ghana, ran into unlikely complications: witchcraft. In response to the very beginnings of that agricultural enterprise, which by the time Ghana has achieved independence (1957) will have made the country one of the richest in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nyanteng 1996:179), one of the Basel missionaries wrote: “Cocoa is spoiling everything ... the Akuapem stations present a disagreeable picture, most of the people are away on their cocoa farms ... they seldom attend Church and are most liable to influence from pagans ... everywhere there is discontent, quarrels, irregular living, open strife.” (cited after

¹⁷³ I am aware that in her article ‘Make a Complete Break with the Past’ Meyer (1998) focuses on contemporary Ghana and not necessarily the missionary context. However, the activity of *breaking with the past*, as described in that article is the same as one can observe in the 19th- and early 20th-centuries. Moreover, Meyer’s findings in many ways still count today. The opening narrative of Meyer 1998 illustrates the *breaking* by an elderly lady who upon becoming a “*born again*” recently began to perceive the *Homowo* festival, which she has celebrated all her life, as a “primitive thing”, beyond which, she “has moved”. (Meyer 1998:316)

Mohr 2013:57) The cocoa industry brought individual wealth but also social chaos, as it removed the former “lineage-based subsistence economy”, and led to migration and “structural changes in social relationships”. This caused social strife among the people, many of which were Basel Christians or had been schooled by the BAM, which was reacted upon with witchcraft accusations within families¹⁷⁴. It was believed that witches can burn down cocoa farms, cause poor crops, which was typical for this period (besides the commonly know fears of witches being responsible for sterility, impotence, and other diseases and misfortunes). The BAM denied the existence of witches and excommunicated those Christians who “accused anyone of witchcraft.” (Mohr 2013:57f.)

While Meyer (1999:106) sees implications that the fear of witchcraft increased during the time, Greene (2002:167) states that there is evidence that witchcraft accusations among the Anlo existed “long before colonial rule”, and cannot clearly state whether it increased during colonial rule.

It is impossible at this point to conclusively decide in what way African pre-colonial religion has or has not changed in terms of witch belief. As I discuss in the section on the early endeavors with European chroniclers in the preceding part, the belief in witches is documented at least from West Africa back to the 15th-century as I have demonstrated in the Chapter before. However, I shall concur with Birgit Meyer and conceive of African pre-colonial society not as static but also acknowledge that the economic and social changes that came with, firstly, Atlantic trade, the slave trade, and then colonialism, have effectively mapped a new projection surface onto the African setting in which witchcraft accusation and suspicion could easily play a major role. Meyer claims that in times pre-colonial “the tension between individualism and family affiliation was never as marked as in colonial and post-colonial society”. In fact, when people lived “off the produce of their farms and had not extra cash income, witchcraft had been much less prevalent.” With the prospect of the “individual accumulation of wealth” the “people became increasingly ‘greedy’” which in turn resulted in “feelings of envy among others”, who then suspected the more successful “secretly sought their downfall through *adze*” (witchcraft). (Meyer 1999:106)

Missionary *Jakob Spieth* too observed that “witchcraft (*adze*) was one of the most feared powers in Ewe land. It was the witches’ ‘dearest longing ... to make somebody poor. If he has become rich, they destroy him. If he has children, they kill them all. Secretly they destroy everything he has.’” (cited after Meyer 1996:216)¹⁷⁵ The Ewe understanding of witchcraft evolves very much around the concept of jealousy, as for instance, when one family member gets richer than the others. Therefore it was, “traditionally, the best remedy against the threat of witchcraft [...] to share one’s riches with one’s (poorer) relatives.” Another possibility was to trust the missionaries’ claims “to be more powerful than traditional spiritual entities”, and to hope for the “protection against witchcraft” by liberating oneself from “existing family ties” through the

¹⁷⁴ Mohr refers to Geschiere (2000) and calls the bewitching of family members which results from the new prosperities the “dark side of kinship.” (Mohr 2013:58)

¹⁷⁵ Meyer (1996:216) admonishes that Spieth did “unfortunately [...] not pay much attention to the phenomenon [...].” To some extent one might explain this in relation to the mission’s theological agenda as they did not want to put much emphasis on the diabolical nature of the ‘old’ religion.

new faith of Christianity. Meyer (1996:216) portrays this as one of the reasons to be attracted by the mission Church, and, moreover, suggests that “some people became church members because they did not want to share their riches with their families.”

According to Meyer, the missionaries, however, “did not appreciate the existence of the belief in witchcraft and other gods and spirits”; they considered these to be “a superstitious ‘heathen’ survival.” As discussed before in the part on the Devil and the continuing belief in that entity, Meyer observes the same attitude towards witchcraft. While the missionaries had made the Ewe Christians understand that any spiritual entities of the traditional religion were demons, and the Ewe Christians themselves denounced these “as agents of Satan”, these “old powers were still too alive and real to be neglected in their discourse.” Despite the consternation of the Pietist missionaries, Ewe Christians continued to make these ‘old’ notions into everyday topics. The missionaries put the Devil into a “peculiar position” which triggered “speculations and associations about the badness of the world.” Ewe Christians took the liberty to “imagine the actions of the Devil” in this framework, which “countered the closure of fixity of the doctrine.” (Meyer 1996:216f.)

However, despite the urgency of this topic, it was not “treated in public, but only in private,” nor did the Church offer any kind of discourse to address, as for example, the fear of *adze*. Neither Church services nor any protective rituals were focused on this topic, and apart from private prayers the Ewe Christians who suffered from these fears had no way of dealing with them. (Meyer 1999:106f.) Below, I discuss a selection of missionary correspondences which show that in quite a number of contexts witchcraft did matter to the Ewe Christians. Meyer also cites from such sources and in reference to a report from 1932 further illustrates the importance of the topic. According to the report, issued by the “Christian Council of Gold Coast, to which the Ewe Evangelical Church belonged”, belief in witchcraft was “very common throughout the colony.” The report does not generally concern itself with the idea whether or not witchcraft existed but rather suggests to expose all people who claimed to “be able to perform witchcraft” as “charlatans”, and further advises people against consulting ‘witch doctors’. According to the colonial governments witch-finding was a criminal offense¹⁷⁶ and the mission reproduced this attitude in its work.

Apart from asserting that for Christians there was not need to be afraid, no practical means of protection against witchcraft were recommended. Though this document only consists of a brief statement, it reveals that despite the fact that fears of witchcraft were a matter of great concern in Christian congregations, no special remedies to counter this threat were offered. (Meyer 1999:107)

Having no Church to address these issues Ewe Christians were “virtually obliged to consult Ewe specialists in secret” if they wanted to “maintain their wealth” and receive protection against witchcraft attacks. In summary Meyer explains that “As far as spiritual protection was concerned, missionary Christianity was thus still of little value.” (Meyer 1999:108)

¹⁷⁶ A fact that “probably” will have people caused to think that the colonial state, as well as the Church, protected witches. (Meyer 1999:107)

‘Backsliding’ into Heathendom

There was no way of properly addressing witchcraft in the new religion of Christianity, while the need to do so continued to exist. Meyer points out that as long as people were well off and no uncanny events occurred, participating in the “church activities was enough.” When the Christians, however, were confronted with “problems that they were unable to solve, they often did not consider the practices entailed by missionary Pietism as sufficient.” In cases where uncanny events or other problems occurred people engaged in what Meyer calls “backsliding into heathendom”. Any time when trouble occurred which did not have a direct answer, people would rediscover the importance of the very family with whom they had previously refused to share their riches. (Meyer 1996:217) Among the reasons to slide back to “the old ways” Meyer (1996:217f.) names, illness or health related issues in general, which included doubts regarding the “*effectiveness* of Christianity in retaining people’s health”¹⁷⁷, and the violation of Pietist sexual morals¹⁷⁸. In regards to health, there is a case which which a women, who has fallen sick, explained her sliding back to the old ways in the following words:

I had believed that, being a Christian, one would no longer fall sick; but I now see that the worship of God and idolatry is one and the same thing, for wherever one is, one falls sick and dies. Therefore I have gone back. (cited after Meyer 1999:104)

When people were affected by an illness or by related problems they “had to conclude that missionary Pietism, with its claimed anti-ritualistic attitude could not really satisfy their needs” while they still believed, like the non-Christians, that ritual in general was capable of removing evil. Whether in the open or in the secrecy of the night, once substantial unease about the superiority of Christianity has developed, people consulted the priests of the ‘old’ religion. (Meyer 1999:105)

There were, of course, penalties for those who seemingly went back to the diabolical religion of the Africans. It was the task of the entire Christian congregation to “watch over the ‘purity of behavior and doctrine’, and a person who rebelled against these was first admonished, and in case of the repetition of the behavior they were excommunicated. The “first Church order” (*Kirchenordnung*) from the “Protestant Ewe-Church in Togo and Gold Coast” (which was published in 1933)¹⁷⁹ explains that people had to be punished when they “had committed several faults”, and as such they listed, “relapse into heathen sin, idolatry, participation in heathen feasts and ceremonies or other rude sins such as adultery, fornication, theft, fraud,

¹⁷⁷ This is also a gender-related issue in that before the background of health issues the backsliding occurred “much more among women than men.” (Meyer 1996:218) At this point, it is worth to mention that the motivation to become Christian was less among women because they did not gain many chances of coming to a better economic situation. Due to the “conservative Pietist norms and values” the missionaries did not appreciate women who were economically independent as, for instance, only men could assume any of the more prestigious and economically rewarding positions such as “pastors, teachers, and evangelists.” This view stands in contrast to the fact that in the traditional religious environment, women would play a more important role, also regarding their spiritual function. This was lost due to the turn towards Christianity. Also, in regards to child caring, women saw the acceptance of Christianity as less attractive. Even though there was “occasional success” on the part of the Mission to cure illnesses, their remedies were not “as good, or even better than” what traditional priests had to offer. (Meyer 1996:209) Since the Mission banned any ‘traditional’ medicine, and the sufferers had to instead ‘trust in the Lord’, (Meyer 1996:205), women hesitated to convert. (Meyer 1996:209)

¹⁷⁸ Again a gender-related issue in that it occurred more among men than women. (Meyer 1996:218)

¹⁷⁹ All of the findings regard the time before the first appearance of that document, so one can only use this as indicators for the missionary points of view; trusting that they did not change fundamental attitudes during the later parts of the 19th- and beginning of the 20th-centuries.

cramming, boozing, squandering, obstinate irreconcilability, abuse of relatives, cruelty, etc., and who had become causes of public annoyance.” (Meyer 1996:206)

2.2.2 Missionary Correspondence

The material I present in the following part, consists for the most part of the correspondence of Bremen missionaries, and of other mission documents.

The transcripts of the mostly handwritten texts were made by the author (if not indicated otherwise)¹⁸⁰, and they are aimed at rendering the original orthography¹⁸¹, punctuation, use of line breaks, page change, and emphases (such as underlining, line spacing, bold type etc.). It is worth noting that access to the original files was denied due to their fragile nature, only microfilm copies were available which, unfortunately, entails a loss of quality, unclear cases of words or passages (in the source material, see appendix) are underlined in dashes. The process of collection was comprehensive but easy: any text or text fragment which contained the words ‘Hexe’, ‘Zauber’, ‘Magie’ as well as their derivations and cognates¹⁸² were admitted to the sample, which, in total, has yielded 38 documents. I have to state at this point that not all of these documents refer to a fully transcribed text, some of them are snippets of texts that cover in a few sentences the missionaries’ application of witchcraft related terms.

Depending on its formal structure and purpose one can subdivide the material into three categories: *letters* (22 items), *reports* (15 items) and *commentaries* (2 items). The content of *letters* is embedded in formulas like “Geehrter Herr...” or “Lieber ...”, and “Mit herzlichem Gruß” (or similar)¹⁸³, they are usually addressed to the mission Inspector, missionary brothers, other pastors or family. Letters are reports on progress and setbacks in missionary work, a topic that to a large extent oscillates between the acceptance and rejection of the Christian faith in conflict with ‘traditional’ Ewe religion. *Reports* are less often put into a

¹⁸⁰ At this point, I have to express gratitude to my mother who is a fluent reader of *Kurrent*, an old fashioned way of handwritten German, which these days only very few native speakers still can decipher. She made it possible for me to transcribe the missionaries letters, which were all, except the typewritten written ones, in this style. Thus she made it possible for me to pursue my analyses. I would further like to praise the work of Dr. Rainer Alsheimer of the University of Bremen who has worked through a large amount of the Bremen material, tagged it with keywords, and produced excerpts without which I could only have surveyed a much smaller portion of the material. Alsheimer’s major file giving only basic information on the missionaries is still a document of 1030 pages, which in turn provides thousands of references to items in the extensive collection of personal files at the Staatsarchiv Bremen. In the summaries of the correspondence references to witchcraft are made too. These are also taken into consideration here.

¹⁸¹ Concerning the inconsistent usage, and sometimes indistinguishability of *ss* vs. *ß* in the original all cases are rendered here consistently as *ss*. Exceptions made are those texts transcribed by Alsheimer (Afrikabestände der NM in Bremen) who apparently translated the texts into more contemporary German orthography.

¹⁸² i.e. *Hexerei*, *Hexen*, *verhext*, etc., and *Zauberei*, *Zauberer*, *zaubern*, *verzaubert*, etc., as much as *Magier*, *magisch*, and the like. Since there may be semantic differences between German and English terms and concepts, I shall roughly translate these three major tokens as witch/witchcraft (Hexe/Hexerei), sorcerer, sorcery (*Zauberer*/*Zauberei*), and magic (*Magie*). Depending on the context, however, terms may have to be translated differently. A particularly interesting notion in the German text is the reoccurring term ‘Fetischwesen’, which (in relation to *Zauberwesen*) would have to be translated as witchcraft, in the sense of an established magical belief system. The notion of *Fetisch* (fetish) is used naturally by the missionaries in relation to magical thinking and therefore deserves to be counted as the fourth central notion besides *Hexe*, *Zauber*, and *Magie*. See also discussion about *fetish* in 2.1.4 *Contrasting Views on Witchcraft in History—African and Portuguese*.

¹⁸³ ‘Geehrter Herr ...’ (honorable Mr ...), and ‘Lieber ...’ (dear ...), “Mit herzlichem Gruß” are the common German formulae to begin and finish letters, personal or official.

formal greeting structure, however, they may begin with “Liebe Brüder” (dear brothers). Most of the reports in the material are the minutes of missionary station conferences, treating a variety of subjects (e.g. the flourishing of Christian communities in terms of the number of new baptizands, obstacles in missionary work), file applications (e.g. the transfer of personnel), and similar organizational issues. The category *commentary*, comprised of just two items: one supplement and one response to a case regarding teacher Baru (as I discuss below).

Missionary Jakob Spieth has a special position in this discussion as he has not only practiced as a missionary but also has been active like an anthropologist investigating the Ewe culture and religion. His contributions in the form of letters and reports amount to 10 items from the three total items. It is worth to focus on this “most important and influential missionary” (Ustorf 2011:72), as he stands out in that he followed a double assignment as missionary, and linguist and ethnologist. (Ustorf 2011:72) His contributions in the material at hand also bear witness to his specific way of mission, which is discussed in the following¹⁸⁴. Apart from him there are 18 individuals who contribute to this collection: *Gottlob Binetsch, Louis Birkmaier, Ernst Bürgi, Gottlob Däuble, Karl Freyburger, Alexander Funke, Christian Gustav Härter, Christian Hornberger, Lisbeth Meier, Johannes Merz, Wilhelm Müller, Carl Wilhelm Osswald, Andreas Pfisterer, Gottlob Benjamin Schieck, Bernhard Schlegel, Hermann Schosser, Carl Spieß, and Franz Michael Zahn*¹⁸⁵.

2.2.3 Witchcraft in Bremen Missionary Correspondence

There are a number of interesting terms that emerge from the missionary correspondence. A first glance at the material unveils a collection of (partly curious) variations on the four central terms (Hexe, Zauber, Magie, and Fetisch). This list provides an overview and gives the numbers of application, indicating the weight in the discourse.

¹⁸⁴ Jakob Spieth (1856-1914) was born as the “son of a peasant” (Ustorf 2011:72) and became the mission’s most important Bible translator into the Ewe language, and, next to Diedrich Westermann, its leading ethnologist. (Jones 2008:1579) In his later years, Spieth worked as a learned theologian “producing a theology of African Traditional Religion that he was not able to support as an active missionary.” (Ustorf 2011:72) This, Ustorf maintains, gives a somewhat paradoxical image of him, raising the question why in his role as a missionary he excluded African culture and tradition from his endeavors, whereas in his role as a theologian and scholar “loved to describe and preserve African tradition?” The “love and understanding of the African brother in Christ”, as is expressed in this work, does not seem to match with his missionary practice “characterized by an extreme degree of control and suspicion” (Ustorf 2011:72f.).

¹⁸⁵ All were missionaries, except Lisbeth Meier (deaconess) and Franz Michael Zahn (BRM Inspector).

Table 6. Terminological Inventory of Concepts of Witchcraft among Bremen Missionaries

Terms	Translations ¹⁸⁶	Occurrence
Zauberei	‘sorcery’	19
Zauberer	‘sorcerer/wizard’	12
Zauber	‘magic spell’	8
Zaubersachen	‘magical items’	6
Zauberpriester	‘sorcery priest’	5
Zaubermedizin	‘magic medicine’	4
Zauberschnüre ¹⁸⁷	‘magic cords’	3
Fetischwesen	‘fetishism’	3
Hexerei	‘witchcraft’	3
Zauber doktor	‘witch doctor’	3
Zauber mittel	‘magical items’	3
Fetish	‘fetish’	2
Fetischhexen	‘fetish witch’	2
Fetischplatz	‘fetish site’	2
Fetischpriester	‘fetish priest’	2
Zaubergegenstände	‘magical items’	2
Zauberwesen	‘sorcery’ as a system of beliefs	2
Bezauberung	‘bewitching’	1
Fetischmacher	‘fetish maker’	1
Fetischschnur	‘fetish cord’	1
Flintenzauber	‘gun magic’	1
zauberische Künste	‘magical art’	1
magische Kraft	‘magical powers’	1
verzaubern	‘bewitch’	1
Zauberbann	‘magic spell’	1
Zauberdienst	‘magical service’	1
Zauberding	‘magical thing’	1
Zaubertreiben	‘magical performance’	1
Zaubergeist	‘magical spirit’	1
Zauberkunst	‘magical art’	1
Zauberstab	‘magic staff’	1
Zauber verehrer	‘devotee of magic’	1
Zauberwaffen	‘magical weapons’	1

These terms involve a variety of concepts that are mostly based on variations of the token ‘Zauberei’ (sorcery, magic). Interestingly, the notions ‘Hexe’ (witch) and ‘Hexerei’ (witchcraft) occur only in two forms: a) ‘Hexerei’ and b) ‘Fetischhexe’. It seems that the missionaries were not in need of the concept of witch (Hexe) in its general form, and only in the specified form of ‘Fetischhexe’. For the missionaries the notion of ‘Zauberei’ (sorcery, magic) must have seemed a more suitable concept than ‘Hexe’ in describing their observations in the contact situation with the Ewe. This can perhaps be explained when one takes into consideration their Pietist Theology, in which, the notion of the witch and the Devil were considered parts of an ‘old’ belief system, and therefore rather shunned by the missionaries as everyday topics (cf. Birgit Meyer). Since, however, the missionaries needed to make distinctions within beliefs and separate the ‘good’ beliefs from the ‘evil’ ones the notion of ‘Zauberei’ (sorcery, magic) might have seemed a better option.

¹⁸⁶ The English translations of the terms are only rough but literal approximations to help the non-German speaking reader to get an understanding of what is meant.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Zauberschnur’ or ‘Fetischschnur’ refers to a magical item which put on a newborn child is believed to ensure that it eats and grows. (cf. Merz, Johannes. Letter to Inspector, July 2nd 1876 in Waya. StAB 7,1025-28/7)

‘Zauberei’ (sorcery) does not necessarily carry the dimensions of danger and aggression, anger and consternation like the notion ‘Hexe’ does. Missionaries who must have been well aware of their own European history of the witch-crazes, which were overcome during the Enlightenment, might have found it better therefore to refer to African things rather in terms of sorcery than witchcraft, thus avoiding the charged history of the latter concepts. Also the notions applied by the missionaries largely concern material objects¹⁸⁸ as well as practices¹⁸⁹ and spiritually or magically trained or interested persons¹⁹⁰, and do not regard the ‘evil’ deeds of witches and their phenomenology. This further corroborates the idea that when missionaries are concerned with witchcraft they rather do so to differentiate religious Christian beliefs and practices from the ‘old’ ones.

On a general note, I can summarize that if there is talk about witchcraft, it is in most cases dismissive toward the existence of witchcraft. Some cases report about African heathens, or even freshly baptized African Christians who make use of witchcraft to eliminate other people competing for more prestigious jobs in the mission stations, for land, or for less obvious reasons, and sometimes simply for attacking missionary personnel. This situation can be illustrated by a case from 1899 where missionary teacher, Gerson Dadugblo has been ‘attacked’ by a charm that was placed into his bathroom by an unknown person.¹⁹¹ Such incidents are quickly resolved by the mission officials. They consult specialists for magic and ask for the potency of the charm of the spell in use; however, there is no report, where the case is dragged any further.¹⁹² The missionary position in general seems not to view these as a serious cases. A remarkable exception is made by deaconess, Lisbeth Meier, who in her report of the growing involvement of one of the Ewe women she works with becomes ever more involved with magic. Ella, the women concerned, apparently disappointed by her unanswered prayers to the Christian God to heal her child, consults a sorcerer (Zauberer) who seems capable of healing the child. Deaconess Meier regards the eventual recovery of the child which she implicitly attributes to the efficacy of the sorcerer’s magic with the words: “Now she is in good physical health. I must ponder what power evil has here.”¹⁹³ It is worth noting that such ‘attacks’ never met any ‘white’ missionary but always Africans who work for the missions. Another observation I can make is that very often witchcraft accusation and other accusations such as adultery, embezzlement of missionary money, indulging in alcoholic beverages, and similar ‘vices’ go together. Individuals are often accused of these things first, and then further accused of also having had contacts with magic, using it to harm others.

One example of this can be found in the continuing correspondence and reports on mission conferences concerning the case of mission teacher *Baru*. Charged with several offenses like *embezzlement of Church*

¹⁸⁸ ‘Zaubersachen’, ‘Zaubermedizin’, ‘Zauberschnüre’, ‘Zaubermittel’, ‘Zaubergegenstände’, ‘Fetischschnur’, ‘Flintenzauber’, ‘Zauberding’, ‘Zauberstab’, ‘Zauberwaffen’.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Zauberei’, ‘Hexerei’, ‘Bezauberung’, ‘zauberische Künste’, ‘verzaubern’, ‘Zauberbann’, ‘Zauberdienst’, ‘Zaubertreiben’, ‘Zauberkunst’.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Zauberer’, ‘Zauberpriester’, ‘Zauberdoktor’, ‘Fetischhexen’, ‘Fetischpriester’, ‘Fetischmacher’, ‘Zauberverehrer’.

¹⁹¹ Source: Spieß, Carl. Excerpt of “Stationschronik Ho Juni 1902-Dez. 1915”, Oct. 1st and Nov. 2nd 1908. StAB 7,1025-13/2.

¹⁹² e.g. Funke, Alexander. Report entitled “Das Schreckensende eines Zauberers”, dated between 1928-1932. StAB 7,1025-12/1.

¹⁹³ Meier, Lisbeth. Letter to Pastor Ho, Febr. 22nd 1932. StAB 7,1025-12/6.

money, drinking of hard alcohol, fornication, and sorcery (“Zauberei”)¹⁹⁴, the teacher had to be expelled. The case of teacher Baru begins at least as early as by the end of 1894¹⁹⁵ and continues at least until end of March 1899¹⁹⁶ when after years of conferences, consultations, and interrogations the majority of missionaries are convinced that the assumed offenses of teacher Baru have become intolerable and he has to be removed from the mission.¹⁹⁷ Particularly interesting for this discussion is that the first dissatisfaction that is phrased by the mission organization against teacher Baru refers to a magical offense. Baru was accused by a publicly displayed poster of an anonymous source that he has taken part in “heathen sorcery” (heidnische Zauberei).¹⁹⁸ A couple of weeks later it is revealed that it was Baru’s wife, Anna Baru, who allegedly consulted a witch doctor (“Zauberdoktor”) to get medicine for pains in her lower abdomen.¹⁹⁹ She was removed from the parish. Baru’s offense, at this early stage of the ongoing conflict between him and the mission, was not considered to lie in a magical offense:

Da Baru den Mann für einen gewöhnlichen native Doktor hält, gab er seiner Frau die Erlaubnis. Danach hat er sich der Mithilfe zur Zauberei nicht teilhaftig gemacht u. kann deshalb auch nicht als ein bei Zaubern Hilfesuchender behandelt werden. Wir haben daher den Beschluss des verehrten Vorstandes, ihn seines Amtes zu entsetzen, nicht ausgeführt, sondern ihn ersucht, er möge selber in dieser Sache an den verehrten Vorstand schreiben. Wenn B. Heute entlassen würde, so fürchte ich zwar nicht, dass er nicht bald eine andere Anstellung finden würde, aber nach meiner Meinung würde ihm von uns bitteres Unrecht widerfahren.²⁰⁰

This case, similarly to others, illustrates the harsh response on part of the mission towards what Birgit Meyer calls *backsliding to heathendom*, and the fear of people engaging in the ‘old’ religions. How important this motive is, and how much it is related to witchcraft can be further corroborated in the following. In a short excerpt one learns that for people who want to be baptized the use of magic was strictly forbidden. Carl Spieß reports about a 60-year-old “heathen” who was eager to learn the 10 commandments to be accepted to the baptism, but who had trouble quoting them and so presented his own version:

¹⁹⁴ Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Barus Verantwortung über die gegen ihn erhobenen Anklagen”, March 1st 1899 in Ho. StAB 7,1025-6/4.

¹⁹⁵ Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Stationsconferenz”, March 4th 1895 in Amedzowe. StAB 7,1025-6/4.

¹⁹⁶ Schosser, Hermann. Letter from Leklebi Duga, March 22nd 1899. StAB 7, 1025-6/4.

¹⁹⁷ According to my survey, the case is covered in the following correspondences and mission conference protocols: 1. Zahn, Franz Michael. Comment to Baru case, possibly after February 23rd 1895. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 2. Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Stationsconferenz”, March 4th 1895 in Amedzowe. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 3. Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Stations-Conferenz”, April 17th 1895 in Amedzowe. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 4. Dettmann, Johannes (?). Report entitled: “Stationskonferenz”, June 21th 1898 in Lome. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 5. Schosser, Hermann. Report entitled “Klageschreiben gegen den Lehrer F. Baru”, Feb. 15th 1899. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 6. Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Barus Verantwortung über die gegen ihn erhobenen Anklagen”, March 1st 1899 in Ho. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 7. Spieth, Jakob. Letter, March 1st 1899 in Ho. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 8. Bürgi, Ernst. Letter to Spieth, March 5th 1899. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 9. Härtter, Christian Gustav. Commentary entitled “Beitrag zur Entlassung Barus”, March 10th 1899. StAB 7,1025-6/4; 10. Schosser, Hermann. Letter from Leklebi Duga, March 22nd 1899. StAB 7, 1025-6/4.

¹⁹⁸ Franz Michael. Comment to Baru case, possibly after February 23rd 1895. StAB 7,1025-6/4.

¹⁹⁹ Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Stationsconferenz”, March 4th 1895 in Amedzowe. StAB 7,1025-6/4.

²⁰⁰ “Since Baru took the man [the witch doctor] for a general native doctor he allowed his wife to consult him. Therefore Baru has not committed the offense of sorcery and cannot be treated as somebody who has sought help through a wizard. Therefore we did not carry out the request by the board to relieve Baru from his duties but asked him to write to the board himself. If we had relieved Baru today, I am not concerned he will not find new work soon, but I fear we would do bitter injustice to him.” (Spieth, Jakob. Report entitled “Stationsconferenz”, March 4th 1895 in Amedzowe. StAB 7,1025-6/4.) (Translation and following by Riahi.)

1. Es gibt nur einen Gott. 2. Du sollst keine Legbas²⁰¹, keine Zauberschnüre – kurz keine Dinge des Heidentums anbeten. 3. Du sollst Gott von Herzen anbeten und kein Wort umsonst sagen. 4. Jeden siebten Tag sollen wir ruhen und die Kirche besuchen.²⁰²

Such reports concerned with sorcery and magic as forms of heathendom which have to be avoided can easily be found in the sample.²⁰³ Especially when cases concern people who want to be baptized one can find stories that illustrate the turning away from magic. As one can see in the following case, the stories of transition from ‘heathendom’ into Christianity are marked by a narrative in which the former ‘sorcerers’ expose their magic as fraud.

Die beiden jungen Männer, die jetzt Petro Kumasi und Salomo Kwasi heissen, waren beide Zauberer. Wie sie mir erzählten, bestand ihre Zauberkunst hauptsächlich darin, den Leuten aus Palmkernen zu wahrsagen, ob sie von ihrer Krankheit genesen oder daran sterben werden; oder in Heiratsangelegenheiten zu entscheiden. Welches Mädchen einen Mann wählen solle, ob er glücklich oder unglücklich werde und dergleichen. Ferner mussten sie den Leuten allerlei Zaubermittel fertigen, Zauber, Schnüre, Amulette & Zauberstäbe [...]. Das Wort Gottes aber, dass sie manchmal hörten, zeigte ihnen, dass sie lauter Lug & Trug trieben, und so hatten sie keine Ruhe und keinen Frieden dabei u. entschlossen sich endlich, ihr Heil bei Jesu zu suchen, der der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben ist.²⁰⁴

As argued through the works of Birgit Meyer (1996, 1999) and Chukwudi Njoku (2005), the overall intentions and attitudes of the missionaries and other mission personnel are situated within a curiously woven world view that to some part is determined by Pietism and to the other by a scientific positivism. In all regards a view that was considered to be superior to the African view, which also entails a dismissive attitude towards witchcraft. The term witchcraft (Hexerei), however, only very rarely occurs. Mostly people refer to its cognate sorcery (Zauberei). The only occasions in which *witchcraft* is used refers to a report by missionary Andreas Pfisterer who narrates the story of two men, Jonathan Geraldo and Jackson Okloo, who seemingly were in conflict. Geraldo went to a Dzoto²⁰⁵ to confuse Okloo’s mind so that he would not be able to fulfill his position as chief clerk at the mission. Pfisterer reports that for that kind of witchcraft (Hexerei) a certain type of gourd was needed and thus the story came to light. Pfisterer continues to speculate that Geraldo, who apparently fled from the area, would have been put to the chair²⁰⁶ if he had been caught by the mission:

²⁰¹ Possibly a clay figure of a God, cf. Rosenthal 1998:264.

²⁰² “1. There is only one God. 2. You shall not pray to Legbas, magical cords – in short not things of heathendom. 3. You shall pray to God with all your heart and speak no word in vein. 4. Every seventh day you shall rest and go to church.” (Spieß, Carl. Letter to Inspector Lome, May 4th 1903. StAB 7,1025-20/2.)

²⁰³ e.g. Osswald, Carl Wilhelm. Letter entitled “An den Vorstand Jahresbericht Lome”, Jan. 20th 1902. StAB 7,1025-20/1; Däuble, Gottlob. Letter to Inspector Keta July 2nd 1901. StAB 7,1025-16/5.

²⁰⁴ “The two young men, who we now call Petro Kumasi and Salomo Kwasi, both were sorcerers. As they reported to me their magical art consisted mainly in divining for people from palm kernels. To find out whether their clients would recover from an illness or die from it, also they were consulted in questions regarding marriage. Which girl should choose which man; if he will become happy or unhappy and similar questions. Further, they were asked to prepare all sorts of magical items for people: spells, pieces of cord, amulets and magical staffs [...]. However, the word of God, which they sometimes listened to, showed them that they were committed to lies and deception. So much so that they could not find peace and thus finally decided to seek their salvation in Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life.” (Däuble, Gottlob. Letter to Inspector in Lome, Oct. 6th 1898. StAB 7,1025-19/7)

²⁰⁵ ‘Dzoto’ healer. (Meyer 1999:239)

²⁰⁶ Putting somebody in chains indicates a treatment of madness in this context.

Als ich kürzlich mit H. Hauptmann darüber sprach & ihm sagte, dass es sich hier nicht um die Absicht einer Vergiftung handle, sondern lediglich um „Hexerei“, da sagte er: „Dann gehört der Kerl erst recht an die Kette, wenn er so lange die Missionsschule besucht hat & sogar als Lehrer thätig war, & nun glaubt er noch an solche Hexereien.“²⁰⁷

The only use in the sample of witch as a term describing a person can be found in the form of the notion *Fetischhexen* (fetish witches). Missionary Louis Birkmaier makes use of this notion to express his anger over a number of women who eagerly see that one of Birkmaier's friends observes his tradition after one of his wives passed away—a tradition which Birkmaier sees as Fetischwesen (fetishism), hence the insult fetish witches.²⁰⁸

Considering the amount of data²⁰⁹, witchcraft, sorcery, and magic are not very prominent debates within the missionary material. In brief correspondence with BRM history expert Werner Ustorf I was informed that in regards to witchcraft there is surprisingly little material in the files, which might be due to the intuition that missionaries “must have been confronted with that problem on a daily basis.” Missionary Theology, however, situated African culture completely into the context of “sin”, and from the secular viewpoint even as “degenerate”, which would entail that any missionary endeavor would consider the topic is “already settled” and not worthy of being pursued any further. It should be noted, however, there are some early contributions, which still display some missionary interest in the topic. Later, the correspondence will be censored and edited according to the official missionary interest. (Ustorf 2014, personal communication) The years 1890s, which were the fourth decade of missionary work among the Ewe people, were the heyday of the witchcraft discourse in missionary work.

2.3 Summary and Discussion

Comparing the Portuguese view on witchcraft in the African contact situation to the Bremen one, one can make a few interesting observations. This comparison is meant to underline the fact that witchcraft in the African context, as much as any other cultural phenomenon, is subject to the outside view of the phenomena that people interpret as witchcraft. This comparison shows that witchcraft and related phenomena are not only multifaceted, ambiguous, hard to grasp (as I discuss in the introduction), but also deliver much projection surface for European ideas which often give away the underlying interest of the people observing these African phenomena. This can be seen in the Portuguese and Bremen interpretations of and responses to African witchcraft.

²⁰⁷ “When I recently spoke with Mr. Hauptmann about the case I told him that we are not dealing with an attempt of poisoning but merely with “witchcraft”. He responded: “If that is so the guy should be put in chains if he has attended mission school for such a long and even has worked as a teacher and still continues to believe in witchcraft.” (Pfisterer, Andreas. Letter to Brother Däuble, July 1st 1906 in Atakpame. StAB 7,1025-8/5.)

²⁰⁸ Birkmaier, Louis. Letter to Inspector Anyako, Feb. 15th 1872 in Anyako. StaAB 7,1025-7/7.

²⁰⁹ The personal files of the missionaries in the Bremen archive are quite comprehensive. At this point, it is impossible to provide a safe number of items, but considering the fact that it covers more than 150 years of BRM history, the number should confidently go into the tens of thousands.

As I demonstrated, the Bremen terminology is much richer and more creative, they combine different notions in trying to describe the religious belief system they find. Recalling concepts like “Zaubersachen”²¹⁰, “Zaubermedizin”²¹¹, “Fetischwesen”²¹², “Zauberdoktor”²¹³, “Zaubermittel”²¹⁴, “Fetischpriester”²¹⁵, “Zauberwesen”²¹⁶, “Fetischmacher”²¹⁷, “Flintenzauber”²¹⁸, “zauberische Künste”²¹⁹, “Zauberbann”²²⁰, “Zauberdienst”²²¹, “Zauberkunst”²²², reveal a more eager attempt of capturing African phenomena as what can be drawn from the Portuguese reports. Also the missionaries seem much less interested in witchcraft phenomenology, asking for the evil deeds of witches. In contrast, the Portuguese reports circle around the notions of witchcraft and express the typical elements of what constitutes witches (*flying, drying up rivers, spoiling crops, doing ill to people*, and the like²²³). This leads me to conclude that the observations that are made are very much driven by the primary interest of the people making the observations. The Portuguese were interested in making trade and establishing political connections, finding ways of exerting power on Africans but hardly pursued missionary ambitions, and can therefore leave the beliefs in witchcraft intact even to the point where they, later in African colonial diaspora in Brazil allow witchcraft to be treated by African *calundeiros*, as can be seen in the case of Carmelite priest Luís de Nazaret. By contrast, the Bremen missionaries saw the consultation of traditional sorcerers (Zauberer) as a violation of their core missionary ambitions, and wanted to expose any “charlatan” who claimed to have magical powers (cf. Meyer 1999:107).

One must also not forget that Portuguese and North Germans come from different historical settings. For the Portuguese witchcraft was something familiar (and as has been shown to be less scandalous in comparison to other early modern European societies), while the North Germans, coming from a post enlightenment setting, held the belief in witchcraft or any kind of magic to be either a sign for Devil worship or as an indicator of *backwardness* and *ignorance*. Neither Portuguese nor North Germans perceived witchcraft itself as a threat, and only ‘feared’ it indirectly when it jeopardized their economic or theological endeavors.

What both the Portuguese and the Bremen view have in common and what continues up until today, is the attitude of making African phenomena seem exotic. (cf. Pels 2003) Possibly this stance saw an early and more elaborate expression in the early modern intellectual endeavor of fetish theory, as put forward by the Portuguese. Trying to capture the ‘otherness’ of Africa, the Portuguese, as well as much later the Bremen

²¹⁰ ‘Magical items’.

²¹¹ ‘Magic medicine’.

²¹² ‘Fetishism’.

²¹³ ‘Witch doctor’.

²¹⁴ ‘Magical items’.

²¹⁵ ‘Fetish priest’.

²¹⁶ ‘Sorcery’ as a system of beliefs’.

²¹⁷ ‘Fetish maker’.

²¹⁸ ‘Gun magic’.

²¹⁹ ‘Magical art’.

²²⁰ ‘Magic spell’.

²²¹ ‘Magical service’.

²²² ‘Magical art’.

²²³ See Table 4. *Beliefs about African Witches from the (Early Modern) Portuguese View.*

missionaries, sought to understand the apparently deep differences between Africans and Europeans by focusing much on African magic. The Portuguese established their understanding within a “mercantile intercultural space” (Pietz 1987:23f.) and grounded its central element of differentiation on what they understood to be African magic, which, based on the discussion above, did not interfere much with their core endeavor. Bringing together the last point with the fact that the Portuguese times of witch-crazes happened with comparatively less drama, should explain why they did not perceive African witchcraft as scandalous as the Bremen missionaries. The missionaries, on the other hand, evolved their own view of African magic in a setting of missionary efforts. Pointing at magic from this view allows them to disregard any utterance of genuine African religion as backward and evil which, in turn, provides the task—a theological necessity—of containing these beliefs. Apart from what I have presented above this view can be illustrated in what missionary Gottlob Benjamin Schieck imagines to be African nature religion:

Das Heidentum ist Naturreligion, im engeren Sinne des Wortes, der Boden auf dem es erwachsen, ist die Natur. Denn hier ist der Mensch mit seinem Denken, Fühlen und Wollen im Bereich der Natur und kommt nicht über dieselbe hinaus, entweder einen einzelnen Naturgegenstand herausgreifend und als einen Gott verehrend, oder sich durch zauberische Künste von Menschen einen vorschaukeln lässt [cf. magic as fraud].²²⁴

Again and again one can find notions of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic that are employed to fill the gaps when explanations are needed to demonstrate the ‘otherness’ of Africa. This attitude continues until today, and, as I shall argue in the further debates (especially in relation to critical thinkers like Kapferer 2003), often works as an obstacle of understanding African phenomena.

As I summarize in this Chapter, Rosalind Shaw (1997) traces back contemporary notions of witchcraft in Temne culture to the historical period that is referred to as *the slave trade*. Moreover, Birgit Meyer (1996, 1999) identifies concepts of evil, and of the Devil in Ewe society which originated in the contact situation during the Bremen missionary work (beginning in the 19th-century) and last until today. By comparing the examples from the history of the slave trade to the 19th-century missionary endeavors in West Africa, it was established that the observations that are made about African discourses on magic very much depended upon one’s own intentions and motivations.

Following this trail of comparison over time, I shall now move one to the contemporary study of witchcraft on genuine Ghanaian sources. In this Chapter I have laid discussed points which I shall now investigate in the following Chapter: how do participants in the online discourse relate to *a) the modernity of witchcraft*, *b) the ‘otherness’ of Africa*, and *c) witchcraft as a scandal*. As I argue above, these three points are reoccurring topics, which challenge contemporary debates on witchcraft. I would like to inquire, from the largely censorship and authority free online setting, how genuine African discourses on witchcraft relate to

²²⁴ “Heathendom is nature religion in the proper meaning of the word; the soil from which it originates is nature. The *thinking, feeling, and wanting* of man is embedded in nature, and he cannot go beyond it. Either he focuses on one natural phenomenon and worships this as a God [cf. idolatry], or he lets another man trick him magical arts [cf. magic as fraud].” (Schieck, Gottlob Benjamin. Report entitled “An das Komitee”, undated Keta 1873. StAB 7,1025-14/10)

these questions, and inquire whether there are common themes in both the historical and the contemporary context.

3 Empirical Chapter: Witchcraft in Ghanaian Online Newspapers

The following Chapter is dedicated to presenting a wide and detailed picture of the content of 2172 articles (roughly 6000 pages of text) which are illustrated by quotations from more than 350 articles and numerous journalists, columnists, and participants. As mentioned before, I am interested in studying what is meant by the token witchcraft and its derivations when they are employed in discussions on Ghanaian online newspaper websites. Furthermore, I am interested in lively debates, and discourses which are free through anonymity, largely free from censorship or other forms of authorities (like Churches) that can leave their mark on the discourse. I expect that this large collection makes up a difference to what emerges from the discourses that are regularly studied when witchcraft is researched.

3.1 Witchcraft in Politics and Economy

In the following I present the findings from my research on witchcraft in the political and economic sectors. I found three contexts in which notions of witchcraft frequently enter political discussions. The first Subchapter focuses on the *witch-hunt metaphor* which is a prominent feature of political news in general, in which people are accused of acting against state interest, which, in turn, is often fended off by declaring the persecution a *witch-hunt*, implying *injustice* and *victimization*. The second Subchapter addresses the problematic situation of the witch camps in Northern Ghana, which also carries strong political implications. The third and fourth sub-chapters deal with two recent cases in which notions of witchcraft and magic were applied by politicians and put into relation with their political agendas. These cases are rich sources for the discourse and are therefore presented in greater detail.

As will become apparent more and more, the topic of witchcraft in the online context (not only in the political context) to some degree is metaphorical and not only meant in a literal sense. This is revealed in the readers' section, where it is stated quite frequently that witchcraft may easily be used metaphorically where it develops different meanings. This observation again confirms the attitude of leaving the notion of witchcraft undefined and empty, as I discuss in the first Chapter by reference to Otto (2009:8f.). Only through the thorough analysis of how readers amongst themselves, and in response to the statements of journalists, discuss the topic can one contextualize it and trace the conceptual history of the notion.

3.1.1 The Witch-Hunt Metaphor

Politics in Ghana has always been about witch hunting and vendetta from as far back as the sixties. Soon after the 1966 coup that toppled Ghana's first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, instead of moving forward to return the country to a new democratic government and get the nation back on course for development, the coup makers mounted an extensive exercise to arrest, prosecute and imprison as many members of the former administration as possible. The impression they created was that they were 'cleaning the country from corruption'. But could they succeed? (*Danny Okyere-Darko, GhanaWeb* columnist in an article entitled "Ghana and Witch-Hunting Politics")²²⁵

If there is witches, they must be hunted! (NGYL)²²⁶

Ghanaian witchcraft discourse on the internet is, first and foremost, about *witch-hunting*. This can be said regarding the mere number of articles which show this notion. About 30% of the entire material displays the token "witch-hunt". This concept, however, does not address the idea of an actual hunting of so-called *witches*, but rather the concept is applied as a very prominent metaphor. The literal hunting of witches is described in a multitude of ethnographic studies as a practice that happens to this day in Ghana. The concept at hand, however, immediately reveals a striking difference to the idea that there are 'witches' on one hand and 'hunters' on the other as in the political context, the act of witch-hunting has no physical correspondence. The moment a person in the political context stages protest by calling him- or herself *witch-hunted*, the idea is brought across that the person has fallen victim to political vendetta. This is based on a deep rooted distrust towards the other, and in most cases it affects another political party which has recently moved from ruling power to opposition and is consequently *witch-hunted* by the new administration. The distrust that lies at the bottom of this notion addresses the idea that another power has illegally enriched itself by misappropriation of state funds, assets, properties and the like.

The idea, already at this point reveals the ambiguity that is carried by the concept. While the self-proclaimed *victim* would underscore the unjust persecution by the notion, the persecuting party would not speak of *witch-hunting* but of *fighting against corruption*. This is displayed by the two quotations in the beginning of this Subchapter: witch-hunting and political vendetta on the one hand, against the slogan "if there is witches, they must be hunted". These are the two sides of the metaphor, where one highlights the aspect of the supposed *victim* of a witch-hunt which is perceived as being subjected to an unfair trial, and the other side, which carries along the idea of witches who eat away the livelihood of a group, and therefore commit an antisocial act.

Apart from the political and economic context the notion witch-hunt also finds application in other contexts²²⁷, however, the political and economic settings are the most prominent spaces where this notion is applied. The significance of the notion for political discourse in Ghana is emphasized by *GhanaWeb*

²²⁵ Gh.Web. 2009, January 11.

²²⁶ Mod.Gh. 2009, January 14. The NGYL (Next Generation Youth League International) understands itself as a "Youth Advocacy Think Tank". It is based in Accra, Ghana, and works "against Policies and Programmes that have negative implications for the Next Generation." (<https://www.blogger.com/profile/08897306989626915595>, accessed April 16th 2016)

²²⁷ People for instance speak of a witch-hunt against homosexual people in Ghana (e.g. Chronicle. 2011, July 21; GH.Web. 2011, December 8; Gh.Web. 2012, January 31; Gh.MMA. 2013, February 11).

columnist *Frank Agyemang*. In a piece entitled “Ten Political Talks We Are Always Assured Of”²²⁸ he puts into contrast what he deems 10 typical explanations, promises and justifications made by politicians when first in opposition and then in power:

When in opposition:

1. Ghanaians are suffering
2. The fuel price is too much, it could be cheaper
3. The economy is being mismanaged
4. Instead of concentrating on the economy, Government is embarking on ‘witch hunting’
5. In fact we are dying
6. Unemployment rate has gone up
7. The man on the street need money in his pocket and you are talking about micro/macro
8. Ghanaians are doomed
9. Why do we embark on such wasteful initiative/policy
10. You cannot take Ghanaians for granted

When in power:

1. We underestimated the challenges
2. Internationally fuel prices have gone up
3. We are restructuring the economy, it was damaged beyond our expectations
4. There is nothing like witch hunting, it’s a matter of dealing with corrupt officials
5. Let’s tighten our belts
6. We are creating several employment opportunities for the people
7. The Micro/Macro- economic indicators point to the fact that...
8. There is light at the end of the tunnel
9. This initiative/policy has a long term benefit
10. Ghanaians believe in us that is why they gave us the mandate

Typical Examples

To give an impression the following lists are incidents where the notion of witch-hunt was employed:

The Ghana-China Friendship Union in 2012 accused a Ghanaian Mining Association of “Witch-Hunting Chinese Mine Workers” by “labeling them as illegal workmen”²²⁹. Also situated in the politico-economic context was the claim that political vendetta (or witch-hunting) against political opponents has delayed the oil production in Ghana, hence the author entitled his article “Ghana Oil witchhunting Threatens Production

²²⁸ Gh.Web. 2009, October 8.

²²⁹ PeaceFM. 2012, September 26.

Delays”²³⁰. Indeed, a reoccurring subject in Ghanaian economy is the observation that political witch-hunting and corporate harassment often go together and cause a “poisoning of the Ghanaian business environment.”²³¹ This has allegedly caused the “once vibrant business potential of Ghana” to be “replaced by a fear amongst entrepreneurs that they invest in Ghana at their own peril.” The author, obviously from an opposing political camp, admonishes that it is “the wrath of the NDC government” that hits successful businesses because, in the view of the author, the NDC government entertains the “cynical notion that success in business can only be a result of corrupt practices”. As I argue above, political commentators repeatedly explain that one of the knee-jerk reactions to corruption is witch-hunting, and this author comes to the same conclusion. Accusing the Ghanaian government of having conducted “pure political witch hunting of companies including Norway’s Aker Group, ExxonMobil, Vodafone, Trasaco Realty, Accra Mall, [and] EO Group”²³².

More often than companies, cases of political or economic witch-hunting regard popular Ghanaian politicians and entrepreneurs who have either NDC (National Democratic Congress, a social democratic party²³³) or NPP (New Patriotic Party, a liberal democratic party²³⁴) connections. A reoccurring example of witch-hunting against a person is that of *Tsatsu Tsikata*, a Ghanaian lawyer, former law lecturer at the University of Ghana, and barrister²³⁵. He spent a couple of months in prison during president John Kufuor’s administration for causing financial loss to the state²³⁶. Apart from his academic life Tsikata played a supportive role for former Ghanaian president Jerry John Rawlings²³⁷, and therefore clearly has NDC connections²³⁸.

Another prominent case in the sample is that of Kwadwo Okyere Mpiani, former Chief of Staff and Minister of Presidential Affairs during John Kufuor’s administration (2001-2009). He was one of the early targets of the new administration of John Mills in 2009 to be investigated regarding his “duties under the NPP administration”. The article quoted John Atta Mills that “people who are found culpable of dipping their hands into state coffers would be prosecuted”²³⁹. A similar setting occurs in the case of *Tsatsu Tsikata*, which, however, has different political inclinations.

²³⁰ Gh.Web. 2010, January 10.

²³¹ Gh.Web. 2010, March 24.

²³² Gh.Web. 2010, March 24.

²³³ <http://www.ndc.org.gh/>, Accessed April 18th 2016,

²³⁴ <http://www.newpatrioticparty.org/index.php/the-party/who-we-are/who-we-are>, accessed April 18th 2016.

²³⁵ cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsatsu_Tsikata, accessed October 30th 2015.

²³⁶ cf. Gh.Web. 2010, March 7.

²³⁷ The PNDC (Provisional National Defence Council), led by Jerry John Rawlings, assumed power and established its regime on December 31st 1981 (Opoku 2010:11) and held it until January 7th 1993. This date marks the day of the “launch of Ghana’s fourth Republic” (Opoku 2010:102). Elections held in November and December of 1992 were the climax at that time of Ghana’s transition to democracy. The elections again showed Rawlings and the NDC to be victors—a fact that was met with a boycott of the parliamentary contest by the opposition parties. (Opoku 2010:102) Nevertheless, Rawlings and his administration continued to rule the country until in 2000 John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor led the NPP to victory.

²³⁸ Further information on the case of the persecution of *Tsatsu Tsikata* from the viewpoint of a fellow NDC politician, see Asamoah 2014:470.

²³⁹ Gh.Web. 2009, May 22.

The case of John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor shows that even the president of Ghana can be presented in media as the victim of a witch-hunt. Early on in John Atta Mills' administration (2009-2012) allegations regarding a deal with British telecommunications company, Vodafone, were lodged against Kufuor²⁴⁰. Similar to the cases before, people on one side of the argument brought forth claims of corruption while the other side protested by calling it witch-hunting.

Cases like this can be found in abundance, however, not to the liking of many political commentators. A reoccurring argument against the metaphorical practice of witch-hunting is phrased as an economic concern. As I argue above, the practice appears to some as causing serious damage to Ghanaian business and economy. Some fear a "slow down" of the "progress of economy" in that instead of assuming responsibility in facing the actual economic challenges, as for instance caused by the crisis of the world economy, government engages in such distractions²⁴¹. *GhanaWeb* columnist *Leonard Quarshie* expresses his take on the matter in the final part of a commentary published January 5th 2009 by the title "Open letter to President-Elect Atta Mills" by stating:

Finally, Mr. President-Elect, please treat Mr. Kufuor and his administration fairly. Don't embark on a witch hunting spree. Accord him all the respect and courtesies due a former president. Do not withdraw his courtesies and privileges under any circumstances. If you do, it would come back to haunt your government. Do not also ask senior civil servants and chief directors allied to the present government to proceed on leave wantonly. Ghana needs their expertise too. Let them serve Ghana. Thank You.²⁴²

Many commentators complain about a government that engages in the act of witch-hunting. Overlooking a number of such cases one can see that there is not much variety in that the pattern of such cases is fairly simple and remains stable: "Official" reasons are being stated by the government via newspapers explaining why a certain politician needs to be prosecuted for an act of corruption, then the defending party (a journalist or columnist of the defendant her- or himself) calls out "witch-hunt" while delivering the unofficial but "true" narrative that she or he is being made the victim for a political vendetta.

3.1.2 The Witch Camps

The second largest context that can be established in the material addresses the Ghanaian witch camps, which regards roughly 15% of articles in this collection. Also situated in the context of politics, newspapers are full of discussions on those camps, where journalists as well as commentators ask for changes in legislation or call for politicians to engage in improving the living conditions in those camps, or even closing them down (as demanded by some non-profit organizations with a humanitarian focus like *ActionAid*). Authors address the humanitarian challenges that are connected to the witch camps regarding sanitation, health but very often also in terms of gender and age (in-)equality. The political dimension of this debate is,

²⁴⁰ Gh.Web. 2009, October 18.

²⁴¹ cf. Gh.Web. 2009, February 9.

²⁴² Gh.Web. 2009, January 5.

moreover, illustrated by the fact that political figures (like the First Lady of Ghana, Lordina Mahama) visit the camps to donate money, food, and other goods or to initiate housing projects for the so-called witches.

How many Camps, how many Inmates?

I should first provide some general information about the camps. Going through the material one can easily see that there is a hierarchy in reporting about camps in that newspapers seem to favor reporting on some while rather neglecting other camps. Camps like *Gambaga*, *Kukuo*, *Gushiegu*, *Gnani* and *Nabule* receive more attention than camps like *Bonyase*, *Kpatinga* or *Leili*. But even concerning the total number of camps newspapers disagree, while some articles report of six camps²⁴³ other articles count seven camps²⁴⁴. The entire list of camps mentioned in the newspaper is the following (spellings may vary): *Gambaga*, *Kukuo*, *Gushiegu* (also spelled *Gushegu*), *Gnani* (also referred to as *Gnani-Tindang* or *Tindang*), *Nabule* (also spelled *Nabuli*, *Naabuli*, *Nabulli*, *Naboli*, and *Noobuli*), *Bonyase* (also spelled *Bonyashe*), *Kpatinga* (also referred to as *Tindan-zhie*), *Lel Dabari*²⁴⁵, *Basingwe*²⁴⁶, and *Leili*²⁴⁷.

Concerning the numbers of inmates the newspapers differ even more. Some articles propose impressively high numbers of inmates, as in one case where there is talk of “Ten thousand inmates in six witch camps”²⁴⁸. Another source gives a total of “6000 alleged witches camped” in the North²⁴⁹, while yet another estimate speaks of “over 3000 women and children residing” in the camps in the Northern regions with an addition of “about [...] 1000 girls who accompanied the old women as attendants.”²⁵⁰ Smaller estimations of the total number suggest that there are about 500 or roughly 700 women and between 300 and 500 children and grandchildren living in the witch camps²⁵¹. Adinkrah (2004:328) speaks of “the existence of numerous witch sanctuaries” in Northern Ghana, which provide shelter to “some 5,000 to 8,000 suspected witches [...]”

In regards to terminology, I should mention that newspapers most widely refer to the women as *alleged witches*, some however prefer to refer to them simply as *witches* or *accused witches*, or as *women accused of witchcraft* and *inmates*.

Topics

Prominent topics regarding the existence of witch camps is very often taken from a human rights angle, discussing the welfare and better treatment of women in camps, or campaigning against witch belief, and usually conclude that Ghanaian politicians should step in and no longer overlook the harsh living conditions

²⁴³ e.g. Gh.Web. 2014, December 11b.

²⁴⁴ PeaceFM. 2012, April 2.

²⁴⁵ The camp is mentioned only in one article: Gh.Web. 2014, December 4.

²⁴⁶ Again the camp is mentioned only here: Gh.Web. 2010, April 11.

²⁴⁷ Leili camp seems to be near Nabuli witch camp: Mod.Gh. 2013, February 21.

²⁴⁸ Gh.Web. 2010, April 11.

²⁴⁹ Gh.Web. 2012, August 3.

²⁵⁰ Gh.Web. 2012, May 7.

²⁵¹ Gh.Web. 2012, May 24; Gh.Web. 2014, Gh.Web. 2014, December 9; December 11a, Gh.Web. 2014, December 11b; Gh.Web. 2014, December 15; Chronicle. 2014, December 18.

in the witch camps. Newspapers report about the conducting of respective workshops, the involvement of interest groups like WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa) who emphasize the gender aspect of the problem of the camps. There are groups like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) teaching Gambaga “inmates” how to make soap and charcoal, and how to earn some income. The Southern Sector Youth and Women’s Empowerment Network (SOSYWEN), is a group that regularly conducts projects which, for instance, educate the Ghanaian public about life in the witch camps.

A large number of articles are regularly discussing the idea of closing down the witch camps. This project is even shared by politicians like Nana Oye Lithur²⁵² who frequently speaks out against the camps: “The mere existence of witch camps in Ghana blights the country’s human rights record.”²⁵³ But also religious leaders agree and condemn the maltreatment of elderly women as witches, as for instance Reverend Samuel Berko, district Pastor of the Church of Pentecost, who criticized “the practice of abandoning the aged and widows, at times at witch camps” as a “blot on the conscience of Ghanaians.”²⁵⁴ Repeatedly politicians try to point at the fact that witch camps are actually not in accordance with Ghanaian law. In this way, Larry Bimi, Chairman of the National Commission for Civic Education, declared that “the existence of witch camps in the country offends Chapter Five of the 1992 Constitution,” which calls the practice of abandoning women in such places as “discriminatory against women and inhuman.”²⁵⁵ In certain cases politics is able to put pressure on traditional leaders, especially the chiefs who are responsible for the local politics of such camps. This can be illustrated by one case where a woman was banished but when a human advocacy group, the Anti-Witchcraft Campaign Coalition of Ghana, was able to bring the case to the authorities, the chiefs and elders who made the decision were given an ultimatum to reintegrate the woman or face legal action²⁵⁶. There is no report about the result of the case, and in general, newspapers do not report about much success when Ghanaian politics faces traditional authorities.

Regarding the desperate situation the alleged witches are in, claims have surfaced in 2010 that witches would even have to resort to prostitution to provide for a living. According to the newspapers *Northern Ghana*²⁵⁷ and *Modern Ghana*²⁵⁸ the so-called witches of Nabuli offered sexual services in exchange for money or food. The claim was later challenged and rejected by the alleged witches. As reported by *Northern Ghana*²⁵⁹ the women concerned “have poured their venom on journalists, for causing with impunity, what they termed dehumanized, degrading, and false publications that sought to portray them as prostitutes.”

²⁵² Since January 2013 Lithur is Cabinet Minister of the Republic of Ghana to head the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/people/person.php?ID=1206>, accessed April 19th 2016.

²⁵³ Gh.Web. 2014, December 11b.

²⁵⁴ Gh.MMA. 2013, May 13. In regards to the motivation of religious leaders to face the witch camp issue, it is interesting to take note that allegedly the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (EPCG) has adopted Gnani witch camp (Gh.Web. 2014, September 3).

²⁵⁵ Mod.Gh. 2010, November 25.

²⁵⁶ Gh.Web. 2013, June 8.

²⁵⁷ North.Gh. 2010, April 24.

²⁵⁸ Mod.Gh. 2010, May 5.

²⁵⁹ North.Gh. 2010, June 14.

Concerning the topic of violence and gender, newspapers feature high ranking politicians like former and current presidents John Atta Mills and John Dramani Mahama who speak out against the practice of discriminating against women by labeling them witches and abandoning them in camps. Government is frequently reported to be discussing ideas of how to implement laws that could effectively criminalize practices like *Trokosi*²⁶⁰ and the operation of witch camps²⁶¹. In assessing the situation, journalists and columnists, as well as the politicians they cite, seem to agree that the root of the problem lies in the fact that Ghanaians to this day make elderly women responsible for bad luck. Moreover, journalists, as well as columnists, agree in their concern about the fact that children, who were either born in the camps or were sent there to accompany their grandmothers, cannot go to school and receive education. There are cases of people who have spent their entire lives in the camps and are now around 30 years old. This results in aggravating the problem of illiteracy in the North. Writers reiterate the fact that the camps in the North are not only a gender issue but also an age issue as a high number of children are suffering irrespective of whether they “belong” there or not.

The abolishment campaigns of the witch camps, as mentioned above, are based on humanitarian reasons. The abandoning of elderly women in the camps to many Ghanaian citizens, politicians, religious leaders as well as human rights activists, is an “abominable practice [which] must not be encouraged in the society”, as Rev. Samuel Berko concludes²⁶². However, this does not mean that there is wide consent over the matter, even if awareness over the harsh living conditions seems to be generally shared among people engaged in this discourse²⁶³. Also it is not only the traditional leaders who oppose the aim of closing down the camps. Most possibly for a different motivation²⁶⁴ than traditional leaders, local district politicians, who are well acquainted with the situation in the North are concerned about the idea, and thus stand against voices from politicians in Accra and human rights activists who want to abolish the camps as soon as possible. Local politicians fear that the witch camps are the only way of protecting people who live in contexts where there is a strong belief in witchcraft.

Arguments for a swift abolishing of the camps can be found in abundance, all moving around humanitarian concerns as described above. To illustrate this, consider the following examples from the discussions:

Miss Zenabu Sakibu, Coordinator for the Southern Sector Youth and Women’s Empowerment Network (SOSYWEN), [...] bemoaned the inhuman treatment under which the accused were undergoing. She said SOSYWEN is [...] currently undertaking projects [...] and aims at promoting the rights of women, empowering and advocating for the abolishing of discrimination and cultural elimination of women to ‘Witches Camps’. Miss Zenabu indicated that the witches’ camps’

²⁶⁰ The concept resurfaces again and again throughout the material. The notion *Trokosi* (“slave of a fetish”) is a cultural practice that can be found in Ghana and among other “tribes in parts of West Africa.” Parents who want to atone for sins that were committed by family member give their “virgin daughters to serve as sex-slaves to fetish shrines.” Despite the fact that the practice has officially been abolished in Ghana it continues to this date. (Dzansi and Biga 2014:1; Onyinah 2002:245; Rinaudo 2003)

²⁶¹ Gh.Web. 2009, February 9b.

²⁶² Gh.MMA. 2013, May 13.

²⁶³ I have not found one journalist, columnist or, let alone, politician to speak out for the practice of sending elderly ladies to a camp.

²⁶⁴ The differing ideas about the cultural and social value of the camps must be discussed at another place. However, I should emphasize again that the media debate is largely driven by humanitarian concerns, and voices which argue for maintaining the camps as part of Ghanaian culture, are virtually nonexistent.

issue was multi-dimensional; socio-cultural, religious, socio-political, legal and human rights as well as an issue of ignorance and lack of knowledge about the causes of diseases. She said her outfit apart from advocating for the abolishing, would also be sensitizing all the communities about issues of human rights, educate people about diseases and epidemics and what causes them, tolerance and cohesion among people in the communities.²⁶⁵

Mr. Yakubu Abass, Yendi Municipal Director of CHRAJ, noted that the issue of witchcraft is an old-long tradition which does not exist in reality hence the need to bring to an end the practice from the modern society. He raised the concern that children of the accused who come with them to the camps do not go to school and those who do are often stigmatized in school by their colleagues which he said could affect them psychologically. Mr. Abass said the accusers do not have the legal right under the constitution of the republic to accuse people of witchcraft because they cannot prove it at the law courts.²⁶⁶

Dr Prosper Yao Dzamepe, a policy expert, on Friday called on government to as a matter of urgency abolish all witches camps in the country. He said this was because the continuous existence of such camps contradicted the laws of the country. [...] On the issue of witches' camps in the northern region, Dr. Dzamepe queried whether there were no wizards in those communities and why the focus was only on women and urged the government and traditional authorities and women groups to lead the campaign and not just look on. He said, 'A liberated woman is a light to an entire generation, her family, community, her nation and humanity at large' and urged the government to enforce to the letter all laws that prohibited the violations of women's rights in the country.²⁶⁷

Mama Attratoh II, Queen of Ho-Dome, said it was time to stop using women as compensation for wrongs committed by men. She said violations against women were criminal and urged the government to use force to stop cultural practices that violated the rights of women if persuasions failed.²⁶⁸

As mentioned before, the connection of witch camps and politics is also emphasized by the activities of the first lady of Ghana, Mrs. Lordina Mahama, who during her husband's term in office has invested time and money into the improvement of the living conditions in Gambaga witch camp²⁶⁹. Lordina Mahama has given her name to the *Lordina Mahama foundation*, which was launched in 2009 and aims at catering for "destitute and vulnerable children and women (especially young women)"²⁷⁰. The fight against the social and gender repercussions of witchcraft belief is also stated on the website, where it specifically says that Mahama "also helps provide shelter and vocational skills training for women accused of witchcraft who are ostracized by their communities."²⁷¹ For her continuing effort the first lady has been praised in the United States Human Rights report 2012²⁷².

²⁶⁵ Gh.Web. 2010, May 19.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Gh.Web. 2010, October 22.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Some of the articles display noteworthy title like "X'mas with the 'witches' and Lordina's paradise on earth" (Mod.Gh. 2013, December 31); see also: Mod.Gh. 2012, December 3; Gh.Web. 2012, December 24; Gh.Web. 2013, July 2; Mod.Gh. 2013, October 20; Gh.Web. 2013, October 20.

²⁷⁰ <http://www.lordinafoundation.org/who-we-are/about-the-foundation/>, accessed April 20th 2016.

²⁷¹ <http://www.lordinafoundation.org/who-we-are/leadership/>, accessed April 20th 2016.

²⁷² Gh.MMA. 2013, April 30.

3.1.3 Case – Akua Donkor: “I will use my witchcraft to make everything free”²⁷³

Σε εως anyen a, fa ye adzi papa! (“If you have witchcraft do something good with it!” A.B. Crentsil, Ghanaian High-Life Musician)²⁷⁴

In contrast to the topics of the *The Witch-Hunt Metaphor* (3.1.1) and the discussions about the *The Witch Camps* (3.1.2), stands the following case in which a Ghanaian politician allegedly claimed to be a witch, and to use her witchcraft powers to achieve great things in the country of Ghana. Cases like these further illuminate the relation of witchcraft and politics in Ghana, and are therefore extensively presented.

Introduction to the Case

Akua Donkor, a vibrant personality in Ghanaian politics²⁷⁵, founder and leader of the Ghana Freedom Party and 2012 aspirant for presidential candidacy²⁷⁶, has, as claimed by PeaceFM, “made [a] shocking revelation at the 3rd edition of the annual Legends and Legacy Ball”²⁷⁷ (November 20th 2013) as she declared that she is a witch²⁷⁸.

Like our brother A. B. Crentsil said in his song, we have to use our talent or whatever gift we have to develop our country not to destroy it. When I imagine to become president, I will use my witchcraft to make everything free.²⁷⁹

Thus she was quoted by PeaceFM, hinting at a reference to the Ghanaian musician A. B. Crentsil. In his song entitled “Devil”, Crentsil favors an interpretation of witchcraft as a supernatural power that can be used to both *good* and *bad* ends. The topic of doing good by witchcraft in Crentsil’s song is exemplified by artifacts of modernity such as *planes* and *trains*, by peace (“Don’t use it [witchcraft] to fight other people”), and by *care of the next generation* (“take care of our children, so that our children can learn from us”)²⁸⁰. Onyinah (2002) in his PhD Thesis and Adinkrah in a recent (2015) book both refer to the song to illustrate the idea that witchcraft may in some instances of Ghanaian culture have a reputation of invention and prosocial activity. Onyinah (2002:66ff.) makes the point that in contrast to other peoples’ conceptualizations of *witch*, the Akan concept covers both negative and positive magic. While, for instance, the Nupe of Nigeria believe that the supernatural power, which can possess man, is “exclusively [used] for evil and antisocial purposes,”

²⁷³ cf. PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁷⁴ The citation is from the lyrics of a song called “Go Away From Me, You Devil” by Ghanaian musician A. B. Crentsil. At this point, I would like to thank my friend Roslyn Mould who translated the lyrics from Fanti into English for me and gave me her interpretation of the meaning of the song. The version I use for the translation can be found on YouTube by title: “A. B. Crentsil – Devil”, published on channel “ghanamankofi”, published April 19th 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDNPMIEQbrE>, accessed February 12th 2016.

²⁷⁵ PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁷⁶ According to *Francis Tawiah (Modern Ghana)* Donkor was “disqualified by the Electoral Commission for her failure to complete her application forms [...]” (Mod.Gh. 2012, December 18; also Mod.Gh. 2013, June 4) Also, it is claimed that she is, in fact, “the first woman whose presidential nominations form was rejected.” Apparently because she “missed the deadline for the submission of the nomination forms.” (Oct. 24th 12 Akua Donkor Joins PPP)

²⁷⁷ The ball is to honor “outstanding Ghanaian musicians”, (15/12-3_PeaceFM-Legends).

²⁷⁸ PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Translation Roslyn Mould.

(66) the Akan etymology allows for more flexible interpretations. One of the two notions to trace back the concept of, *bayie* (witch), goes back to missionary and linguist, Johannes Christaller. He understood the word to be a derivation of “‘*ɔba* (child) and *yi* (to take away?)’”, the idea of a *bayie* as a person who takes away or kills a child is thus conveyed. The other etymology goes back to Damuah²⁸¹, and claims that the word is derived from *ɔbae* which means *came* and *yie* which translates as *well* or *good*. *Bayie* can be “an inherent potency” that can be found in “fortunate human beings as part of their personality.” Onyinah deduces therefore that the Akan concept denotes a person who has “supernatural powers, which may be used for either good or evil.” (Onyinah 2002a:67f.) Adinkrah (2015:136) mentions the song as the “title track of [Crentsil’s] late-1970s highlife²⁸² album”, which “focuses on the distinction between two types of witchcraft”, and is a popular culture example of the Akan concept.

A translation²⁸³ of the song’s lyrics expand singer A. B. Crentsil’s view on witchcraft:

If you have *bayie* do something good with it
 This *bayie* of yours, use it to take care of your children
 Don’t blame it on other peoples’ children
 If you are rich, do something good
 This money of yours, use it to help you children
 Don’t use it to fight other people
 People, listen to me: God created us, the power of the devil is here on earth
 He has given us *bayie*
 We should use it to care of ourselves
 Some people use their *bayie* for destruction
 Other people’s *bayie* is good *bayie*
 They use it for good
 The white mans *bayie* is good *bayie*
 He has used it to invent airplanes
 When you sit in airplane you are happy
 It takes you quickly from place to place
 The white man has used *bayie* to invent trains
 When you sit in a train you are happy
 It takes you quickly from place to place
 The black man’s *bayie* is used for evil
 When a black man sees his friends succeeding, he says to himself:
 ‘This guy, I’m gonna be more successful than him’.
 He will use his *bayie* to blind/to cripple his friend so it stops his success.
 Really? Witch! Witch!
 Let’s use our witchcraft to take care of our children, so that our children learn from us.
 Hatred! All those things are bad spirits.
 [And then in English:] You devil, go away from me!

A striking aspect of this song is the idea that witchcraft comes from the Devil (“[...] the power of the devil is here on earth. He has given us witchcraft”) but it is up to man to decide how to use it. Crentsil illustrates this by making reference to the inventions (planes and trains as artifacts of modernity) that the “white man” has made, which are an example of a benign, productive and prosocial use of witchcraft. Contrasting this with the next lines in which he states that the “black man” rather uses it to engage in competition with his friends

²⁸¹ For information on Damuah, the founder of *Afrikania*, see Subchapter 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

²⁸² Highlife is a musical genre, popular in West Africa, which originated in Ghana and is “rooted in the spontaneous, moonlit get-together of traditional Ghana music which was originally known by the indigenous name ‘Osibi’.” (Oti 2009:38) To name another musician, Alfred Benjamin is a famous Ghanaian singer of Highlife music.

²⁸³ All translations in this paragraph, and following (from Fante and Twi) are from Roslyn Mould.

and defeat them because they want to be more successful than the other, suggests a view in which evil witchcraft is typically used for egoistic means, whereas good or benign witchcraft is used for the benefit of the group, or as Onyinah (2002:66) states: “The Akan often explain the advanced societies’ ability to invent, in life, as the good use of *bayie*.” These repeated returns to the notion that the ‘black’ man and the ‘white’ man make use of witchcraft differently, fits to an observation I take from Geschiere (2000:3). As mentioned before Geschiere (2000:3) reports of an elderly woman who made the claim that she knew how airplanes are built, without having ever seen one closely. To her the planes belong to “the world of witchcraft”, and it is the ‘black’ man who gives witchcraft to the ‘white’ man for them to interpret the witchcraft into real life. The result is that the ‘white’ man, through the witchcraft of the ‘black’ man bestows inventions like planes, TVs, radios and telephones upon the world. The image of the ‘black’ man as *backward* and the ‘white’ man as *progressive* and the opposition between the two is apparent in Crentsil’s song, and one must wonder how to deal with the idea: the ‘white’ man doing more practical, more prosocial things, while his actions are referred to as witchcraft nonetheless. The different images of ‘white’ and ‘black’ magic in popular West African culture seem to have been neglected thus far. Such cases are admittedly rare, however, as I shall argue on the following pages, the positive image of, not necessarily the ‘white’ man, but the ‘West’ as a ‘role-model’ also in terms of how to mediate traditional values and (what at a later point is discussed as) “retrogressive”²⁸⁴, “discriminatory”²⁸⁵, and “harmful”²⁸⁶ cultural practices in a modern world, is addressed frequently throughout the entire material.

Going back to Akua Donkor, one can find an example of this view on witchcraft. In her perspective, the politician highlights her political prowess and insight through the idea of witchcraft. The proper use of her “talent” and “gifts” (which in the Crentsil song are bestowed upon man by the Devil) are made use of to “develop our country [and] not to destroy it.”²⁸⁷ This idea to aim for social development via witchcraft is then contrasted by her display of the current economic state of affairs in Ghana, which she explained in an earlier interview during preparation phase for general elections December 2012. She explained, despite the fact that “the Ghanaian community has been endowed with mineral resources and oil and still, Ghana cannot maintain a stable economy and therefore solicits funds from donors outside.”²⁸⁸ The explanation she provides for this is “corruption”, which “can be seen in the length and breadth of this country [...]”. Her political aim would be to redistribute the money and channel it into the development of “less privileged communities.” She concludes, “When I’m voted by Ghanaians into power, I will declare free port, free education for all Ghanaians no matter the party they support or ‘tribe’ they belong to [...]”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Gh.Web. 2010, November 1.

²⁸⁵ Gh.Web. 2010, March 11.

²⁸⁶ Gh.Web. 2014, December 22.

²⁸⁷ PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁸⁸ Gh.Web. 2012, August 20.

²⁸⁹ Gh.Web. 2012, August 20.

Readers' Discussion

Despite the arguably positive imagery of witchcraft conveyed in the Crensil song, and Donkor's application of it, the politician received chiefly negative responses from readers. There is only one article in the sample that specifically reports on her self-presentation as a witch and nine other articles that were used to gather more background information on Donkor's image in newspapers. The report on the case, however, is published twice, one on *GhanaWeb*²⁹⁰ and the other on *Peace FM*²⁹¹, which provides two sets of readers' comments (95 in total). The focus thus lies on the question how readers perceive of her alleged claim of witchcraft and in particular on how the idea of positive witchcraft as a political means is perceived.

Comments gathered from the *Peace FM* version of the article make up a collection of single, mostly unconnected statements rather than, what is normally the case in the readers' section, evolving debates. There are broadly three kinds of reactions: one in which readers claim that the politician, Akua Donkor, is merely seeking for attention, as she "is doing all she can do [to] be known in the political arena with her disguising comments."²⁹² Another commentator wonders if she needs "any more attention than fighting over a car with that president-wannabe?"²⁹³ and author *Shango* puts in simply: "WELL, FUNNY OLD LADY, SHE IS JUST OUT TO ENTERTAIN GHANAIAAN[s]."²⁹⁴ The other kinds of reactions are expressed in the complaint and rebuke that Ghanaian journalism should not present topics like these because such "issues are soo trivial", and should not "be considered news on this platform. We need constructive news. News that will impact and change our dogmatic social and political attitude [...]."²⁹⁵ Another commentator asks "What this reporter wish[es] to achieve? [...] Ghanaian Media has no agenda. They always fish for non-developmental and non-productive news to disturb our minds."²⁹⁶ Only a handful of comments actually take seriously Donkor's statement to some degree and seemingly support the assertion that she is a witch: "But who doesn't know that she is a witch?"²⁹⁷; "All Ghanians [sic] knew it long time that Akua Donkoh is a witch. Look at her face and it will tell you she is a queen in the spirit world."²⁹⁸; "This is no news. We already new [knew] it. Not just a witch but..... also."²⁹⁹; "I would be very shock[ed] if you were not a witch. It is very visible on your body that you are a dirty witch."³⁰⁰

²⁹⁰ Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

²⁹¹ PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁹² Author *sky Bee*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁹³ Author *AMA*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 2. The commentator refers to an incident which had drawn rather negative attention to Donkor during the preparation of the general election December 7th 2012. Donkor, who by October 24th 2012 had joined the campaign of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), led by Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom, was apparently given a Toyota Tundra to support her work. However, she shortly after broke away from the campaign and refused to give back the car which resulted in a fight between Dr. Nduom and Donkor. The fight went so far that Donkor at some point even claimed there had been "several threats on her life", and "called on the Inspector General of Police, Paul Tawiah Quaye, to help ensure her safety." (MyJoy. 2012, October 24; Vibe. 2012, December 20)

²⁹⁴ Author *Shango*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

²⁹⁵ Author *Vandal kitw3*, *ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Author *kitoo*, *ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Author *Yaa Mensa*, *ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Author *Kbee*, *ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Author *BIN*, *ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Author *Momo*, *ibid.*

The comments mostly regard Donkor's physical appearance and are plain insulting. They are drawing an openly aggressive comparison between her bodily features and that what commentators implicitly believe a witch should look like. While one could argue that such descriptions are not very likely to amount to the positive image of witchcraft as expressed in the song, one should at least take note that none of the comments further elaborate on either her political or supernatural claims. Thus it remains doubtful if they are meant to be more than superficial rejections and defamations on her person. In view of the last statement, one should point at the possibility that by use of the negative intensifier "dirty witch" (my emphasis) one may wonder if this implies that in the eyes of that reader there are also benign witches. Unfortunately, the readers do not explore this possibility more, and leave the topic with merely a vague indication that this ambiguity of witchcraft is part of their conceptualization.

There is only one slightly longer comment in the *Peace FM* sample which favors a different interpretation:

Let's apply our linguistic senses small here. She only wants to say she will employ her political prowess. Opoku Afriyie was once called 'beyie' for his goal scoring prowess. Was he a witch? Many commentators do not use their IQ when contributing.³⁰¹

This argument suits, as I argue below, a common structure in which uncritical statements or those in seeming support of the actual existence of witches are relativized by making reference to metaphor or other linguistic means of constructing analogies. The reference the author makes is addressed at Opoku Afriyie, a former Ghanaian football player who was "popularly called Bayie."³⁰² This view seems to rather support Crentsil's productive form of *bayie*, where outstanding skills (just like those of Afriyie) are explained by witchcraft. Furthermore, one of the commentators maintains that one should read too much into her utterance, and not interpret her statement literally. On the contrary, the author clearly states that this is merely a manner of speaking. Just like Opoku Afriyie, was given the name "beyie", Donkor simply wanted to highlight her "political prowess".

In comparison to the comments above, the ones from *GhanaWeb* show a wider range of topics, and sometimes even evolve into small debates and disputes. To improve the understanding of the debates one needs to give special attention to disputes as they are all displays of how controversially witchcraft is being discussed on Ghanaian websites.

Generally, reactions to the claim are mostly either met with a clear dismissal of witchcraft, and there is no room for interpretation of witchcraft in its benign form. Especially on grounds of, what is most possibly, Christian reasoning, the reference to Crentsil's notion of *bayie* is ignored. The following three commentators show this attitude:

³⁰¹ Author *ekow*, *ibid*.

³⁰² Afriyie, Opoku on Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opoku_Afriyie, accessed February 23rd 2016. I should add at this point how frequently people speak of 'magicians' in German football jargon when they refer to players as "Ballzauberer" (*ball-magician*) or when they observe that a player "zaubert" (*performs magic*) when scoring or elegantly breaking the defense of the opposing team. (cf. <http://www.dfb.de/spieler/bis-u-11-spielerin/ballschuleballzauber/?m=1>, accessed August 19th 2016; <http://www.zeit.de/news/2015-06/06/fussball-baras-ballzauberer-gewinnen-champions-league-06224807>, accessed August 19th 2016.)

MAY YOU PERISH WITH YOUR WITCHCRAFT [...] May God forgive you, ignorant woman.³⁰³

Evil spirits do not give anything for free. Therefore Ghanaians would be paying for it with their lives. If you are a witch please seek deliverance and get saved through the blood of Jesus and all your evil deeds would be forgiven.³⁰⁴

I suspected from the beginning that this uncouth and un-groomed bitch was a witch. [...] This is a classical daughter of Jezebel.³⁰⁵ No wonder she wanted political power just like her 'spiritual mother' did in the bible.³⁰⁶

No Evil can do good we don't need you.³⁰⁷

In the entire sample, indirect or direct support of witchcraft belief is usually met with rebuke from other commentators. Very active in this respect is author *Africabi*, who throughout the material repeatedly emerges as a fervent opponent of witchcraft belief. A typical example of such an argumentative exchange between a seeming supporter and opponent of witchcraft belief looks as follows:

What braindead argument only asantes ... asante beyie can't do foko. keep using it in your bush enclave and don't even dream of getting any serious attention, you illeterate opportunist. You'll provide everything for free from thin air just like okomfo anokye abi? Your likes were burnt to ashes in europe some few decades ago. Stay in the bush with your demons.³⁰⁸

In this way, author *Kojo!* makes reference to topics which are regularly raised in the readers' comment section. Dressing witchcraft as a 'tribal' issue, a problem of, in this case, Ashanti (cf. "asante beyie can't do foko"), the author advances the idea that witchcraft is an antiquated or backward belief system (cf. "keep using it in your bush enclave") which has no proper place in society (cf. "don't even dream of getting any serious attention"). In contrast to the framing of witchcraft in this sense, the author adds that witches, and he counts Akua Donkor among them, were burned in European history. I should add, however, that there is another possibility of interpretation. Instead of alluding to the early modern European witch-crazes (which, admittedly, did not happen "some few decades ago" but centuries ago) the author might have also hinted at the persecutions and the murders during the era of the Nazis. The motive of the *burning to ashes* seems to be the stronger, and more central element which points at the witch-crazes; similarly does the extension to the entirety of Europe (and not only the restriction to Germany). The aggression in the image, however, would well work with both instances.

This comment is immediately met with reaction from author *Africabi* who, neglecting the remark on 'tribe', advances a clear dismissal of witch belief: "WITCHES ARE FAKE. GET SOME EDUCATION, STOP BELIEVING IN SUPERSTITION."³⁰⁹ Another commentator, equally dismissive of witchcraft belief, expands the criticism towards the Christian religion, and thus reclaims ideas of progress and development:

³⁰³ Author *Cudjoe*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

³⁰⁴ Author *Kofi*, *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Reference is made to the Biblical character of *Jezebel* as symbols of idolatry (Baal).

³⁰⁶ Author *KB, USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

³⁰⁷ Author *blesswanyoung*, *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

³⁰⁹ Author *Afrikabi*, *ibid.*

Witchcraft? [...] it is only in the minds of the gullible that witchcraft exists. it is equally foolish to fall on divine intervention for our development and advancement. if we spent half the time we spend on church/religious activities on efforts to find solutions to our problems, we would have developed by now.³¹⁰

Further discussions of the readers commentary shows that this is a common example of the controversy of witchcraft. Apart from this position, comments on the rationality of Donkor's claim again interpret her statement to be "metaphorical", a "joke", a view that is specifically expressed here: "ANY ONE NOT UNDERSTANDING THIS IS A FOOL," and "She meant it metaphorically. come on IGNORANT internet users. look at how you expose your IGNORANCE on Ghanaweb."³¹¹ Another commentator directly responds to this by saying: "Headline foolish. people comments foolish. its a methapor joke. she means using her intelligence like AB [Crentsil] meant in his song. [...] ignorant Ghanaians. bush web users."³¹² Author *KB* concludes: "It beats my imagination how people get to freely expose their ignorance and stupidity on Ghanaweb. Seems like you two [authors *Joe Baiden* and *peeeeeee*] were the only ones who got her metaphorical message here. Unbelievable!"³¹³ Such outspoken criticism of the literal understanding of Donkor's statement is not as rare as these authors make it seem. However, readers get clearly more readily involved in debating witchcraft when it is presented in a way that accused one particular 'tribe' of being culturally inclined to witchcraft belief. This easily arouses conflict, which is documented with ample evidence also beyond this case.

Focus: 'Tribe' and Conflict

Conflict of this kind arises mostly between Ashanti and Ewe (and in a handful of examples also regarding Ga) in the material, and this case is no exception. Incidents regarding witchcraft, as for instance when people refer to themselves as witches, are persecuted, physically attacked and sometimes murdered under the label, regularly arouse a climate of recrimination. In this sample the Ashanti are accused more than other Ghanaian societies, most certainly following the fact that Akua Donkor belongs to this particular group. For author *Kojo!*³¹⁴, whose comment is a typical example of this kind of accusation, Donkor is an "Asante beyie, bayifour"³¹⁵, who from "a landlocked asantestan in the bush" rules with "witchcraft or is it wishcraft". He claims that it is "No wonder nothing positive comes out of your dark holes you called ashanti region." In this context it is notions like "bush", "backwardness [in the] Ashanti bush", "stupid [...] Ashantis", "Trokosi maggots", "Stupid akan witch" which are all references authors make to render dispute between Ewe and Ashanti people. The picture of the supposed *backwardness* of the Ashanti as expressed through the authors, is quite clear and needs no further discussion. The 'Trokosi' insult, on the other hand, is a concept that can frequently be found in the sample and regularly co-occurs with concepts like *witch camps*, *female genital*

³¹⁰ Author *OneGhana*, *ibid.*

³¹¹ Author *Joe Baiden*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

³¹² Author *peeeeeee*, *ibid.*

³¹³ Author *KB*, *ibid.*

³¹⁴ Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

³¹⁵ 'Beyie' means *witchcraft*, 'bayifour' means *witch*.

mutilation, and forced marriage thus forming a context where traditional cultural practices are understood as gender-based violence. This in mind, reference to the concept of Trokosi becomes a retort of people in support of the Ashanti ‘tribe’ and attacking the Ewe ‘tribe’ on the same level as they do with their reference to witchcraft as something particular to Ashanti culture:

MAY YOUR WISHES COME THROUGH ... Oh how I wish we have a landlocked country of our own away from these Trokosi maggots. Trust me if Asantes had their own country that stretches from the North-West of Eastern Region to Eastern Ivory Coast, we would bring back all Asantes from outside, just like Israel and then leave the rest of Ghana to deal with these Trokosi parasites. I wish Ghana can take its oil and leave we Asantes alone. In any case that is soon going to happen and we will leave other Akans to decide if they would like to join us or not. We need to do this as soon as possible before we deplete our forests to feed these ungrateful idiots in Ghana.³¹⁶

Despite the aggression and sometimes strongly insulting language, not all commentators readily chime in the chorus. In this debate, author *kiwi* makes the point that all regions of Ghana are affected by magical beliefs as he asks: “Why limit this to Ashanti Region? The whole country has all sorts of shrines everywhere. ... Doesn’t matter if its water, tree, witchcraft, juju, or whatever.”³¹⁷ In general, it seems to be the case that the moment the ‘tribal’ perspective is engaged, magical beliefs are, without exception, looked down upon, and raised as insult against one another.

3.1.4 Case: Anita De-Soso and “Dwarf Economics”³¹⁸

... this administration is having problems administering the country into reality. (Justice Sarpong, GhanaWeb Columnist)³¹⁹

Introduction to the Case

One of the more curious cases in the sample is that of Ghanaian politician, Anita De-Soso³²⁰, currently (2016) on the position of *National Women’s Organiser* of Ghanaian leading political party, the NDC³²¹. The synopsis of this case is based on 13 articles and 57 readers’ comments from two of the articles.

According to a number of online sources, De-Soso, who during the time of the events had occupied the position of “Deputy National Coordinator of The National Disaster Management Organisation,”³²² claimed in the early months of 2014 that the declining value of the Ghana Cedi is to be blamed to the “witch-doctors” who employ “dwarfs” that steal “Ghana’s foreign currencies from banks and other financial institutions” which “inadvertently affects its stability”³²³. She states:

Do we know where they get the money from? Do we know what they do with it? These dwarfs [...] the black magic, is what has made the Cedi lose value. [...] What I want to tell Ghanaians is that, there is nothing God cannot do. We must

³¹⁶ Author *OSEI TAWIAH*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

³¹⁷ Author *kiwi*, *ibid.*

³¹⁸ cf. CitiFM. 2014, February 18.

³¹⁹ Gh.Web. 2014, July 20.

³²⁰ Sometimes alternatively spelled *De-Sooso*, *De Souza*, *de Soza* or similar.

³²¹ The NDC has been in office since 2012 and throughout 2014 when these events occurred. The following general election in Ghana is November 7th 2016.

³²² Gh.MMA. 2014, February 11.

³²³ *ibid.*

make an attempt by praying to revive the cedi. Ghana despite the crisis is far better than other countries. We must be steadfast and pray to bring back the cedi from the dwarfs.³²⁴

Furthermore, De-Soso is reported to have claimed that the depreciation of the Cedi is due to “the activities of magicians, who conjure up money as part of their stock trade”³²⁵. This summoning up of money has “a direct effect on the cedi, which is witnessing unprecedented depreciation in recent times”, which “despite attempts by government to stem the tide” and similar endeavors by the banks to introduce “currency and exchange controls aimed at strengthening the cedi” maintains a problem. De-Soso further cited “the activities of black marketers, currency speculators and other people she describes as ‘saboteurs.’”³²⁶

The attributing of economic processes to the occult in Ghanaian political context is something that happens on occasion. In this way, “General Overseer of the Christian Action Faith Ministries [...] Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams” came into similar criticism for asking “Ghanaians to pray for divine intervention in halting the Cedi’s free-fall.”³²⁷ Also Nigerian Pastor T. B. Joshua, engaged in religious reasoning to challenge the economic situation as he encouraged “prayers to stall the economic downturn.”³²⁸ It is not uncommon to be asked as a Ghanaian citizen to pray to react to a problem of national magnitude. So it became one of the more spiritual acts of former Ghanaian president John Evans Atta Mills, a few days after his inauguration as president, to induce a “national day of prayer and thanksgiving” on Sunday February 1st 2009³²⁹. A more recent attempt of coercing the entire Ghanaian nation into prayer can be found in Reverend Isaac Owusu Bempah’s prophecy of the supposed death of Ghanaian president John Dramani Mahama. The “well-known Prophet and founder and Leader of the Glorious Word Ministry International” stated that “God revealed to him that President Mahama will die this year [2013].” The “impending calamity”, however, “could be averted if the entire nation, and most especially the President, sought God’s help through prayers.”³³⁰ Concerning the 2014 financial situation, besides Anita De-Soso there are other Ghanaian politicians who take this line of argumentation. For instance, Alhaji Collins Dauda, referred to the Quran and the Bible when he stated that president Mahama can do “little [...] to address the situation in the economy” because both sacred texts “predicted hard conditions at the End Times.”³³¹

Reader’s Discussion

Not every call for prayer is met with equal enthusiasm. De-Soso’s call sparked rather negative reactions from journalists, commentators, and, notably, famous Ghanaian witch-doctor Kwaku Bonsam³³². The latter does not generally oppose the notion that dwarfs and gods can bring “monies”, but concerning this specific case

³²⁴ PeaceFM. 2014, February 12.

³²⁵ MyJoy. 2014, February 10.

³²⁶ MyJoy. 2014, February 10.

³²⁷ Gh.MMA. 2014, February 11; CitiFM. 2014, February 18.

³²⁸ CitiFM. 2014, February 18.

³²⁹ Gh.Web. 2009, January 28.

³³⁰ Gh.Web. 2013, February 12.

³³¹ Gh.MMA. 2014, February 13.

³³² For an in-depth discussion on Kwaku Bonsam, see section 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

he clearly expresses that instead of dwarfs it is Ghanaians who should be blamed. According to him this is not a spiritual but an economic problem that is rooted in the Ghanaian attitude towards the Cedi:

Why do we trade in dollars even though we are in Ghana? The fact is we don't respect our cedi ... everyone is talking about dollars. You can't go to America and trade with the cedi. We mishandle the cedi ... roughly folding up into our pockets. There is not spirit behind our cedi ... it's our own behaviour that is causing the depreciation of the currency.³³³

The spiritualist insisted that he and his peers have done nothing wrong; thus responding to the allegation by De-Soso. Moreover, Bonsam maintains that the depreciation of the Cedi is caused by the people's own behavior as there is "no spirit behind" the Cedi. I understand this not as a general dismissal of the idea that supernatural powers or entities are able to manipulate currency, but rather in this particular case, so argues Bonsam, there is no spiritual entity behind the depreciation. From this sample one cannot tell if De-Soso returned a comment to Bonsam, however, columnist *Sydney Casely-Hayford* claims that immediately after Bonsam's reaction De-Soso "shut up [...] because she is a believer."³³⁴

Kwaku Bonsam is not the only spiritualist who felt challenged in this case. Mallam Mahamadu Alhassan, according to *Peace FM* "was amazed at how Ghanaians can so easily give credit to black magicians, gods and juju for any unfortunate incident." In his view, the "current economic hardship" is not due to supernatural entities but comes as a result from a government that has had too little time to react upon the economic challenges:

There are no economic woes in Ghana except that the new government in power is now putting economic measures in place, hence the hardship in the country. The government has a lot of projects on its shoulders and it is yet to deal with the economic issues. Ghanaians better exercise patience and do not blame the economic woes on dwarfs, black magic and gods [...]. We rule a country with wisdom and knowledge to change the economic situation and not some spiritual entities somewhere. If the knowledge will work, wisdom will be applied and patience will be maintained then Ghana will progress.³³⁵

Thus a curious situation evolves in which, on one hand, there is a politician who fulfills the function of diviner in that she identifies the problem as supernatural entities and suggests spiritual ways of counteracting them, i.e. by prayer. On the other hand, however, there are actual self-proclaimed spiritualists who provide rational, if not economic, accounts as to why the Cedi depreciates and how to prevent it from further doing so.

There are in total 74 comments in three articles.³³⁶ The majority of commentators (roughly 3/4), i.e. journalists, columnists and people authoring readers' comments have been patently dismissive of De-Soso's analysis. Most of such rebuttals agree in that they express concern over a politician of the Ghanaian ruling party to resort to the summoning of dwarfs when faced with economic challenges. Some reacted with humor or even ridicule:

³³³ PeaceFM. 2014, February 13a.

³³⁴ CitiFM. 2014, February 18.

³³⁵ PeaceFM. 2014, February 13b.

³³⁶ Gh.Web. 2014, February 12; PeaceFM. 2014, February 12; Gh.Web. 2014, July 20.

If it is not Anita Desoso's dwarf, we might have to look at the ghost angle and if that is the case, then we can call the Ghostbusters to come and fumigate the Flagstaff house³³⁷ so that the ghosts can go away. [...] Oh My goodness, what a bunch of yahoos we have ruling this country.³³⁸

We need Anita Desoso to lead us to the jujumen who used the dwarfs to steal our monies. First of all they should bring our monies back and secondly we'll need them to steal monies from the US, German, UK, Switzerland etc banks. [...] When you read or hear things like this you don't know whether to laugh or cry. You will want to laugh because such utterances serves as a comic relief and you will want to cry because people of high positions who are supposed to be very sophisticated in their logic are the ones rather making such mind-boggling statements.³³⁹

Only two commentators from the sample actually pick up on the religious implications in De-Soso's statement:

When people who profess to worship the almighty GOD dabble in juju and the worship of idols, the end result is what we are experiencing at the presidency. We can't serve multiple masters and expect to have peace and prosperity as a nation. GOD BLESS GHANA MY HAPPY HOMELAND.³⁴⁰

Ghana is facing all these problems because God is against the use of Juju at the Presidency. Mahama is a Christian superintending Juju activities at the Flagstaff house. It started at the castle. Get rid of this government before God visit Ghana with more headaches.³⁴¹

The statements express clear disagreement towards the "dabbl[ing] in juju and the worship of idols"³⁴² or the "superintending [of] Juju activities"³⁴³ in the government. In this sense, one could argue that by giving the blame to the dwarfs, De-Soso, instead of avoiding it, has actually done damage to the government by upsetting their Christian voters³⁴⁴. At least, if one considers the two commentators who in reference to Biblical quotations clearly dismiss the act of occult recriminations: "We can't serve multiple masters and expect to have peace and prosperity as a nation." (cf. Matthew 6²⁴)³⁴⁵

Yet another number of articles brings in a different take on the problem on how to understand De-Soso's claims in that they explicitly express that they are not to be understood *literally* but *metaphorically*. Anita De-Soso, they say, refers to *dwarfs*, *juju* and *black magic* not as genuine spiritual entities but as *wildcards* for a number of either more complicated or controversial issues. This becomes apparent, for instance, in the following comment where *the* dwarf stands for the Ghanaian economist, politician, former Governor of the Bank of Ghana and now Vice president of Ghana, Kwesi Amissah-Arthur³⁴⁶.

EBUSUA DWARFS ARE IN CAPE COAST. PAA KWESI AMISSAH ARTHUR IS FROM CAPE COAST. ANY CORRELATION MADAM? BE BOLD.³⁴⁷

³³⁷ *Flagstaff House* is a common reference to the presidential palace in Accra.

³³⁸ Gh.Web. 2014, July 20.

³³⁹ Author *Diprof*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, February 12.

³⁴⁰ Author *PK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, July 20.

³⁴¹ Author *Ghanaba*, *ibid*.

³⁴² Author *PK*, *ibid*.

³⁴³ Author *Ghanaba*, *ibid*.

³⁴⁴ There is a strong Christian majority (71.2%) in the country. 17.6% are Muslim and 5.2% are indigenous religious practitioners, and 5.3% have no religion (Nrenzah 2015:2).

³⁴⁵ King James Version.

³⁴⁶ Amissah-Arthur, Kwesi on Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwesi_Amissah-Arthur, accessed February 17th 2016.

³⁴⁷ Author *KOFI ADAM*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, February 12. With his utterance "Any correlation Madam?" the author of this commentary highlights the fact that Paa Kwesi Amissah Arthur is from the same town as a football team who call themselves the "Cape-Coast Mysterious Dwarfs" (Ebusua Dwarfs on Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebusua_Dwarfs, accessed February 14th 2016)

Commentator Prince Amoako in a similar remark explains what he thinks is actually meant by *dwarfs*, and thus makes clear that De-Soso is not the first politician who made reference to these creatures on a public level.

Anita De Sosoo was not referring to the mythical or mysterious dwarf which is supposed to live in the ***barred word***³⁴⁸. She was referring to the evil dwarf who challenged the NDC in 2012 presidential elections.³⁴⁹

The author refers to a statement by former president Jerry John Rawlings who in October 2012 warned incumbent president John Mahama of “old dwarfs”³⁵⁰ in their own party, the NDC: “I believe the President is beginning to see for himself the actions of these same old evil dwarfs.”³⁵¹ Complaining about problems within the NDC, Rawlings asked the people to support their president by praying to God who shall “give him strength and courage to put his foot down and do what he needs to do.”³⁵²

Another commentator expressly uses the notion of “riddle, metaphor or figure of speech” to enable “the average person to understand” how the government “uses dubious ways to steal money from tax payers.”³⁵³ Here the argument is expressed by the commentator that an idea of supernatural entity can solve a complex situation. In this way, the involvement of the occult is presented as rhetoric strategy to make understandable what is hidden to the eye and mind of the “average person”.

It is only the sages who believe Anita Desooso figure of speech. Anita use words like ‘JUJUMEN’ ‘DWARFS’ are metaphor. The jujumen are the theifs in the government and dwarfs are the fake documents present to AG [Attorney General³⁵⁴] as law suit for unjust termination of contracts and payments judgement debts and inflating of prices of contracts and purchases. Can you image GRA³⁵⁵ boss award contract of GHC 170 million to Subah³⁵⁶ without documents and parliamentary approval? Forbes³⁵⁷ said President Mahama has stolen US \$ 900 million and Afriyie Ankrah³⁵⁸ also has stolen US \$ 120 million and the GHC 8.7 billion wasted during the election. Aren’t these folks stealing dwarfs? Thses [these] folks stole the money and kept it at safe place and not in transaction and bollowing [borrowing] a cause the cedi to depreciate. Anita Desooso you have tell the truth, I love you, no amount of name calling or insult people throw at you, you still my girl.³⁵⁹

GhanaWeb columnist *Philip Kobina Baidoo Jr.* comes to a similar conclusion in which De-Soso’s “childish diagnosis of the current distress of the cedi”³⁶⁰ is only on a superficial level understood to be a problem. In fact, her argumentation serves a society where “superstition is our bread and butter”³⁶¹, he says, which thus allows politicians like De-Soso to conceal the true facts, which might be inconvenient to the government.

³⁴⁸ The token ***barred word*** is the way of censoring on *GhanaWeb*.

³⁴⁹ Author *Prince Amoako*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, February 12.

³⁵⁰ Mod.Gh. 2012, October 5a; Mod.Gh. 2012, October 5b; PeaceFM. 2012, October 4.

³⁵¹ PeaceFM. 2012, October 4, taken from the audio-recording that is linked to this article.

³⁵² *ibid.*

³⁵³ Author *HAZOR*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, February 12.

³⁵⁴ The *Attorney General of Ghana* “is the chief legal advisor to the Ghanaian government”, and is also responsible for the Ministry of Justice.

³⁵⁵ *Ghana Revenue Authority* is a government agency which is a merger (2009) of “three revenue agencies” in Ghana “into a single authority for the administration of taxes and customs duties in the country.” <http://www.gra.gov.gh/index.php/about-us>, accessed February 18th 2016.

³⁵⁶ Subah Infosolutions is a Ghanaian information technological and telecommunications solutions provider. <http://www.subahghana.com>, February 18th 2016.

³⁵⁷ Forbes business magazine, <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/welcome/>, accessed February 12th 2016.

³⁵⁸ Afriyie Ankrah is a Ghanaian NDC politician.

³⁵⁹ Author *Prince Amoako*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, February 12.

³⁶⁰ Chronicle. 2014, February 25.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*

But unlike commentator Justice Sarpong, he does not want to check De-Soso into “Ankaful or Patang mental hospital,”³⁶² but instead reveal her motive: to distract the public from the government’s mismanagement. Similar to the commentator before who claims that in order to allow the average person to understand, De-Soso makes use of metaphors. Baidoo Jr. in this case goes a little further and brings in the metaphor of the “smoke screen”. De-Soso’s explanation may be ridiculous but in fact her narrative functioned like a “trial balloon”, to assess media and public responses. In this way, De-Soso’s narrative “is only another Tomahawk missile, they have released to cause maximum damage to serve as a smoke screen.”³⁶³ *Maximum damage*, I interpret at this point, to refer to the degree of violation of the facts, so that: the bigger the damage the thicker the “smoke screen”, i.e. the better the concealment. Baidoo Jr. goes on to explain in reference to ...

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda chief [...]: ‘the bigger the lie the more people will believe it. [...] You and I know that what she said couldn’t be more outrageous than a dog giving birth to a cat. Who will raise an eyebrow if someone says that a dog has bitten a man? But if you should have it reversed to say that man bite dog, even the skeptics will sit up and philosophize.’³⁶⁴

As Baidoo Jr. concludes, this is De-Soso’s plan: to involve everybody by believing right away or at least philosophizing, and thus distract from the true problems³⁶⁵.

Focus: Spiritual Solutions to Economic Problems

What I would like to stress in regards to this case is the attempt of summoning religious or spiritual explanations for political or economic threats. This is an act that is obviously routinely performed in the West African context as can be illustrated by reference to the media engagement of people like Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Pastor T. B. Joshua, Alhaji Collins Dauda, Reverend Isaac Owusu Bempah or former Ghanaian president Atta Mills’s “national day of prayer and thanksgiving”. In this sense, De-Soso’s elaborations on the Cedi seem to fall into the strategy of clouding one’s own speech by ambiguous magical references. The involvement of notions of magic to explain economic or political hardship, at least in De-Soso’s view, must have been believed to function as such a smoke screen. However, not every reader regards this with equal enthusiasm. Some ridicule it while others understand her speech in the form of a “riddle, metaphor or figure of speech” which helps the uneducated readers understand government tax policy³⁶⁶, and again other complain about the lack of seriousness in political discourse. What is striking about this particular discussion is the curious twist of roles that is expressed through the comments of the two spiritualists, Kwaku Bonsam and Mallam Mahamadu Alhassan, who both argue in rational, non-spiritual ways why there is a depreciation of the Cedi. To make this clear: neither Bonsam nor Alhassan categorically stand against the notion that spirits may indeed have an effect on economy; however, in this particular case both spiritualists favor rational explanations over spiritual ones.

³⁶² Gh.Web. 2014, February 12.

³⁶³ Chronicle. 2014, February 25.

³⁶⁴ *ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Author *HAZOR*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, February 12.

3.2 Witchcraft and Illness

The context of witchcraft and illness is a common place in the study of witchcraft in Africa and beyond, through history and in contemporary times, and it is also represented in the material. The articles addressed at this topic mostly reveal a background regarding the health- or medical sector. What all the references to diseases and medical conditions have in common is that they are exclusively attributed to witchcraft, which poses a social as well as health problem to the population. Very often there are health rallies that inform the citizens of Ghana that certain diseases are not caused by witchcraft but resort from other causes. This concerns mostly diseases like tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, buruli ulcer, cholera, malaria, but also breast cancer, and mental conditions like dementia, schizophrenia, depression, autism and epilepsy or general disabilities and even childlessness, which are all attributed to witchcraft.

“Illness is not caused by Witchcraft” (Medical Personnel and Campaigners)

Medical personnel frequently report that certain conditions are not caused by witchcraft like in the case of tuberculosis—a disease which also bears some degree of patient stigmatization:

In a welcoming address, Mrs. Eva Agbodo Saku, District Public Health Nurse, stressed that ‘TB is not caused by demons and witchcraft but rather by a germ and everyone is at risk’. Mrs. Saku called on the people to join hands in the campaign against the spread of the disease.³⁶⁷

The same is the case for cholera. The same problem entails the same reasoning:

The Director-General of Health Service, Dr. Elias Sory, called on the public to desist from blaming witches for cholera related deaths explaining that ‘when you get cholera it means you have eaten human faeces. It has nothing to do with witches and wizards.’³⁶⁸

One of the major *killers* on the African continent is malaria. According to the World Health Organization every minute malaria kills a child on the continent;³⁶⁹ and furthermore is a disease which is also attributed to witchcraft:

Less commonly, malaria transmission may occur through accidental transfusion with infected blood. Unlike common cold or flu, one cannot get malaria from casual contact with malaria-infected persons neither is it a spiritual disease as some people still believe nor can it be caused by witchcraft. Of course like any other disease, preventing malaria is better than a cure.³⁷⁰

This list continues with mental conditions and disabilities, which according to the newspapers are frowned upon in society as they are perceived as to be connected to witchcraft. Another reoccurring topic is the fight against breast cancer. In 2011 Shaft FM, a Ghanaian radio station, and the Cancer Foundation organized a free breast cancer screening³⁷¹.

³⁶⁷ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14a.

³⁶⁸ Gh.Web. 2011, March 27.

³⁶⁹ <http://www.afro.who.int/en/malaria/>, accessed April 21st 2016.

³⁷⁰ Gh.Web. 2010, June 1.

³⁷¹ Chronicle. 2011, May 10.

Concerning mental conditions the pattern is the same. Conditions like epilepsy are readily attributed to witchcraft, as the following quotation from a campaign against the condition illustrates:

‘If you feel like having a seizure, lie down on your side and place something soft, such as a folded towel, under your head in order to stop you from harming yourself.’ He called on Ghanaians to disabuse their minds of the notion that the disease was caused by witchcraft of spirits.³⁷²

Other mental conditions like dementia or schizophrenia are in a worse position even because people suffering from them are perceived as witches themselves:

According to a Ghana News Agency report, the Executive Director of Alzheimer’s and Related Disorders Association of Ghana (ARDAG), Mrs Esther Dey, says education on dementia, a medical condition, is urgently needed in the country. She said this was mainly because symptoms of the condition easily made sufferers look like witches in the eyes of people who are ignorant of the condition and superstitious. [...] She recounted an incident in the country a few years ago, when an old lady, who had lost her way and was incoherent in her speech, was killed by some people, who accused her of being a witch. ‘Some knowledge of dementia would have made them know that she rather needed help and saved her life,’ she said. Mrs Dey said a good understanding of the condition by the public could also have saved many who had been accused of being witches from being thrown into witches camps by their family members.’³⁷³

The cohesion of mental illness and witchcraft is a well established fact in Africa and beyond. In many traditional contexts the view is maintained that madness can result from “the breaking of taboos like sorcery or witchcraft, or [be considered] the actions of ancestral spirits [...]” (Read et al. 2015:98) In Senegal “Psychiatric patients often suspect the cause of their illness to be magic spells initiated by rivals in conflicts involving love, money, or professional activities [...]” (Frankling 1996:325 cited after Read et al. 2015:98) Thus recently Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in West Africa “have become a popular resource for the treatment of mental illness. They have developed their own models of mental illness, which often combine the belief system of traditional religion and Christianity, and sometimes biomedicine.” (ibid.) Spiritual as well as biomedical approaches, “despite their differing epistemologies” are not viewed upon by patients and families as mutually exclusive—a study on schizophrenia from Nigeria demonstrated that while “psychoses were most often attributed to the work of Satan [...] the families had sought hospital care.” (ibid.)

In Ghana, witchcraft and mental illness in the form of “depression among elderly Ghanaian women”, has been researched since the 1950s by Margaret Field’s “ethnopsychiatric work among the Akan”. Field illustrates how “Akan women” who suffered from clinical depression would accuse themselves of witchcraft at traditional shrines. (de-Graft Aikins 2015:118) Women are much more likely to be labeled and stigmatized than men, and there are a number of factors which facilitate this correlation: one of the central symptoms of depression is “self-stigmatization” which is connected to the debilitating character of the illness that leads one to not being able anymore to fulfill “their important sociocultural role”, lose one’s old identities, feel useless and a burden to the family. In some parts of Ghana where, despite a lack of legal sanctioning, polygamy is practiced “women with debilitating chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cancer face greater risks of marital conflict and breakdown compared to men for these reasons.” (de-Graft Aikins 2015:118) Referring back to the Subchapter on witch camps and the clear prevalence of female “witches” in those

³⁷² Gh.Web. 2010, November 30.

³⁷³ Graphic. 2014, January 8.

camps, as reported by the newspapers and as known from ethnographic studies, the view on traditional ways of coping with debilitating physical and mental illnesses—where sometimes the latter is facilitated by the first—makes up a feasible explanation for the situation to at least some degree.

3.3 Witchcraft and Violence

This category summarizes all cases in the material in which people who are called witches are subjected to violence, physical or psychological, because of their supposed practice of malign forms of magic. I suggest that the element which constitutes the cohesion of this topic is *violence*. Violence of physical or psychological nature features in all the cases. In some cases they make up the grounds of a legal case in front of Ghanaian law (homicide, physical assault, rape, deprivation of liberty) or are the driving moment to get Police alarmed.

For a thorough presentation I present each case (in chronologic order, old to new) and provide a summary of the events based on respective sources. Secondly, I discuss how these cases are being reported, and thirdly, if there are, present how these cases are perceived in the reader's comments³⁷⁴. Finally, a summary and discussion of the crucial observations is provided.

3.3.1 Homicide

I would like to begin this point by stressing that deaths resulting from witchcraft accusation, as alarming and saddening they are, emerge as a most rare instance from the material. While there is a plethora of cases on media in which violence is meted out on supposed witches, or cases in which people are ostracized and abandoned in witch- and prayer camps, cases where people misuse others under the false pretense of witchcraft (when, e.g., sexual harassment and other forms of physical and psychological violence are passed upon supposed witches) cases of actual homicide in response to witchcraft accusation in this collection amounts to nine cases in total (covering the years 2009 until 2014)³⁷⁵.

³⁷⁴ Note that not every article in this collection has reader's comments. Some websites do not offer this service while others regularly erase the reader's comments section.

³⁷⁵ There are two cases which had to be omitted because of lack of readers' comments or of other ways to investigate how people respond to the topic of magic. Cases without any response by readers, by journalists or by other persons in the reports are not very useful for this kind of study. The two cases left out in the section should at least be mentioned:

One case dates from February 2012 and is entitled "Man guns down 78year old woman ... for stealing fowl" (Chronicle. 2012, February 13): a young male has apparently beat an elderly lady to death after having been caught trying to steal a fowl. When interrogated by Police the accused claimed that he had not wanted to steal but to beat up the old lady who in his words had been "witch-hunting him for a couple of months now." Notice that this particular application of the term *witch-hunting* is the only exception in the material to the otherwise metaphorical application of the notion. Instead of the unjust persecution of a person, the commentator refers to the actual act of being spiritually *hunted* by a witch.

The other case dates from September 2014 and is entitled "Housewife Murdered Over Witchcraft" (Daily. 2014, September 25): the report narrates the events around the brutal assault and subsequent lynch murder on a 55-year-old housewife upon the accusation of witchcraft.

This cannot, of course, be seen as an indicator of the witchcraft related homicides and deaths occurring in the country of Ghana. In regards to this question see, e.g., Adinkrah (2015:1ff.) who also includes court records and other sources to assess the prevalence of witchcraft related homicides and deaths, specifically see his work on female homicide in Ghana and its relation to witchcraft (e.g. Adinkrah 2004). There is, e.g., the lynching of five women in the villages of Yoggu and Kumbungu in the aftermath of the 1997 cerebrospinal meningitis epidemic in the North of Ghana. (Adinkrah 2004:327) Further, Adinkrah (2004:339) describes about 13 cases of homicides in which women had previously been suspected or accused of witchcraft. His data stems from the newspaper *Daily Graphic*, and covers the time from January 1st 1995 until December 31st 2001. Adinkrah argues, however (as I do above), that these are not to be taken as an indicator what actually happens in this regard in Ghana. It may be that the *Daily Graphic* (as much as other newspapers) simply does not report on all such cases or sometimes the “killings may have been misclassified as accidents, suicides, deaths resulting from illnesses, or deaths due to undetermined causes.” Autopsies are not carried out very often and in this way, it is problematic to determine the true cause. Moreover, physical assaults “do not always result in immediate death”, as the choice of weapons is not always a firearm or stoning (where immediate immediate death is almost certain) but perpetrators may use blunt objects, knives or poisoned concoctions. (cf. Adinkrah 2004:341) Finally, perpetrators come “routinely” from the immediate family, and the victims are “hurriedly” buried to avoid investigation. (Adinkrah 2004:339)

I maintain, it is noteworthy to consider the fact that despite the indisputable attraction that media can drain from such cases, there are comparably few reported.

1. August 2009: “Pastor Whips Church Member To Death”³⁷⁶

The one and a half page article was published August 14th 2009 on *GhanaWeb* and reports about “Pastor Kwame Kussi, 30, of the Warriors of Zion Prayer Camp at Asante Kwaku near Nsawam” (Eastern Region), the alleged killer of Esther Ayeley, 40, a local farmer. According to reporters from Ghana News Agency who interviewed the responsible Chief Inspector of Nsawam Police, Redeemer Kumah, the Pastor during deliverance service claimed that Esther Ayeley “and her two daughters were witches”. Supported by some Church members Ayeley was caned “until she collapsed and died the following day”. Pastor Kussi, who is in Police custody, had to appear “before the Nsawam Magistrate Court on August 21”, while Police was investigating to identify and arrest “the other members of the church” who took part in the caning of the victim. On a note of warning, Apostle Emmanuel Opare Adarkwah who is “Eastern Regional Co-ordinator of the Ghana Association of Faith Healers and Traditional Birth Attendants” as well as “leader of the New Testament Church at Nsawam” in an interview with Ghana News Agency spoke out against “pastors who chain and lash their patients at prayer camps”. Adarkwah urged “healing churches to register with the

³⁷⁶ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

Association so that their activities would be regularize[d] and coordinated”, and that identity cards and licenses of healing and prayer camps could be checked. In this way, illegally operating pastors can be sanctioned when caught.

Readers’ Discussion³⁷⁷

The article has 210 comments. I begin by identifying the main topics discussed and giving examples of them. Generally, I can submit that the vast majority (roughly 4/5) of commentators call the caning and killing of Esther Ayeley a despicable act. From the entire collection only one commentator judges differently and commends Pastor Kussi on his deed: “Yea more lashes for the old witches. have special cans for them ... if the new pastor coming like it.”³⁷⁸

This may well be a display of irony. Since nobody responded on this, and the commentator did not pursue it further, it is hard to tell. Other commentators, however, make undoubtedly clear their protest about this incident. Very often in these cases commentators problematize the powerful position in which pastors find themselves, which according to some views leads to the exploitation of people. The following quotations all aim to the responsibility of the Pastor:

How can a pastor do that? Did Jesus ever cain patients he healed? Africans uptil now donot know what a worship means. We donot really worship God rather we seek power, richness over powerless, uneducated volks. The sad thing is that some of our educated elites are trapped in such criminal organisations. If educated ones are following such criminals who then should help our brothers and mothers and sisters who can neither read nor write. I think it is time Africans should start using their God-giving-precuios-brains to analyse things. There are no witches, osaman, sikaduro, obayifo, no pastor can heal you if you are sick please go to hospital. Stop saying obayifo is letting you drink alcohol you are doing it yourself!! If you are sad and you want help from God, Allah, Onyame Chineke [...] go on your knees yourself and pray donot ask any pastor for help because God loves you equally as the pastor. Open your eyes always!!!!³⁷⁹

Others put forward another prominent idea in this respect, which is to criticize the ease with which one can become a Pastor, and how far these people take control of personal life:

FREEDOM OF RELIGION SO ANYBODY CAN BE A PASTOR. HOW COME? IF SOMEONE IS A WITCH OR WIZARD IS IT BY CANING THE PERSON THE ANTIDOTE TO HIS OR HER PREDICAMENT OR CONDITION. FOR HOW LONG ARE THESE SELF-ACCLAIMED PASTORS WHO ARE ONLY CHAMPIONS IN VISA ACQUISITION, MARITAL PROBLEMS RESOLUTION AND BUSINESS FLOURISHING VENTURES ARE TO BE ALLOWED TO SUBJECT INNOCENT MEMBERS TO SUCH ORDEALS.³⁸⁰

The following statement is yet another popular criticism which can easily be found in cases where Christian ministers have used violence against alleged witches:

Church Competitions and the struggle cum eagerness to win souls and recruit more members to the individual and private churches, resulted in the creation of falsehoods, forgeries, lies, pretentions, magic, juju, and 419³⁸¹ in the present-day churches. In some of the churches, any member who is unable to pray in tongues, will be beaten on the head and harrassed

³⁷⁷ The comments are entirely dated only a few hours around when the article was published August 14th 2009, but were collected March 22nd 2016.

³⁷⁸ Author *SLIM BONE*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

³⁷⁹ Author *Concerned African*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

³⁸⁰ Author *KWABENA DANSOMAN*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

³⁸¹ The author’s reference to the number 419 is a code for a *scam, fraud or betrayal*, and originated from the “reference to the section of Nigerian law that the scam violates.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Nigerian-scam>, accessed April 4th 2016.

continuously until he or she wises up and creates some false chatter and blabs, as if it is the true tongue, in order to be free from the pastor's torture. [...] These pastors want to impress church members, so they go all the way seeking the help of Juju, Magic, and Witchcraft. 'Abakadabra' is a common word in the pastors' tongue language. Pay attention and listen to them when pray in tongues. Search them, you will get them wearing strange amulets, talismans, multi-colored underwears and cow or goat tails. All these for what? MONEY!! It is a shame. What do you think about it?³⁸²

Apart from the criticism towards Christian pastors there are two comments which assume historical perspectives. The first one is a longer commentary discussing the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the lack of a similar document for the African context. The comment is unique in the way that it makes reference to the European times of the witch-crazes not in the sense of admonishment but model. As I discuss below, Ghanaian commentators occasionally make comparison to the European context. In this case, however, the commentator, who in the final lines of the commentary declares himself to be a legal expert from Belgium (with the Ghanaian name Amoako), puts forward the idea that to bring order into the African witchcraft situation one needs to emphasize the legal perspectives. The comment proposes a few interesting ideas and interpretation of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and hence deserves to be quoted in full:

The *Malleus Maleficarum* (Latin for 'The Hammer of Witches') Witch craft as long as it did exist should be considered a vice and not a virtue. During the middle ages, the western world suffered the same social beliefs and problems of Witch crafts being considered as the main cause of social and individual setbacks. Until the publication of the Book *Malleus Maleficarum* which made a good impact on the minds of the then European and religious men, the same problems hindered the progress of their society the same as africans are experiencing until yesterday and today. Most of our Brothers and Sisters, mums and dads, friends and foes go to The Church, MOSQUES and Shrines and Temples to seek protection against witches and the devil. It is however necessary and proper to treat very well the topics concerning the devil and the witch crafts so that children and adults can move round with simplified and structured realities about the so called witches and devils and their effects on our economy, politics, technology and creativity. How can we define witchcraft in our society? Witch craft was legally defined through the help of the above mentioned book. To be legally qualified as a witch, three elements were necessary: The evil-intentioned witch, the help of the Devil, and the Permission of God. The treatise is divided up into three sections. The first section refutes critics who denied the reality of witchcraft, thereby hindering its prosecution. The second section describes the actual forms of witchcraft and its remedies. The third section is to assist judges confronting and combating witchcraft. However, each of these three sections has the prevailing themes of what is witchcraft and who is a witch. Section I Section I argues that because the Devil exists and has the power to do astounding things, witches exist to help, if done through the aid of the Devil and with the permission of God. The Devil's power is greatest where human sexuality is concerned, for it was believed that women were more sexual than men. Loose women had sex with the Devil, thus paving their way to become witches. To quote the topic *Malleus* 'all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable.' Section II In section II of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the authors turn to matters of practice by discussing actual cases. This section first discusses the powers of witches, and then goes into recruitment strategies. It is mostly witches as opposed to the Devil who do the recruiting, by making something go wrong in the life of a respectable matron that makes her consult the knowledge of a witch, or by introducing young maidens to tempting young devils. This section also details how witches cast spells and remedies that can be taken to prevent witchcraft or help those that have been affected by it. Section III Section III is the legal part of the *Malleus* that describes how to prosecute a witch. The arguments are clearly laid for the lay magistrates prosecuting witches. Institoris and Sprenger offer a step-by-step guide to the conduct of a witch trial, from the method of initiating the process and assembling accusations, to the interrogation (including torture) of witnesses, and the formal charging of the accused. Women who did not cry during their trial were automatically believed to be witches. [...]³⁸³

This idea is indeed genuine in that the author argues witchcraft is a problem to society, people need and seek protection from it. This, however, cannot be properly administered by the religious sector ("The Church, MOSQUES and Shrines and Temples") because they cannot properly "treat [...] the topics concerning the devil and the witch crafts". People need to be able to "move round with simplified and structured realities about the so called witches and devils and their effects on our economy, politics, technology and creativity."

³⁸² Author *Ketasco Headmaster*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

³⁸³ Author *Duty & right to revote*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

This is where the author suggests African society needs to learn to define witchcraft. Inspiration can be taken from the legal definition of witchcraft as proposed in the *Malleus Maleficarum*—a bold idea considering the images of injustice, violence and caprice which contemporary historical scholarship associates with Heinrich Kramer and the *Malleus Maleficarum*. (cf. Behringer 2000:41 ff.)

A more typical example of a historical reference to the times of the witch-crazes in the West, is the following quotation, including the element of comparison between African and Europe:

Testifying that old and young women are witches, and killing them for witchcraft, is what occurred in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, before the early white American population realised how silly and primitive that practice was and gave it up. There have been no trials and/or murder of witches in this part of human civilization since. And here we are, exactly 317 years latter dealing with exactly the same crap in Nsawam, less than 30 miles from our capital, Accra. It just shows you how far we are behind as a nation! There is indeed a long long road ahead of us in our very slow march as a nation towards civilization!³⁸⁴

The West might have suffered from witch belief but they overcame it. The motive of Africa lagging behind in development is a common topos in the material.

2. August 2010: “Woman lynched for denying she is a witch”³⁸⁵

There are two articles³⁸⁶ that deal with the death of Kumbian Kadjoun³⁸⁷, a 62-year-old widow of “Gilig, a community close to Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo District in the Northern Region.”³⁸⁸ According to Tamale Police two people, Sule Kumon (60) a father and his son Sule Nuhu (23), have been arrested. Apparently what had led to the conflict was a dream the son had had about Kumbian Kadjoun who according to how he narrated to his father chased him in a dream. The father, linking this to witchcraft, two days later confronted Kadjoun at her house and “warned that if Nuhu died, he would kill her.” Kadjoun, however, denied the accusation, leaving the accuser “furious”, who then “mobilised the youth to beat her up”. Here the details in the two articles differ slightly. According to *MyJoy* Kadjoun collapsed during the beating and was then set on fire, while upon realizing that the woman was dead the two perpetrators fled to a nearby community. *Dagbon.net*, on the other hand, adds that “the deceased was said to be in possession of the soul of the 23-year-old for which reason she was subjected to severe beating until she collapsed and died.” Further, according to Chief Inspector Ebenezer Tetteh (Police Public Relations officer in Tamale) “[t]o confirm if the deceased was actually dead, the soles of her feet were burnt into ashes”. Mr. Tetteh, according to *Dagbon.net* described “the act as ‘stone age’ and barbaric”. Also, according to Rafik Banle “a brother to the deceased [...] the deceased was going to be taken to Gambaga witch camp to be detained.” He further claims that “his sister

³⁸⁴ Author *Krakye Kwakye*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

³⁸⁵ *MyJoy*. 2010, August 14.

³⁸⁶ *MyJoy*. 2010, August 14 and *Dagbon.net*. 2010, July 12. But do not contain comments by readers. One can, however, still analyze it as an evaluation of the case, which can be drawn from the interview with Chief Inspector Tetteh, who called the act “‘stone age’ and barbaric”.

³⁸⁷ Names of people may sometimes vary slightly in orthography in different articles, e.g. *MyJoy* writes Kombian Tagun while *Dagbon.net* has is Kumbian Kadjoun.

³⁸⁸ *Dagbon.net*. 2010, July 12.

until her death lived in peace with her neighbours even though she had had ‘petty squabbles’ with them in the past year.”

3. November 2010: “Witchcraft, Grandma set ablaze”³⁸⁹

This is perhaps the most notorious case of a witchcraft related homicide or manslaughter in younger times in Ghana. This case was reported on several Ghanaian newspapers. It triggered responses by columnists and commentators who engaged in a large debate, touching upon problems regarding elderly people being prone to witchcraft accusation, gender issues, and, for the most part, religion and modern development. Fourteen articles have been selected to render this debate. The description below is based on the very gist of the events narrated in the articles.

The incident is reported to have occurred November 25th 2010 in the town of Tema near Accra when 72-year-old Ama Hemmah travelled by bus to visit her son. However, the latter had moved away without her knowledge, so she was stranded in a place some hundred miles from her own home in Ajumanko Assasan (Central Region). She then set out to beg for food, water and money to make her way back. Hemmah found her way into the premises of the home of Emelia Opoku, 37, unemployed, when Pastor Samuel Fletcher Sagoe (55, brother to Emelia, evangelist) who met Hemmah in his sister’s bedroom, for reasons unmentioned, “raised an alarm [on Hemmah] attracting the attention of the principal suspect, Samuel Ghunney [50, photographer], and some people in the neighbourhood.”³⁹⁰ Ghunney apparently had claimed that “Madam Hemmah was a known witch in the area”³⁹¹, so that she was then subjected to torture to elicit her confession. After it, the main suspect asked for kerosene which was then poured over Hemmah setting her on fire. A student-nurse, Deborah Pearl Adumoah by chance came by the incident to rescue Hemmah, sending her to Tema General Hospital. Despite these efforts Hemmah died the next day due to her severe burnings³⁹². In defending, the suspects denied the offense and claimed that it was not kerosene but anointing oil that was poured on Hemmah to offer her prayers and to exorcise the demon from her. The oil “amidst intense prayers and repeated chants of ‘Holy Ghost Fire!’” “spontaneously erupted into flames”. (Adinkrah 2015:5)

Immediate Reactions

On defending his mother Mr. Stephen Kwame Ofofu Yeboah, 48, spoke out against the allegations of witchcraft: “Our mother was never a witch and had never suffered any mental disorder throughout her entire life, apart from exhibiting signs of forgetfulness and other symptoms of old age”³⁹³.

³⁸⁹ Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d.

³⁹⁰ Districts. 2010, November 20.

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

³⁹² cf. Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d.

³⁹³ MyJoy. 2010, August 29.

As mentioned above this event has aroused responses from a number of people, organizations and media. An early response was made by CHRAJ (Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice), whose Head of Public relations clearly spoke against “this atrocious crime”, “a very barbaric” act that

[...] greatly dims the nation’s human rights record. That they came and met her in their room does not in any warrant branding [branding] her as a notorious witch who deserves to be subjected to such an ordeal. It is, indeed, very disheartening that some men of God, whose responsibility it is to help save lives, could rather orchestrate the killing of innocent souls, all in the name of God.³⁹⁴

The spokesperson further praised Ghana Police Service for taking swift action, and Ms. Deborah Pearl Adumoah for her efforts and attempt to save Hemmah’s life. This should invite all Ghanaians “to emulate her example to desist from being involved in mob attacks.”³⁹⁵

Another immediate response on the event is that of the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs, who “condemned the barbaric act”, and urged Tema Regional Police to thoroughly investigate the incident and to make sure “that the perpetrators of the heinous crime face the full rigours of the law.”³⁹⁶

Readers’ Discussion

Apart from the immediate media and policy maker responses, there are a number of articles that pick up on the events and deliver their own perspective on the case³⁹⁷. There are especially three articles³⁹⁸ with rich comment sections (in total 377 comments) which I use for this section. Comments are, for a significant part, met with strong reactions, many of which formulate the core of the problem is the “barbaric society” which does not “abdicate this stupid belief system.”³⁹⁹ By far, the majority (roughly 3/4) of commentators in the sample clearly condemn the act of killing for witchcraft accusation, very few abstain from assuming a clear position, and only three statements utter support of witch belief in general but condemn the killing of Ama Hemmah, and merely one condones execution in this case⁴⁰⁰. There is a wide range of arguments which differently ground their dismissal of that belief. There appear to be three main narratives working as the fundament for the readers’ analyses of the problem. The arguments seem to highlight that witch belief is still prominent today in Ghana because:

a) *there is a lack of commodities of modernity in society*: references to *science, education and development* illustrate this stance, while opposition to *tradition, belief in the supernatural, and superstition* is maintained.

³⁹⁴ Gh.Web. 2010, November 26a.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*

³⁹⁶ Gh.Web. 2010, November 26b.

³⁹⁷ Outside of media and political attention, there is a curious report by *GhanaWeb* which should not go unnoticed. According to the source, alleged witches of the witches’ camp at Kukuio have uttered threats to go on “naked demonstration if government fails to punish the murderers [of Ama Hemmah]”, Gh.Web. 2010. November 28.

³⁹⁸ Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d; Gh.Web. 2011, January 16.

³⁹⁹ Author *ANGEL*, comment article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d.

⁴⁰⁰ See detailed discussion below.

b) social and legal policies fail to protect the weak: social policies are ineffective in establishing equality, and the legal system either does not have the power or the will to prosecute people who accuse others of witchcraft

c) Christian Pentecostal Churches make profitable business out of witchcraft accusation: Pentecostal pastors are powerful people who are capable to press their services upon other people; witchcraft ministry is such a service

One should note that these points are sometimes connected and depended upon one another, and are not on the same hierarchical level as becomes apparent when one observes that the call for better politics is very often used as a conclusive remark: e.g., pastors have become too powerful, politicians should do something about it. Nonetheless, in terms of a working hypothesis, I suggest this approach illustratively underscores what emphases readers make.

The following statements illustrate the three narratives.

a) modernity:

BELIEVE IN WITCHES IS COMMON AMONG EDUCATED AND UNEDUCATED IN GHANA. IS A DISGRACE FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY IN THIS CENTURY.⁴⁰¹

[...] We are in the 21st century and it is my fervent wish and prayer that we will move from these primitive ideas of blaming everybody else bars ourselves for every misfortune that befalls us.⁴⁰²

When is Ghana and Africa as a whole are going to grow up and start thinking about the development of our nations? It's SAD that we just can't learn.⁴⁰³

[...] Too much backwardness in the society; sponsored by exploitative folks called pastors, some of whom themselves can hardly construct a correct sentence.⁴⁰⁴

Now look at this, how stupid [stupid] are Ghanaians. In the 21st century we are still acting like we live in medieval times. When will we start using our brains to think????⁴⁰⁵

is ghana living in the dark age? how can humen being burne anther humen, this is a huge crime against the almighty god bad bad sin shamfull crime, the police shuld arrest all the killers immd [immediately].⁴⁰⁶

This witch crap should cease immediately. According to a BBC reporter, belief in witches among educated and uneducated in Ghana is common. It is a disgrace for the whole country in the 21st century.⁴⁰⁷

b) politics:

THIS IS THE TIME THE GOVERNMENT, POLITICIANS AND OPINION LEADERS MUST STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. THIS BARBARIC ACT MUST BE CONDEMNED IN THE STRONGEST TERMS. IT HAS SHAMED THE NATION AND PUT LOTS OF OLD PEOPLE UNDER FRIGHT WHETHER THEY ARE GOING TO BE NEXT.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰¹ Author *COUPLE, USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁴⁰² Author *KIKI MUSAMPA*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰³ Author *B. Agyarko*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Author *SA*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ Author *kyesi mensa*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Author *freeman*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ Author *COUPLE, USA*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Author *KWABENA DUODU, LONDON*, *ibid.*

Bull, the legacy Rawlings left to Ghanians [sic], is INDISCIPLINE. This is the results. Politicians are insulting any one who dares to criticize them, even though what their doing is wrong. youths don't any respect for elders anymore. Police do care about the law, they are suppose to enforce. What really is going on in our beloved country.⁴⁰⁹

the government should come to the aid of this family and prosecute those who burnt this innocent old lady irrespective of their political affiliation. their prosecution will serve as an example to those who accuse innocent old women falsely as witches. is it a crime to grow old.⁴¹⁰

c) witchcraft belief misused by Christian pastors

I fervently believe that the fake churches and their fake pastors are the reason superstitions and the resultant primitive barbaric acts still exist in Ghana. They influence the weak minds and steal their monies as well as commit crimes. The full weight of the law of the land should come down on these MURDERERS. The Government SHOULD ACT NOW!! The whole world is laughing at Ghana.⁴¹¹

This is simple logic, ghana president came to power under the superstitious means nigerian pastor promised him. Therefore it should not be wonder if the citizens are burn their grandmother superstitiously.⁴¹²

All one man churches in Ghana should be stopped.⁴¹³

This NONSENSE of some Pastors, pronouncing people as wizards and witches should not be allowed in any civil society. I think that it is time the Government of Ghana find a way to stop the uncivilised and illiterate behaviour of these Pastor in our churches because it is gaining roots to the detriment of families and the Ghanaian population as a whole.⁴¹⁴

we can learn but there is only one thing is stopping our people to move forward, which is bible and God, is in our people head too much and yet they still do evil.⁴¹⁵

Superstition and ignorance disguised as religious faith has taken over this country while rationalism has been defeated. My solution: close down the churches and turn the premises into schools. Only knowledge will cure this collective madness.⁴¹⁶

As a Doctor and a Christian from Ghana I find it appalling that we are still stuck in the golden ages when it comes to witchcraft and spiritism [...] Please stop believing in these false spiritually beliefs.⁴¹⁷

We need to stop accusing people for our own actions. It's about time pastors advise lazy people to get jobs rather than give them false prophecies. [...] Please people we need to open our eyes. We need to love one another just as Jesus loves us.⁴¹⁸

As mention above, there are barely three statements that affirm witch belief, and just a single one in the entire collection that perceives the killing as justified.

Exodus 22:18: Thou shall suffer not a witch to live. The guys did nothing wrong if the bitch was indeed a witch. There is nothing wrong with killing a witch according to the bible. That is justifiable homicide.⁴¹⁹

Witches are real but we do not have to attribute any mishap to them.⁴²⁰

⁴⁰⁹ Author *KWAA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d.

⁴¹⁰ Author *garzi*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 16.

⁴¹¹ Author *Teye Koliko*, *ibid.*

⁴¹² Author *BLACK PEOPLE*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁴¹³ Author *Yajaki*, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Author *Ghanaba*, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ Author *MANSON UK*, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Author *Ozymandias*, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ Author *Steve*, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ Author *ESTHER USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁴¹⁹ Author *ELSIE HAICK*, *ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Author *Pelicles*, *ibid.*

Witchcraft is real and that is why in Gambaga, Northern Ghana, there is a camp for them. Usually their powers are destroyed before they are kept there. Their relatives bring them there voluntarily. I have personally witnessed a witch confess to her deeds. She was forced to release the person and that person suddenly recovered at the intensive care unit – BMC hospital. This happened in Nalerigu before my own eyes. The perpetrators of this heinous crime must be punished severely to send a clear message to those who are intolerant of other beliefs that their own brand of non-sense is not the only belief system and that they must learn to live peacefully with others.⁴²¹

Respective comments have been met with disbelief, ridicule or even outrage. None of these postings, however, has been pursued much further than to express disagreement.

A final topic I shall briefly present, can be subsumed under ‘tribal’ disputes⁴²². Besides passing the buck to pastors, politicians, the Police, and the perceived “backward” people of Ghana, commentators accuse other ‘tribes’ of keeping witch belief alive. A discussion like that usually unfolds when a commentator, mostly either from the Ashanti or the Ewe side, accuses respective side of being culturally inclined to believe in witchcraft. Statements by other commentators make it seem likely that ‘tribal’ (as well as political) issues are regularly brought up in times of national concern.⁴²³ How easy the blame game make take off is illustrated by the following argument:

How backward we are. Instead of improving our mentality and brains, people wank a national language which eventually goes to peperuate [perpetuate] this barbaric backwardness in the name of superiority complex. Low minded dogs of the land.⁴²⁴

Which is responded to by:

IDIOT, WHAT HAS THIS GOT TO DO WITH NATIONAL LANGUAGE? DON'T WE HAVE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE, YOU IDIOT WITH YOUR STINKY BODY ODOUR? WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, THERE IS A NATIONAL LANGUAGE THAT DOMINATE COMMERCE IN GHANA IN GHANA AND IT IS CALLED TWI.⁴²⁵

TALK ABOUT YOUR PRIMITIVE EWE TRIBE BURNING PEOPLE.⁴²⁶

As one can see from this presentation, the necessity to account for the killings that happen in response to witchcraft accusation brings people into an aggressive mood and engaging in fault finding, preferably among another ‘tribe’ which is held to be more backward and akin to witch belief.

4. December 2012: “Two brothers lynch woman, 75, they accused of being a witch”⁴²⁷

This incident occurred December 12th 2012 and was reported in one article. According to *GhanaWeb* a 75-year-old woman was “lynched” by two brothers, Felix Nwohinyen, 22, and Dok Nwohinyen, 19, over the accusation of witchcraft. The brothers held the 75-year-old woman, who was killed “at her residence at Zanlerigu in the Nabdam District” (Upper East Region) “to be responsible for the deaths of their grandmother and mother”. According to Police the two “had always suspected the deceased of being a

⁴²¹ Author *Kankafour*, *ibid.*

⁴²² Commentators make use of the term ‘tribe’ when referring to another society and people like Ewe, Akan, Ga and so forth.

⁴²³ cf. Author *ThundyRock*, *ibid.*; Author *Eddie*, *ibid.*; Author *TUTANKAMEN*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d; Author *ANGEL*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d.

⁴²⁴ Author *THE EMPEROR*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁴²⁵ Author *KWAMIVI*, *ibid.*

⁴²⁶ Author *KWAMIVI*, *ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

witch”. These allegations seem to have started after the death of the brother’s grandmother. Police report that the two brothers admitted that after the death of their grandmother “people started pointing fingers at the old lady, calling her a witch” but apparently the brothers did not take the allegations seriously. Only when “Recently their mother died mysteriously after having a serious quarrel with the deceased over a headscarf”, the two began to take seriously the rumors that spread. The final cause that seems to have led both brothers to killing the old lady was when a relative of the two, Abena, was spoken to by the deceased. Abena was on the way to the market when the deceased called her but she ignored her. Upon hearing this when Abena came home from the market and told the brothers both “got angry and went to the deceased residence [...] and lynched her.” Both brothers “were charged with conspiracy to commit crime [and] to wit murder [...]”, and are expected to “reappear in court on January 3, 2013.” The article closes in citing Assistant Superintendent of Police, Godson Letsyo, who states that any act of taking the law into one’s own hands will be dealt with “severely” by Police. “If people believe the issue of witchcraft, they should find a better way of addressing issues that arises [sic] out of that. Lynching and beating and banishing are not legal and accepted under the laws of Ghana.”

Readers’ Discussion⁴²⁸

The readers’ section is comprised of 24 comments. Besides the usual ‘tribal’ and political hostilities, some comments more directly focus on witchcraft. Except for one comment they are all dismissive of witch belief. “Are you saying there is nothing like witch craft and wizardry? If the Bible asserts forces of darkness exist, why don’t you believe?”⁴²⁹

The question was addressed to another reader who resents that people in Ghanaian society “still believe that witches are the cause of death.”⁴³⁰ Unfortunately, the debate is not carried any further.

Other commentators chime in similar criticism. One refers back to the incident in Tema regarding Ama Hemmah, and thus shows how grave the situation is:

This is a very serious issue. [...] In Ghana we pamper criminals and so everyday the crime rate increases. Whoever intensionally kills should be killed and should not be put to prison for life sentence whereby the government will use the nation’s money to cater for them. It is wrong. They should also be put to death. Exactly two years ago on 24th November a woman was burnt to death because some people thought she was a witch. What is this at all? The law of this country is too cheat and needs amendments. Up till now nothing has been heard about the people who burnt Madam Hema to death.⁴³¹

One can repeatedly observe the call for Ghanaian legislation to do something about the killing of supposed witches in the country. Thus far, authors like these make up the majority of contributions. A central element is expressed in the observation that by hesitating to adequately react upon incidents like these the country reveals itself as defective as it “needs amendments”.

⁴²⁸ The comments were accessed March 22nd 2016, however, originate from a few days after the publishing of the article December 19th 2012.

⁴²⁹ Author *GHANAVIA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

⁴³⁰ Author *Chiga*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

⁴³¹ Author *Nora Owusu*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

5. June 2013: “40-year-old arrested for killing grandmother”⁴³²

This very short article of June 30th 2013 reports of a homicide case with no specific place indicated nor date. Suspect Michael Dakodzi is supposed to have “hit his grandmother several times on the head with a club until she died.” The man, “who hails from Fiakpokope in the Aktasi South District” as reason for the killing explained that he believed his grandmother was a witch and “had caused him to suffer from elephantiasis”; also he “thought that she was the one behind his retrogression in life.”

Readers’ Discussion⁴³³

There are 28 comments in the article. Again one can find the usual picture: a few comments aim at ‘tribal’ and political hostilities, while the rest of the commentators, who refer more closely to witch belief, put forward typical observations:

There is a lack of education on side of the accuser:

WHO ELSE WILL DO THIS? THIS IS THE PROBLEM WHEN WE HAVE SO MANY JSS DROP-OUT PASTORS IN GHANA. THESE PASTORS BLAME EVERYTHING ON WITCHES AND DEMONS.⁴³⁴

Witches are mostly elderly, poor and the least protected:

MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION OR I SHOULD SAY ADD TO WHAT YOU HAVE SAID. HAVE YOU SEEN OR HEARD ABOUT A RICH PERSON BEING A WITCH OR YOUNGER PERSON? NO!!!! IT IS THE POOR AND THE OLDER PERSON. FORGETTING THAT WE WILL GROW TO BECOME OLDER TOO. DOES IT MEAN THAT WE BECOME WITCHES AND WIZZARDS? I GUESS SO. LET US PRAY FOR THIS GUY AND HIS FAMILIES. MAY THIS WOMAN REST IN THE ARMS OF CHRIST JESUS. STAY BLESSED AGONABA.⁴³⁵

POOR OLD WOMAN. WHY DO SOME AFRICANS THINK THAT EVERY OLD WOMAN IS A WITCH? I CANNOT BELIEVE THIS NONSENSE! THERE ARE NO WITCHES IN THIS WORLD. NO ONE CAN KILL ANY ONE SPIRITUALLY. OLD WOMEN ARE USUALLY TAGGED AS WITCHES. SO AFRICANS MUST GET THIS OUT OF THEIR HEADS.⁴³⁶

Old women, disabled, children etc are mostly the ones tagged as witched because these are the least most able to defend themselves against these cowards whose own actions have led to their own predicament. The African still needs a lot of education to come out of this primitiveness.⁴³⁷

The topic is misused by Christian pastors:

[...] The ‘azaa priests and ‘pastas’ also need to be blamed too. Siblings blaming each other as ‘witches and wizards’, not talking to each other when life turns sour. An alcoholic always blaming poor grandma for Installing a pot in his stomach. Oh PROVERBS, ‘aberewa okoaa na bayie s3 no ampa’. May she rest in perfect peace. Thank you and please stay blessed too, PROVERBS.⁴³⁸

What stands in the foreground in this collection of comments is comparable to what could be established before (especially in case of the killing of Ama Hemmah): acts like the killing upon accusation or suspicion

⁴³² Gh.Web. 2013, June 30.

⁴³³ Like before the comments were accessed March 22nd 2016, and originated closely around the time of the publishing of the article.

⁴³⁴ Author *AFRIKABI*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, June 30.

⁴³⁵ Author *PROVERBS*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, June 30.

⁴³⁶ Author *AFRICAN PRIMITIVISM*, *ibid.*

⁴³⁷ Author *Yaw*, *ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Author *Agonaba*, *ibid.*

of witchcraft are deemed unjustified, and commentators very often ask for severe punishment of the perpetrators.

6. July 2014: “Male relative beats old lady to death”⁴³⁹

This case is represented in three articles⁴⁴⁰ in the sample and is reported to have happened July 2nd 2014 at “Nduasuazo, a suburb of Half-Assini in the Western Region”⁴⁴¹. Allegedly beaten to death, the remains of 70-year-old Ena Manya were discovered by family members. Half-Assini District Police has deployed personnel on search for 38-year-old suspect Patrick Nuamah, who is assumed to have killed his grandmother after suspecting her of witchcraft. According to Police the suspect believed that his grandmother was “the cause of all his problems”, and in specific trusted she has bewitched his cousin, Annor Nwonzu. The latter, who apparently is a very good football player has lost “all his footballing skills” because of the bewitching and thus did not make it to “Ghana’s World Cup squad at [...] Brazil 2014 tournament.” The suspect further argued that if it were not for the bewitching his cousin would have “maintained his dribbling skills” and be among those players selected for participation in the World Cup. This would have “consequently improve[d] the economic wellbeing of the family since players who participated in the ongoing FIFA World Cup received \$ 100,000 as appearance fee.”⁴⁴² On the morning of the killing an eye witness reports to have met the victim in tear over having been whipped with a broom by her grandson. The witness having attempted to contact and alarm the family head had sent the elderly lady back to her place. Before, however, family members could reach the house to secure the lady’s safety her grandson has returned to strangle her to death, and leave the scene. A third report differs slightly in claiming that the victim did not die on the spot but was beaten unconscious and succumbed to her injuries on the way to the hospital⁴⁴³.

Readers’ Discussion⁴⁴⁴

The discussion in the readers’ section evolves in two articles with a total of 40 items. It follows the same pattern as those before, which is, the Christian pastors, especially Pentecostal ones, are accused of perpetuating witch belief of this fashion. Here are two representative statements by readers. The rest of the comments can be omitted since they all echo the same debate:

All because the so called and self acclaimed men of God quote and misinterpret the words in the Bible to put fear into the lives of our vulnerable people. In our Ghana the men of God only pray against the acts of devil and pretend to have powers which is false. They can only Shout pretending they can rebuke and bind and declare. The old especially, the females who are the vulnerable ones in our society are always viewed and falsely accused as the devils and the witches They always accuse our mothers, aunties and grand mothers as the witches. This behaviour is not unholy, but vile and ungodly. They use

⁴³⁹ Daily. 2014, July 14.

⁴⁴⁰ Gh.Web. 2014, July 9; Daily. 2014, July 14; and Gh.Web. 2014, August 1.

⁴⁴¹ Daily. 2014, July 14.

⁴⁴² Gh.Web. 2014, July 9.

⁴⁴³ Gh.Web. 2014, August 1. This article differs for the alleged reason for the killing. Here the grandmother was believed to be “brain behind the daughter’s stealing habit”, and was not made responsible for bewitching the football player.

⁴⁴⁴ The comments were gathered March 22nd 2016 and were made during the time of the publishing of the articles.

the Bible to con and loot the vulnerable females of their money, wealth and sex by playing them against their husbands, children grandchildren and family members. They are nothing but charlatans!⁴⁴⁵

Call A Spade a Spade but not an instrument of digging. The Pentecostal churches in Africa are part and parcel of all these problems. They have taken it upon themselves that they preach prosperity and deliverance gospel. They ask people who believe in them to give or 'SEED' money. They promise these ignorant people, they will be blessed with health and wealth. Failure for one to achieve his or her goals is always blamed on spirits, witcherats [witchcrafts], curses, involvement with traditional healers (fetish priests), and so on. These newer Pentecostal churches [Churches] reject traditional culture, but also have a supernaturalistic vision of reality, with a discourse of GOD and the devil, miraculous interventions, and an instrumental understanding of religion, all of which accord with aspects of traditional thinking, including the dynamics of WITCHCRAFT. The head of the Ghana pentecostal churches local and International must have questions to answer. His men are raping married women, destroying families, stealing from innocent ghanaians in ghana and abroad, disgracing CHRISTIANISM and even threating [threaten] our Presidents.⁴⁴⁶

What is highlighted in these responses is the claim that the prevalence of witchcraft beliefs (and their violent nature) is based on the preachings of (Pentecostal) Churches. The readers make very clear that Churches have responsibilities in this sense, but do not actually consider these.

7. January 2014: "Murder suspect remanded in prison custody"⁴⁴⁷

This also very short article, dated January 12th 2014, narrates a somewhat different case of witchcraft related homicide. Allegedly, an "assembly member [Obed Ndayela] for the Dipa electoral area in the Nanumba north district of the Northern region" has killed two people by shooting after they had "accused his mother of being a witch."

The article further cites Crime Officer for Bimbilla (Northern Region) district Police, ASP Owusu Dwomor, who spoke of "three" dead people, and another who was "treated and discharged". Unfortunately the article does neither further elaborate on the number of casualties nor go further into the background of the accusation of witchcraft to shed light on the case. One should take note that this is indeed the first case of witchcraft related homicide where the victims were not the alleged witches but the accusers.

Readers' Discussion⁴⁴⁸

There are 14 comments in this article. It is most noteworthy that half of the statements utter support to Mr. Ndayela, even accepting the shooting the accusers of his mother:

I SUPPORT THE ACTION TAKING BY THE ASSEMBLY MAN FOR THE AREA. THERE IS TOO MANY BREAK OF THE VICTIMS OF WITCH CRAFT RIGHT, HE COULD NOT BEAR HIS MOTHER GOING THROUGH SUCH APPALLING PREDICAMENT. IS GOOD TO GET RID OF ALL ILL DROPPERS FROM THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH.⁴⁴⁹

NO ROOM FOR EAVE DROPPERS. What proves that some one is a witch? The stupidity of the BLACKMAN will never end until much research is done on the brains of the accusers. To me witches are those accusers and killers. BLACKMAN wake-up and educate yourselves.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁵ Author *Yaw Manu*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, July 9.

⁴⁴⁶ Author *Bechemniiba* (Paris), comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, August 1.

⁴⁴⁷ Gh.Web. 2014, January 12.

⁴⁴⁸ Again the comments were accessed March 22nd 2016 and originated closely around the time of the publishing of the article.

⁴⁴⁹ Author *mohammed amin abdallah, adenta, fafraha*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, January 12.

⁴⁵⁰ Author *charlie*, *ibid*.

Leave the man alone. He is innocent. Too many women have been killed in the north on suspicions of witchcraft. This man was simply doing what most men should do, which is simply defend their innocent mothers from ignorant accusers. I would do the same under similar circumstances.⁴⁵¹

I WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THE ASSEMBLYMAN. WHY ACCUSE SOMEONE AS A WITCH?⁴⁵²

One commentator, who also seems to condone the act of taking the law into one's own hands and killing people, speculates how this case could help demotivate future accusers:

This could be an interesting case. It will definitely have some impact on the current practice of people being accused falsely of being witches and even being sent out into exile resulting in the so-called 'witch-camps' when lucky not to be lynched by mobs. The man can put up some good defense of for trespassing private property, assault, the fear of his mother being lynched in his family home, by the three. Let us all follow this case keenly and with an open mind.⁴⁵³

One commentator explicitly appreciates street justice as a means to respond to the violence supposed witches are subjected to:

It is high time those people who have been subjecting poor women to dehumanizing agonies in the name of being accused witches faced some populist justice as they mete out to the poor innocent people. This nonsense is too rampant in the north and some areas in the south. Even those so-called men of god who have been traumatizing young girls and elderly women in the name of being labeled as witches deserve to be killed. This assemblyman is a man of honor who is ready to defend his mother and bravo to him. Shoot them!⁴⁵⁴

Only one commentary clearly rejects the taking of law into one's own hands:

Unless of course your mother is a witch, why bother to defend it, k let alone commit murder, There is absolute no justification in committing murder, never allow your emotions to get the best part of you. those of you who think the guy is rite should think again. you think violence is the only way to solve problems? The accused is gone for good, for double homicide.⁴⁵⁵

What I find very striking in these comments is the understanding that is advanced toward the perpetrator. The calling for immediate retaliation, sometimes even the death penalty, is also mentioned in other articles⁴⁵⁶. What is new in this case is that people commend the alleged shooter of the accusers, demonstrating the anger in the public eye on such cases.

3.3.2 Physical Assault

Physical assault in response to witchcraft accusation is one of the tragic everyday routines in Ghanaian culture, and this sample makes no exception. Cases like these may be triggered by mere suspicion against a person, often within ones' own family or in close proximity. If it is directed against outsiders there is a

⁴⁵¹ Author *MAA*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵² Author *SAM T*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵³ Author *Obed Adore*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵⁴ Author *Kwesi*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵⁵ Author *Koffi Parker*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵⁶ Following authors make explicit claims to execute the perpetrators in witch killings: author *Nora Owusu*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19; Author *AFRICABI*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *Nana Yahan*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *MATHS*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *F. Opuni Frimpong*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

component of witchcraft accusation among elderly women. As has been the case with 2010 killing of Ama Hemmah, and as is documented in one of the following cases very often this regards the problem that elderly women get lost in the “wrong neighborhood” and are taken to be witches. As I argue above sometimes these attacks result in death. Others do not, and should therefore be treated separately in this Chapter. There are three cases in this Subchapter which document events of physical assault in consequence of witchcraft accusation that were recorded in Ghanaian newspapers between 2009 and 2014⁴⁵⁷. Again, the interest in this Subchapter lies in presenting respective cases, identifying the readers’ reactions and argumentations specifically in regards to the question on how they bring into context the notion of witchcraft and the events narrated in the reports.

1. May 2011: “Spiritualist, two others assault woman, 71”⁴⁵⁸

This case is reported in one article. It is set before Ajumanko District Magistrate Court where May 2nd 2011 three persons are tried for “deliberately and intentionally assaulting and causing harm to a 71-year-old woman, Akua Bentuwa at Breman Essiam [Central Region]”. The suspects are Kojo Kuma, 24, mason, Kofie Essel, 20, driver’s mate and Kwesi Annor, 23, “a self-style spiritualist.” The victim spoke in front of court and reported “how the three tortured her and inflicted wounds on her without any provocation.” The events followed her accusation of witchcraft by Annor, who had asked her to come to his “spiritual camp and confess her sins”, she, however, refusing was then “attacked and mercilessly” beaten up by the group. The article adds that in an interview Assistant Superintendent of Police, Seth Tay, “warned people in the district to desist from such act of lawlessness and irresponsible behavior in the area, adding that anyone caught would be prosecuted.”

⁴⁵⁷ There are five more cases which need to be left out because of a lack of sufficient or useful readers’ comments, but which none -theless fall into this category:

June 2009, “Fetish Priest, three others in court for assaulting a witch” (Gh.Web. 2009, June 15). A fetish priest, a teacher and two farmers are accused of having “shaved off the hair of the complainant [...] and subjected her to severe beatings at a shrine to free her from the witchcraft she was accused of using to kill a man.” Allegedly, the victim had confessed before the events.

The case from February 2012, entitled “Court grants bail to child molester” (Chronicle. 2012, February 22) refers to a “Togolese female trader [...] had burnt a six-year-old girl with an iron after accusing her of being witch”. The mother of the child gave her to the care of the trader seven months ago, and ever since has never returned to seek her welfare. The perpetrator has “always been attacking and beating the victim [...] claiming that she was possessed by an evil spirit.”

A case published August 2012, and entitled “Pastor in trouble for assault on alleged ‘witch’” (MyJoy. 2012, August 15) narrates the events that led to the beating of an elderly woman in a Church. According to the accused, a Pastor of 34 years, the “Holy Spirit” came upon a 17-year-old boy in his Church and instructed him to beat the old lady as she “was a witch and had to be disciplined so she could be exorcised of the witchcraft.”

September 5th 2012 an article was published under the title “Couple and a student charged for subjecting girl to trial by ordeal” (Gh.Web. 2012, September 5). The three defendants have “allegedly [performed] unlawful trial by ordeal” upon a seven-year-old girl. Being accused of witchcraft and thus having caused problems to the family the defendants tried to exorcise the child by “recited several incantations and [inflicting] severe wounds on her face [...] with a kitchen knife [...]”

The final case is entitled “Farmer Beaten for cutting down a witch Tree” (Gh.Web. 2014, May 28) and was published May 28th 2014. It describes the ordeal of a 50-year-old farmer who has cut down a tree which, as local people believe, has supernatural powers in that it worked as “a form of protection” against witches. The punishment consisted of having to kneel in front of the chief’s palace for 50 minutes “under the hot sun”, and after that being whipped severely so that the victim had to go to the hospital for treatment.

⁴⁵⁸ Gh.Web. 2011, May 2.

Readers' Discussion

In this discussion, which consists of 34 comments, one can find the usual critical attitude towards witch belief and Churches that entertain it. There are two remarks made in connection to the events 2010 in Tema, where Ama Hemmah was accused of witchcraft and set ablaze alive. People demand to be better informed how such cases of violence and crime in reference to witchcraft are further pursued, and they demand these cases are treated with determination and effort:

She most [sic] be very lucky to have survied [survived] her ordeal, unlike the other old lady who was burned in Tema by another so call spiritualist for being a witch, thry [they] should be made to pay for this nonsense. jail them all.⁴⁵⁹

Please ghanaweb what has happened to the woman that was gruesomely burnt for allegedly being a witch? please find out for us how they are handling the case, because of our lackadaisical attitude when it comes to pursuing cases in court emboldens people to take tke [the] law into their own hands. since when did only old women of seventy years and above become witches? aren't there wizards too? whichever way, old age comes with physiological, psychological, social, physical as well as diseases especially mental could be misconstrued to be signs of witchcraft, a practical example is schizophrenia. poverty also can make old people act weirdly. let's get serious and stop this madness that is creeping up. remember there's life in youth but there's wisdom in erderly [elderly].⁴⁶⁰

Besides the critical attitude towards witch belief, there are rationalizations of cases of supposed witchcraft, just like the author above who points out that witchcraft may well appear as such in elderly people who suffer from illnesses which, to the un-educated, may appear as typically suspicious of witchcraft.

Other commentators even criticize the freedom religions enjoy in society, and demand that politics gets more engaged in controlling those:

I Think it is time the Ministry of Interior stepped in to scrutinize the activities of these new Churches and Spiritual Houses to get them conform to the Constitution. Freedom of Religion and separation of Church and Government should not give people the freedom to assault in the name of exorcism of any kind. The trend of such unprovoked assaults by Houses supposed to be where we could easily confer with God is rising dangerously. Not long ago, a poor old woman who went to Tema to look for his [sic] son was burnt by some members of a Religious House who charged her with Witchcraft. The poor woman had Gasoline poured over her and set ablaze. And now this. Who gave these folks the Authority to be Judges and Executioners of folks they perceive as sinners? Meanwhile, some of the victims never happen to be members of the Religious sect causing these atrocities. Where is our Security Apparatus to protect us? It looks, right now, if someone just doesn't like you, you could be charged with some spiritual misconduct and violently violated [...] Are these Religious folks mentally mature to understand their legal limitations in dealing with other people? What makes these perpetrators do this? Is it sheer ignorance or downright masquarading of the devil in these folks to be so crude and savagery to others? The Public needs to continued Education in Civics. Long Live Ghana!!⁴⁶¹

Only one single entry insists on the existence of witchcraft:

Witches and such spirits exist the bible makes it clear. but we must not fight them physically, burn or molest people with such spirit, we should not fight with the human being (that is where some african pastors go wrong) fight the evil spirit dwelling in them with prayers. the weapons of our warfare is not canal [carnal]. never say they dont exist. wait till one attacks u.⁴⁶²

This is a very rare statement in the sample so far. Notice, however, that the person makes very clear that the existence and the need to counteract witchcraft does not condone to subject the suspected witches to violence.

⁴⁵⁹ Author *gabby Dk*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, May 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Author *Body*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, May 2.

⁴⁶¹ Author *G.K. Berko*, *ibid.*

⁴⁶² Author *ENEMY OF NATIONAL DEMONIC CONGRESS*, *ibid.*

2. September 2011: “MY GRANDMA IS NOT A WITCH”⁴⁶³

The events that make up this case are discussed in two articles. The first article entitled “‘Flying witch’ crashes on cliff”, dated September 8th 2011, contains 11 comments and narrates a story about a lady in her eighties who was suspected of witchcraft. Buokuor Fiadzigbe was found one day before the date of the article naked in a “Military Dogs Training School compound in Accra, by some soldiers who were on their daily patrol duties.”⁴⁶⁴ The soldiers, “who spoke on condition of anonymity”, apparently found the woman “lying helplessly between two heaps of stones”, and “carried and laid her by the roadside, and later reported the case to the Airport police station”.⁴⁶⁵ According to the first article, the soldiers had added the information that “they had never seen her in the area before, and could not explain how she managed to get into the yard through the security wall, to get to where she was lying.”⁴⁶⁶ Also, as reported by *Modern Ghana*, the woman “appeared to understand many Ghanaian dialects”, and explained herself as “native of Sokpoe Sogakope in the Volta Region, and lives with her family between Maamobi and Nima.” The article continues to state that Fiadzigbe “alleged that she was in a company of witches number 15, operating from Nima to a place ‘where only God knows’, when she came crashing to the ground.”⁴⁶⁷ The woman, when found, was unable to walk or even sit upright and her body was covered in bruises. Police who arrived at the scene refused to effectively help the lady, however, one person from the Red Cross, “who did not also mentioned his name” brought Fiadzigbe to Accra Psychiatric Hospital where she was turned down for the second time. Medical assistant on duty, Achnoo Kofi Warlasi refused her admission on grounds of claiming that her condition was not of a mental kind. Reportedly he “virtually screamed” at the Red Cross personnel: “The days of the Good Samaritan are over. Those were Bible days, now we are in Ghana. There is nothing I can do to help. Take her elsewhere.”⁴⁶⁸ The Red Cross official then tried to bring the woman to “Mamobi Poly Clinic” where she was again refused treatment. A second attempt to draw the attention of Police, this time Kotobabi Police station which is around the area of Mamobi Clinic, proved unsuccessful again. Police even became angry that the woman was brought to the station, and one Police officer compared this incident to a case where an 80-year-old man was brought to them “but there was little they could do to assist him.”⁴⁶⁹ Medical practitioners at the hospital where Police brought the man similarly refused to help him, leaving the man “to his fate to die.” The article closes on noting: “When he passed away, they took the body to the mortuary.” The readers does not learn more about the fate of Fiadzigbe.

The second article is very likely a response to the first article⁴⁷⁰. It is written by Selasi Fiadzigbe, a first year student at Manhattan College, New York, dated September 12th 2011, and grandson to Fiadzigbe. In the

⁴⁶³ Mod.Gh. 2011, September 12.

⁴⁶⁴ Mod.Gh. 2011, September 8.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ Mister Fiadzigbe never mentions the title of the article, but he refers to one which portrays his grandmother as a witch. Further - more, he picks up on one distinctive notion found in the article, i.e. the claim that “the days of the Good Samaritan are over”.

article he speaks of another article on the subject where accusations against his grandmother are framed. According to him his grandmother has become the victim of physical assault upon witchcraft accusation. Selasi Fiadzigbe, as he narrates, spent parts of his childhood at his grandmother at Mamobi, Accra, and by the age of 10 moved to his parents who had moved to the United States before. He reports that three years ago his grandmother has “developed the onset of Alzheimer’s disease.” Showing the typical symptoms of forgetfulness and wandering off and getting lost, she one time left the house and indeed got lost so that “the entire family was combing the streets of Accra. They were able to find her but as Selasi reports ...

The sweet news [...] came with shocking surprise. A crowd of people had tortured and thrown stones at my grandmother, almost lynching her. The accused her of being a witch! I was horrified! [...] This is not the Ghana I remember, this is not the warm, kind and friendly place [...]. No matter how I tried to understand, I could not make any meaning out of it.

He goes on to ask, ...

Is it a crime to be old in Ghana? Is it a sin to develop Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease? Has my Ghana changed this much? Considering how much I brag about the land of my birth, I don’t want to tell my friends here that it is people in Ghana that would attack an innocent, lost old lady.

His words report his anger and dismay over what he thinks is Africa’s “most peaceful country”—a country which he would hate his friends to see “as a land of barbaric, ignorant people who attack a sick old woman.” He concludes his article by stating that despite his anger he wishes no evil to the people who accused and hurt his grandmother, as his grandmother had raised him a good Christian.

Readers’ Discussion

This story, similarly to all the above, has caught a lot of sympathies for the grandmother as can be read in 11 readers’ comments. Again the focus is put on the violence against the elderly which, and as usual, is explained through the prevalence of belief in witchcraft.

The following quotations give an impression of the comment section to this case:

Wow, this is such a horrific story, and my heart really goes out to the family. I can totally relate to your story because my mother also has dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, and I just don’t know how I would feel if anyone ever treated her like that. Some Ghanaians are very ignorant and st*p*d. I had my own half sister calling my mother a witch because of my mother’s current situation. Fortunately, we have things under control, and she is being well cared for. My mother is alone in Ghana, but her children are all in the USA, so I can really feel your pain, and I pray that the Good Lord will strengthen the family to get past this ordeal. I really enjoyed reading your article, and I hope there was a way you could get it to the radio stations to bring attention to this disturbing occurrence in Ghana. Take care, and stay blessed.⁴⁷¹

It is about time we Ghanians [sic] and for that matter Africans start looking for scientific solutions to our problems instead of believing that every problem or sickness has some spiritual backing. I thank God grandma is okay.⁴⁷²

It’s sad to read of such pathetic stories about our senior citizens who are labeled as witches/wizards b’cos they suffer from Alzheimer/Dementia. It’s about time Ghanaians are educated about early detection and possible help for our elderly.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Author *Akose*, comment in article *Mod.Gh.* 2011, September 12.

⁴⁷² Author *Grandma not a Witch*, *ibid.*

⁴⁷³ Author *Abeiku Quainoo*, *ibid.*

The interesting aspect in the narrative of this report lies in the repeated turning-down of the women. Soldiers as well as Police and medical personnel apparently hesitate to help the lady; seemingly for fear of witchcraft. Particularly striking in this respect is the utterance by medical assistant Achnoo Kofi Warlasi, who made reference to the “Bible days” and the story of the “Good Samaritan”⁴⁷⁴, explaining that in Ghana this attitude does not fit anymore. This attitude stands in contrast to the understanding that is phrased in the readers’ section.

3. January 2014: “Man Charged For Beating ‘Demon Possessed’ Wife”⁴⁷⁵

The two articles report a case of physical assault by beating of a wife by her husband “under the pretext of delivering her from some demons she possessed”. Dated April 16th 2014, the case is before Accra Circuit Court, and charges a 43-year-old man, John A. Aheto, of “meting out physical and psychological abuse and threat of death” on two accounts. It was assessed that the complainant who is married for 10 years with her husband and who have two children together, “had been enduring physical, verbal and emotional abuses” since the beginning of their marriage. January 19th 2014 the victim has been beaten so that she left her matrimonial home. The incident apparently followed the couple’s visiting of “a famous Nigerian Church” where the victim should be exorcised. Several days later, January 26th, the perpetrator, Aheto, locked up his wife for several hours “and subjected her to severe beating with the excuse of delivering her from the demons she possessed.” He further insulted her, “accused her of being a witch”, and prevented her from eating. Also, he “sometimes mixed concoctions and compelled the complainant and her children to drink and bath.” The case was then reported by DOVVSU (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit), where she and her husband met with personnel. It was there where Aheto threatened his wife that “if the case should go beyond DOVVSU something terrible would happen.” According to prosecution the threat was repeated in front of the victim’s sister, so the victim and her children relocated. This detail together with a medical report formed the grounds on which Aheto could be arrested.

Readers’ Discussion⁴⁷⁶

There are 14 comments in this case which, admittedly, is a rather small number. However, a number of comments show some cohesion so that one can understand them as enriching the topic. The common denominator is dismissal of the accusation of witchcraft by the perpetrator:

You damned fool to think that you can subject anybody to fiscal [physical] maltreatment in the name of black mentality believe in this modern age that YOU want to drive demons out of him or her.⁴⁷⁷

What a backward thinking man, believing those 419 fake pastors. What a mentality!⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ Mod.Gh. 2011, September 8.

⁴⁷⁵ PeaceFM. 2014, April 16 and Gh.Web. 2014, April 17, comments only in the last article.

⁴⁷⁶ The comments are dated April 17th 2014, when the article was published, except one comment that was added April 22nd 2014. Comments were collected April 4th 2016.

⁴⁷⁷ Author *dadzeban*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17.

⁴⁷⁸ Author *JUSTICE*, *ibid*.

Has Ghana turned into witch hunt as witches in Salem? Bad and very very bad.⁴⁷⁹

This kind of Dominant Male behavior is only exhibited in the animal kingdom. The audacity to make one think that its okay to lay your hands on your wife, all in the name of casting out some imaginary demons, possibly urged on by some quack pastor or prophet is evident of the weakness of the human mind and how it can be easily manipulated to do evil toward his fellow man. Unfortunately his threats at a DOWSU meeting shows he really believes its his right an see nothing wrong with his actions. Sad.⁴⁸⁰

Crazy man. Trokosi mentality.⁴⁸¹

One comment shows a different view on demon possession:

I believe it is rather the man who is demon possessed and needs deliverance. The man does not know Christ. How can one inflict wound on others for the sake of deliverance. For, the battle we fight is not carnal but spiritual. This is a criminal case. Sentence him to life imprisonment.⁴⁸²

Thus far, readers only very rarely admit to belief in demonic forces. The last statement immediately call for a Christian solution to the problem by engaging in the battle of good and evil in a spiritual (and not physical way).

3.3.3 Deprivation of Liberty

The following three cases report incidents in which people were abducted, deprived of their liberty, and incarcerated upon the accusation of witchcraft. In some of these cases a medical history regarding certain mental conditions precedes the ordeal of the people, who are locked up and exorcised as a form of treatment against their state. The living conditions of such individuals are very harsh as the treatment may involve fasting, being chained to stones or trees, exposed to heat and cold, having no access to sanitation, and so forth. Whether or not victims, in fact, suffer from certain conditions, the label of witchcraft easily justifies hard measures like those reported in the following cases⁴⁸³.

1. June 2010: “Woman Chained Nine Years”⁴⁸⁴

This case was reported in one article from June 9th 2010 and narrates the story of a woman named Afia Korkor (held to be 30 years of age) who “has been chained for nine years by her mother, who accuses her of being a witch and the cause of their family’s woes.” Afia, who lived with her mother Yaa Nyameama at Denkyira Obuasi (Upper Denkyira West District of the Central Region) was put in chains by her mother in 2001 when the latter was informed by Pastor Sofo Tima of Odeefour Nkansah Church “that her daughter was

⁴⁷⁹ Author *ODK*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸⁰ Author *Crow*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸¹ Author *OheneYaw*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸² Author *Sammy*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸³ There is one case which lacks readers’ comments and therefore cannot be taken into consideration. It was published July 9th 2014 and is entitled “Fetish Priest ‘Detains’ Boy, 13, Over Witchcraft” (Daily. 2014, July 9). It reports the events of the deprivation of liberty of “a 13-year old boy” who “has been held hostage by a fetish priest on suspicion of practicing witchcraft.”

⁴⁸⁴ Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

a witch who was terrorizing the family and until she was chained and prayed for, the family would continue to suffer.” The mother had originally taken her daughter to the Pastor for a “cleansing” after she had allegedly had “sex with her boyfriend in the bush”. The mother was compelled to do so and refused her daughter food and drink, even fighting with those neighbors who wanted to feed her. She apparently only survived by the help of neighbors who “sneaked [food] to her ‘burrow’” when the mother went to work on the farm.

The case only surfaced because the mother told on a radio show that, acting “upon the instructions of the pastor”, she held her daughter imprisoned, and the host of that show, Winfred Kojo Benning brought the case to light. The victim, who has a child, today “behaves like an animal” but could finally be rescued and brought to Dunkwa Municipal Government hospital, where she “is responding to treatment”.

Readers’ Discussion⁴⁸⁵

There are 117 comments, most of which clearly dismiss the act of the chaining and deprivation of liberty for nine years. Readers demand that the Pastor and the mother, and in some cases even the chief of the village and his elders, be arrested and receive equal punishment:

PASTOR SOFO AND MAAME YAA MUST ALSO BE CHAIN TOGETHER FOR NINE YEARS IN RETURN.⁴⁸⁶

This barbaric individuals must be chained in return for 9 yrs without food and water so that they will appreciate the suffering they have severally and jointly put this innocent woman through.⁴⁸⁷

This is an unfortunate ordeal. Those involved should answer for this. The chief of the village and his elders should be jailed as well.⁴⁸⁸

About 20 comments of the section do not show a direct reaction to the case. Some commentators digress into unrelated topics and thus render their contributions useless for the analysis. About a quarter of these comments, however, indirectly supports the notion that chaining people under witchcraft accusation is indeed cruelty in that they blame it on another ‘tribe’. As discussed above, and as can be seen throughout the entire material, it is a common reaction to a situation where a religiously motivated act appears morally unacceptable to blame it on another ‘tribe’. The same happens in this case.

Most of the readers’ comments in this section raise the usual criticism against what they repeatedly refer to as “fake pastors”, as well as the Churches and the general supposed attitude of Ghanaians to allow for such things like in the case at hand.

in ghana only those having bodily ailment are considered to be sick and only those going round naked, dirty etc the abodamfo i mean are considered mentally sick. we have a lot of psychologically unbalanced people going round and most of these people are becoming self stlyed [styled] pastors and pastors. when they begin to get hallucinations they interpret it to be the call of God. please let us open our eyes. it is not the pastors problem it is the problem of the people because we

⁴⁸⁵ The comments are dated between 9th and 10th of June, which is on the day and one day after publication date. Comments were collected April 4th 2016.

⁴⁸⁶ Author *NANA Ø !!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

⁴⁸⁷ Author *Suicide Bomber*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸⁸ Author *Alex Mensah, Canada*, *ibid*.

cant analyse to find out who is mentally unbalanced. but their attitude shoold serve as eye opener. how do u wash somebodys wife and say God is asking you to do that. is it not madness. how do you have sex with the singers and the women in the church and u see urself as being called by God. is it not craziness. why do they prescribe fasting for us and they keep growing fat all the time. are they not making us fools. lets join the movement to expose fake pastors and prosecute them for their deeds as a deterrent to those who have made christianity a profession and not a religion.⁴⁸⁹

WHEN ABRAHAM'S WIFE SARAH DID NOT HAVE CHILDREN, SHE DID NOT BLAME WITCHES. IF ABRAHAM WAS IN GHANA SOME PASTORS WOULD BLAME HER BARRENESS ON SOME INNOCENT WOMEN. SHAME ON THESE PASTORS.⁴⁹⁰

Comment is in response to a speaker who claimed such pastors as the one in the case at hand were all "fake pastors": A wise man like you will branded as SATAN. But the real Satan is the fools who; speak in tongues bath women, prophesises spiritual bathing. SOME PEOPLE ARE SOO STUPID THAT, THEY ALLOW THE STUPID AND FAKE PASTORS AND PROPHETS DUPE THEM. ASHAWO WOMEN AND MEN ARE ALL SPEAKING IN TONGUES. ANY PASTOR OR PROPHET LIKE STUPID JESUS ABRANTIE AND THE CONMAN TB JOSHUA WHO TELL PEOPLE THAT THEIR RELATIVES OR FRIENDS ARE BIWITCHING THEM OR ARE SOURCES OF THEIR WOES MUST BE STONED TO DEATH. ONLY FOOLS FOLLOW THEM. GET IT IN YOUR HEAD, ONLY FOOLS SPEAK IN TONGUES. NO WONDER UNIVERSITY GRADUATES ARE ALL SPEAKING IN TONGUES. FOOLS, DO YOU IDIOT KNOW HOW GOD IS ANGRY WITH YOU FOOLS. ONLY FAKE FEW WHITE PEOPLE AND STUPID ASIANS AND AFRICANS SPEAK IN TONGUES. FOOLS. The woman should be put behind bars and the keys to the door must be trown [thrown] into the sea. The stupi and fake pastor should be castrated and chain for 18 years. fools MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON THE INNOCENT WOMAN. SHE HAS BEEB DENIED HER SOCIAL RIGHT BECOS OF THE SO CALLED MAN OF GOD. FOOLS.⁴⁹¹

MAJORITY OF THESE AFRICAN PASTORS HAVE BROUGHT THEIR 'AFRICAN MENTALITIES' HERE IN LONDON ALL IN THE NAME OF RELIGION. ALTHOUGH, I AM A CHRISTIAN, HOWEVER, SOMETIMES, I DO FEEL EMBARRASSED THE WAY SOME OF THESE PASTORS TREAT THEIR CONGREGATIONS (ALL IN THE NAME OF CASTING OUT DEMONS), FROM THEM. WHAT REALLY SURPRISES ME IS THE DIFFERENT WAYS THEY TREAT SOME OF THEIR 'FEW CAUCASIANS' MEMBERS, WITH RESPECT. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR FELLOW AFRICANS, THE TONE OF THEIR 'SO-CALLED PRAYERS' CHANCES, AS IF ONLY BLACK PEOPLE ARE POSSESSED WITH DEMONS. OH MOTHER AFRICA, WHAT IS GOING ON?⁴⁹²

Repeatedly commentators ask for the state to control the pastors and their Churches, identifying the power of the Churches as a hindrance to the progress of the country:

Gov't should begin to monitor churches in the country. They are becoming a liability and a nuisance to the progress of the country.⁴⁹³

In respect of a skeptical attitude towards belief in witchcraft see the following exchange of arguments between two commentators:

HEY MY DEAR FRIEND AFRICABI, NICE TO READ FROM YOU AGAIN. YOURS IS ONE OF THE FEW 'VOICES OF REASONS' HERE ON GHANAWEB. THESE PROBLEMS OF WITCH HUNTING OF WITCHES IS NOT PECULIAR TO GHANA ALONE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS WIDESPREAD IN THE WHOLE OF AFRICA. THERE WAS A DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMME HERE IN LONDON ABOUT 'INHUMANE TREATMENT' OF 'INNOCENT CHILDREN' IN AKWA IBOM, IN NIGERIA, WHERE CHILDREN WRONGLY ACCUSED OF BEING WITCHES WERE BEING KILLED AND MALTREATED. ALL IN THE NAME OF THE AFRICA 'STONE AGED' BELIEVE IN WITCHES AND WIZARDS. WAKE UP AFRICANS, THIS IS 21ST CENTURY FOR GOD'S SAKE.⁴⁹⁴

YOU ARE RIGHT MY DEAR WISE-TALK. THIS INJUSTICE AND INHUMANITY IS ALL OVER AFRICA. I THINK I SAW THE DOCUMENTARY REGARDING THE POOR LITTLE KIDS ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT IN NIGERIA. IT BROKE MY HEART. SOME STUPID, SEMI-LITERATE PASTOR/PROPHET WAS THE THE WITCH-HUNTER. IT IS STILL ON YOU-TUBE, THOUGH. THOSE INTERESTED CAN CAN GOOGLE 'CHILD WITCHES IN NIGERIA'.

⁴⁸⁹ Author *Adwoa Sampomaa*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹⁰ Author *AFRICABI*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹¹ Author *PROPHET TB JOSHUA*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹² Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹³ Author *Avatar*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

⁴⁹⁴ Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, *ibid*.

PLEASE BE WARNED, THIS IS NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED. WE HAVE TO INFORM OUR PEOPLE, WHO ARE BEING PREYED ON BY THESE IGNORANT PASTORS.⁴⁹⁵

IT IS VERY SAD INDEED THAT THESE SORT OF NONSENSE IS STILL HAPPENING AT THESE DAYS AND AGE. LOOK AT CHINA, WHICH WAS BEING CATEGORIZED AS A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY A FEW YEARS BACK. NOW TELL ME MY FRIEND AFRICABI, WHICH OF THE SO-CALLED WESTERN WORLD, E.G. UK, USA, GERMANY ETC. CAN MESS UP WITH CHINA TODAY. CHINA DID NOT GET THERE BY MAGIC, BUT WITH HARD WORK AND EDUCATION. BUT WHAT DID WE GET IN AFRICA? RELIGIOUS BRAIN WASHING AND NEO-COLONIALISM. GOD HELP US ALL.⁴⁹⁶

THERE ARE NO WITCHES IN THE BIBLE. WHERE DID THESE GHANAIAN PASTORS GET THE IDEA OF WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT FROM? THESE 'SUNSUM' CHURCHES, FULL OF PASTORS WHO CAN HARDLY READ NOR WRITE ARE RUINING FAMILIES AND DESTROYING MARRIAGES. THIS IS VERY SAD INDEED.⁴⁹⁷

To demonstrate the proportion of skeptical and even dismissive attitudes towards witch belief and those, at least seemingly, supportive, see the following comments:

It is true. The girl is a witch. Can't you see her face look like Laryeahs' mothers face? Laryeahs' mother is also a witch.⁴⁹⁸

It is very sad, why the pastor did not cast the demon from the girl but rather chain her, ok after the chain did the family survive. The pastor is fake and he has be questioned and oder him to stop the church in law court.⁴⁹⁹

that odeefuor and the victim's mom are the real witches and they need to be severely punished for this crime to serve as a deterrent to others. I cann't believe a mother will ever treat her own womb daughter this way, this is very very cruel.⁵⁰⁰

Two of the comments acknowledge the witchcraft of the women who was chained while the third only in general admits to the possibility that there are "real witches". It remains questionable, however, if the last commentator actually understands the notion of witch in the literal sense. One possibility is that "real witches" in this sense only refers to the "real" evil-doer in this case, as the author goes on to express that the act of the chaining of the woman to a tree is a "crime".

2. January 2012: "Girl spends 4 years in 'hencoop', accused of witchcraft"⁵⁰¹

According to *Joy FM's* Western Region correspondent a 16-year-old female junior high school student was "rescued after spending four years in a hencoop-like structure to be exorcised of 'witchcraft'." Correspondent Kwaku Owusu Peprah "assisted a combined team of police and Social Welfare" to rescue the girl from the structure by a community near Takoradi. The article, which dates January 11th 2012 further describes the dire situation of the girl by pointing out her suffering from asthma and having to live in a poorly ventilated area. Apparently, in preparation of the rescue the girls' movement was monitored around Nazareth Prayer center where she lived. It was found out that the girl on demand of the prophetess of the prayer camp had to live in the "wooden structure separated from the main house", as she was afraid that the

⁴⁹⁵ Author *AFRICABI*, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ Author *AFRICABI*, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ Author *Prince Adu Boahene*, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Author *FRANK K. OWIREDU (ENYAN ASEMPANY- IN(C)*, *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ Author *may/may*, *ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ Gh.Web. 2012, January 11.

girl's supposed witchcraft "will infect the household [...] if allowed to mingle with other children and siblings of hers." As reported by the *Joy FM* correspondent, the "rescue" did not go without resistance by Church leadership at first. According to Western Regional Director of the Department of Social Welfare, Peter Tweneboa-Kodua, it will be examined if the Church authority can be held accountable for the discriminating and dehumanising act and possibly face prosecution "if found to have acted contrary to provisions in the Children's Act." After her "rescue" the girl could receive medical attention and was prepared to reunite with her family. Also there will be a special teacher for the girl to prepare her to earn her "Basic Education Certificate Examination slated for early this year [2012]". Her school performance has suffered as she frequently "dozes off" during sessions, possibly due to her living conditions as she is "taken through hours of incessant prayers to cast out the supposed 'evil' spirit in her." Her mother who cannot afford to provide shelter for her child and herself, and who is currently allowed to live in one room of the prayer camp, concurs with the prophetess on that her daughter is a witch. However, the living conditions of the child shall be improved, as was stated by the prophetess, who herself has fallen ill to "an unnamed sickness" and receives treatment at a local hospital.

Readers' Discussion⁵⁰²

The article comes with 60 comments. As usual the wide majority of commentators (roughly 90% of them) raise arguments against the act of depriving people of liberty upon allegations of witchcraft. As I argue above, among others, especially Christian pastors are made responsible for the act:

This Bayifuo or witchcraft nonsense is ruining many lives. The family and the pastor should be punished severely.⁵⁰³

The stupidity of witchcraft in Ghana must cease. How stupid could Ghanaians be by following these crazy, illiterate bastard juju pastors blindly. One thing i do not understand about Ghanaians the ease with which they follow these crooks to actually torment themselves. Government should begin sending these criminals to jail. More are they than armed robbers.⁵⁰⁴

CAN SOMEBODY EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF WITCH? EVERY POOR PERSON IN GHANA IS A WITCH. BRING ALL THE SO CALLED PASTORS TO USA AND JUDGE JUDITH WILL PUT ALL OF THEM BEHIND I BARS. NONSENSE. NKWASEASEM NKOAA NA ASOFO NO EDI WO GHANA. I BECOME SICK IN MY STOMACH ANYTIME I HEAR THIS.⁵⁰⁵

Jesus, and later his disciples, cast out evil spirits from their victims to set them free; and he healed the sick of all manner of diseases. Jesus restored the dignity of all who were oppressed by the devil. The false prophets/prophetesses do the opposite: they torment/abuse those they claim have evil spirits and make the healthy sick of all manner of diseases. These false prophets/prophetesses are not able to deliver those oppressed by the devil yet they have following because their followers are ignorant of the word of God and who Jesus is. The bottomline is the law. Anyone who tortures another person must answer from the law.⁵⁰⁶

There are only few contrasting voices. One commentator does not chime in the regular Church criticism by dating back witchcraft in African society before the arrival of Christianity:

⁵⁰² Comments were collected April 4th 2016. They were all added around the date of the publishing of the article.

⁵⁰³ Author *PHILTY McNASTY*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, January 11.

⁵⁰⁴ Author *Who knew!!*, *ibid*.

⁵⁰⁵ Author *ANNE-MARI THE CICO BEST*, *ibid*.

⁵⁰⁶ Author *Martin*, *ibid*.

I disagree with your position about Ghanaian christianity. In fact the practice of confining others on suspicion of witchcraft date backs before Christianity came to Africa. The basis in this situation is the ghanaian tendency to attribute anything he/she cannot understand to supernatural being.⁵⁰⁷

While another commentator, arguing in a similar way like the one before, regarding the psychological basis of witch belief, even defends the mother:

Do not accusing the mother of not caring. It is what she knows. She does not understand the biological basis of mental disease and over her whole life, people who are not rationale or behave in abnormal ways are refer to prophets or those who claimed to know the spirit world. I am not condoning the woman actions, but I know that a mother will go anywhere, and would do anything she thinks is good for her child. They mother is just being deceived because she knows no other.⁵⁰⁸

The analysis put forward here picks up on the idea of the low standard of education in some people and their exploitation by people who pose as “prophets or those who claimed to know the spirit world.” As I argue above, the actual responsibility is put to those people who claim to have such spiritual powers. The understanding, however, that is brought towards the mother is a rare statement.

3. August 2013: “Girl chained to tree at Ashaiman”⁵⁰⁹

These parents should also be chained to a tree without food to see how it feels like. Jesus did not starve anyone. That pastor is cruel. The parents are idiotic morons. They need to read the bible, so that when a moronic priest tells them to chain their child to a tree they will tell him to have his head examine. What a barbaric act. Please someone call the police. The bible says “my people perished because of lack of knowledge.” Jail the elders of the church, the parents and the priest.⁵¹⁰

This report is situated in Agyenkwa Prayer Camp at Zenu near Ashaiman (in the Greater Accra Region), the article is dated August 27th 2013, and reports about an “innocent girl” who has been “fastened to a tree with metallic chains” as it was believed she was “responsible for the misfortunes of her parents.” Without food, “under the mercy of the sun” and without being allowed to wash herself for almost two weeks the girl was held prisoner “as part of measures to deliver her of the claimed spirit of witchcraft”; the treatment includes “dry-fasting” and spending the night under that tree. The girl who is said to have suffered “cruel treatment from her parents for over [a] year now” is understood to be psychologically affected and apparently has visited various places in search of a solution to the family problems. Evidently, the parents who have “severely assaulted her for being a witch” are in support of the Church leadership’s decision to submit the girl to that ordeal, and “claimed to have a video tape as evidence to justify their decision”. They as well as “a section of church leaders are not taking it kindly with anyone who tries to get close to the victim”. Her mother and some Church members have been reported to have attacked anyone for an attempt to make contact with the girl.

The article does not say anything about the girl’s rescue. It closes by criticizing that:

⁵⁰⁷ Author *krassic*, *ibid*.

⁵⁰⁸ Author *krassic*, *ibid*.

⁵⁰⁹ Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁵¹⁰ Author *Dr Naa Dede Agyeman*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

In many parts of the world, including Ghana, older women and children are still persecuted and accused of witchcraft, as the belief in witchcraft is still strong in many places and throughout society. These accusations often have an underlying malicious element and it is believed that they are a critical factor in the violation of women's rights.

Readers' Discussion⁵¹¹

In addition to this article there are 42 comments. Interesting about this case is not only the amount of sympathy that is expressed towards the girl but also the repeated calls for immediate action:

stupid reporter. did you inform the police? if you didnt, you should be charged at the police station for cover ups. What i am interested was what has the police done to the postor and her parents!⁵¹²

where are the human right activist.⁵¹³

Stupid parents ... and useless Reporter. Someone please call the police...⁵¹⁴

how can we locate this poor child and save her??? We need ACTION right now.⁵¹⁵

Reporter Kwasia, Abua, go and report to the police you idiot, if i were the police i will even arrest you too.⁵¹⁶

Further, commentators lodge the usual complaints, pass the blame and ask for consequences taken by the state in regards to such Churches:

GET THE PASTOR AND BOTH PARENTS ARRESTED AND CHARGE THEM FOR CHILD ABANDONMENT, CHILD CRUELTY, CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD ENDANGERMENT. THOSE PRIMITIVE IGNORANTS BUSH PEOPLE DESERVE TO BE IN JAIL AND THE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SHOULD TAKE THE 13 YEARS OLD GIRL FROM THEM FOR GOOD. IT IS ABOUT TIME THE GOVERNMENT INVADE, CLOSE DOWN THOSE CRIMINAL WRONG DOING CENTRES FOR GOOD. IT IS VERY SHAMEFUL TO READ ABOUT SOMETHING OF THIS NATURE IN THE PAPERS AND THE POLICE AND OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENTS DON'T TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION. PLEASE HELP THE HELPLESS CHILDREN FROM THE HANDS OF THOSE EVIL SATANS. VERY SHAMEFUL.⁵¹⁷

and what exactly are the authorities doing about this? i know at least one of the ministers in Ghana is reading about this. at least one minister is. probably even the president himself is. so my question to you, so called leaders of Ghana, what are you going to do about this?⁵¹⁸

That church needs to be banned indefinitely. this is abuse, assault by imprisonment and totalto [?] mother Ghana. Where in the bible did Jesus Christ chained someone [some one] with unclean spirit? Who ordained the pastor of the church? All those involve need to face the Law. Osofo kusenii. Wonan ensii scholl fan mu da.⁵¹⁹

Why don't we ban all these prayer camps? Normally, the parents and the leaders of this camp should be arrested and prosecuted! Very primitive brains! Just molesting a child.⁵²⁰

Another frequent topic in this respect is the raising of theological critique:

⁵¹¹ The comments in this article were mostly published August 27th with six exceptions that were published two and three days later, and one that was published a month later. Comments were collected April 4th 2016.

⁵¹² Author *gghanaba*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁵¹³ Author *mubarak tahir*, *ibid*.

⁵¹⁴ Author *Prince Kay*. London, *ibid*.

⁵¹⁵ Author *angela*, *ibid*.

⁵¹⁶ Author *sweden*, *ibid*.

⁵¹⁷ Author *NYARKO U.S.A.*, *ibid*.

⁵¹⁸ Author *none of your business*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁵¹⁹ Author *Oppong*, *ibid*.

⁵²⁰ Author *Dr. med. William Acquah, Germany*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

GOD SAID, MY PEOPLE PERISH FOR LACK OF KNOWLAGE [knowledge]. JESUS CAST DEMONS OUT OR CHAIN THEM? IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN THINK WHAT JESUS WILL DO ABOUT THIS SITUATION! AND WHAT THE POLICE DOING?⁵²¹

Jesus did not chain anybody why this so called pastors doing that?, if you do not have power to cast them out why chainig [chaining] the victim.⁵²²

The pastor and the parents need to be arrested and chained in Nsawam. My Jesus cast them out and not chain them. I want the pastor to come and tell us scriptural evidence for what he has done.⁵²³

Commentators also make skeptical and progressive remarks about the situation. Besides the usual questions for progress, some readers deliver interesting analyses about the role of religion in Ghanaian society:

Are Ghanaians are progressive and kind people?⁵²⁴

Ghana remains a very primitive society where evil practices remain rife. The country is in fact full of low IQ people. My dog will never dream of living there.⁵²⁵

Ghana so backward. I pray someone gets the authorities. The Pastor is out of the country article says. SOMEONE TELL THE AUTHORITIES. CRAZY GHANA.⁵²⁶

This is the twenty first century and some Ghanaians still believe in this nonsense. The pastor, the mother and all the people involved should be chained the same way to trees and leave them there for good.⁵²⁷

Unemployment creates some of these social havoc. With the advent of quinine and other malaria drugs people still believe in confessions by sick people. Many people spend precious times at Prayer Camps all under the suspicion that somebody is bewitching them instead of finding something better to do and feed their families. This unemployment has produced so many fake pastors who practice witchcraft themselves all in the name of delivering people. Oh, poor girl, may NDC comes to your aid and bring back sanity into our system. Or visit TB Joshua, a real man of God.⁵²⁸

It is easy to condemn barbaric acts when we hear of them. But how many of us will stand up and actually do something to educate these people and so help prevent further cruelty? If 10 good men who have posted here took the trouble to go to that site to teach and learn. The problem would be resolved. Are there 10 good men there?⁵²⁹

Only two comments out of the sample seem to take seriously the aspect of witch belief that is phrased in the article:

If that girl were a rich through her witch the parents will not chain her rather protect her.⁵³⁰

stupid parents and fake pastor if it would have been one of u being treated like this what will u do? the parents are rader [rather] the withcraft not the girl. God panished them for ever n ever.⁵³¹

As demonstrated in this Subchapter, witchcraft accusation in newspapers is presented as a major cause for human rights concerns in the form of physical violence deprivation of liberty, food and sanitation use, and

⁵²¹ Author *concern ghanian*, *ibid.*

⁵²² Author *Great*, *ibid.*

⁵²³ Author *Rev. Francis Goli*, *ibid.*

⁵²⁴ Author *Mattie*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁵²⁵ Author *Ogya*, *ibid.*

⁵²⁶ Author *The Mask*, *ibid.*

⁵²⁷ Author *Efua Gee*, *ibid.*

⁵²⁸ Author *Nana Kodjo*, *ibid.*

⁵²⁹ Author *UK Investor Dave*, *ibid.*

⁵³⁰ Author *Nicholas J Bedzo*, *ibid.*

⁵³¹ Author *Black Jesus*, *ibid.*

even homicide cases like lynching or bludgeoning to death. Indeed, there is an interest by media of reporting them, and by readers of discussing them. There are even more cases on witchcraft and violence to be found circulating Ghanaian newspapers but they happened outside of the country and were therefore left out in the descriptions above. Those cases regard witch hunts in Tanzania⁵³² and Kenya,⁵³³ the Nigerian child witch problem⁵³⁴, and UK homicide case of a suspected child witch⁵³⁵.

Besides cases where violence emerges as an immediate reaction to witchcraft or where witchcraft is taken as justification to mete out physical or sexual violence, there are similarly criminal but not necessarily violent cases legitimization via witchcraft. This is the entire collection of cases in which witchcraft either has been used in an attempt of legitimizing a crime like theft or fraud, and one case in which the insult of being a witch has been part of a court order⁵³⁶.

3.3.4 Witchcraft and Sexual Violence

The following three cases are a selection from the material of incidents of rape and sexual assault in which witchcraft has played a significant role⁵³⁷. In two of the three cases one can see a display of the potential in witchcraft to lure people into compliance or to exert pressure on them. In the other case witchcraft appears rather as part of the back story to the incident in that it has negatively impacted the victim's life before and caused her situation of homelessness. The specific aim in this Subchapter is to illustrate how readers react upon claims of witchcraft and how they establish a connection between the claims and the events narrated in the reports.

⁵³² "Two suspected 'witches' hacked to death in Tanzania", (Mod.Gh. 2014, October 17); "Tanzania arrests 23 over killing of seven 'witches'" (CitiFM. 2014, October 10).

⁵³³ Gh.Web. 2011, June 21.

⁵³⁴ "Ibenu/ Police Rescue Two Children From 'Witch' Killers" (Mod.Gh. 2013, October 17); "Akwa Ibom Government React To Story On Child Witches". The Ignoble Nigerian Child Witch Documentary By A Denmark Lady" (Mod.Gh. 2014, June 5a).

⁵³⁵ "UK CHILD WITCH MURDER TRIAL/ COUPLE CONVICTED OF KILLING KRISTY BAMU" (Mod.Gh. 2012, March 3).

⁵³⁶ Three cases needed to be left out of the debate as they lack sufficient or useful readers' comments. The cases can be briefly mentioned here:

November 2009: "(KADE) KWAEBIBIREM – Two to pay GHC 800 for defamation" (Districts. 2009, November 19): two women were granted bail of 800 Ghana Cedi (183.293 Euro by April 2016) after attacking and insulting a woman they had accused of witchcraft.

June 2011: "Pastor remanded for swindling three sisters" (Gh.Web. 2011, June 8). A 44 year-old Pastor has allegedly swindled three sisters of a sum of 1,200 Ghana Cedi (294,66 Euro by December 2015). He has tricked them "under the pretext of solving their spiritual problems", which included, amongst other things, the exorcising of witchcraft of a family member.

April 2014: "Car Snatcher Blames Witches" (Mod.Gh. 2014, April 17): a young male was arrested after failing to steal a car from its owner "at knife-point." The suspect claimed he was "compelled" by some witches "to snatch the [car] from its owner", he further "expressed surprise at his conduct and subsequent happenings."

⁵³⁷ There are two more cases in the sample with a similar setting which, however, do not show relevant readers' comments to be presented and analyzed here. They should at least be mentioned:

December 2011 "Motor mechanic jailed for defiling seven-year-old girl" (Gh.Web. 2011, December 26): as reported a motor mechanic has raped a 7-year-old girl, and while in court has tried to defend himself by calling the victim "a witch and thief who was out to frame him up."

The second case was set September 2012 and is entitled "Man defiles, bites 3 girls" (Gh.Web. 2012, September 4a): a young man of 25 has kidnapped, mutilated and sexually assaulted three girls between two and a half, and four. The article refers to residents who on trying to explain the deed speculated if the accused took "hard drugs", engaged in "occultism", "witchcraft and 'sakawa'", while others "suspected that [he] was mentally deranged."

1. June 2009: “Fetish priest jailed 20 years for rape”⁵³⁸

This June 13th 2009 article reports about a case heard at Kumasi Circuit Court, where a 42-year-old “fetish priest” named Kwaku Baah was sentenced to “20 years imprisonment in hard labour on his own plea for raping a 20-year-old teacher at Ahwiaa near Kumasi.”⁵³⁹ The events go back to November 16th 2008 when the victim came to visit a friend at Ahwiaa but did not meet him. On her way back she reports to have met “five men including the accused” who called her and “convinced her that she had been bewitched and could never give birth but he, the accused, was able to drive out the evil spirits. He then lured her into his house, gave her “some concoction to bath”, showed her a room to dress up and then rushed in and raped her. The matter was then reported to Police, resulting in the arresting of the perpetrator.

Readers’ Discussion⁵⁴⁰

There are 85 comments in the reader’s section. One of the topics discussed there addresses differing ideas of how the perpetrator should be punished. References are made to other recent cases of rape which are then compared to either argue that the punishment of 20 years was too strong or too weak. Another group of readers involve political talk into the discussion, e.g. questioning the justice of sentencing between this case and comparable offenses by state officials. Others, moreover, focus their contributions on passing the blame to another ‘tribe’, as is the case in many instances before. There clearly is a tendency in evoking ‘tribal’ sentiments when disturbing news with a religious or cultural component circulate the media. As one can see, it is the usual attacks between Ewe and Akan, and vice versa:

It’s not being tribalized but just a reminder to those who hype on Trokosi on in this arena and tagging Ewes with all crimes that occur in Ghana.⁵⁴¹

It’s about an ashanti rapist period, the reast [rest] have not been convicted, this is fiili fili. Don’t change the topic.⁵⁴²

Of course, as usual, there is also a more reasonable voice:

Guys can this not happen in any region? Why tribalize it?⁵⁴³

Furthermore, There are 10 comments that actually make mention of the reference to witchcraft, or at least magic, as found in the article. All of them are dismissive of displays of belief like this, some ridicule it openly:

This Kweku Baah fetish priest man again. I heard of him twice when I was in Kumasi before travelling. We need to do something about our backward stone age traditional system if we really want to catch up with the advance countries.⁵⁴⁴

⁵³⁸ Gh.Web. 2009, June 13.

⁵³⁹ Gh.Web. 2009, June 13.

⁵⁴⁰ The comments are entirely dated only two days around when the article was published June 13th 2009, but were collected April 4th 2016.

⁵⁴¹ Author *Notorious Akuffo Addicts*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴² Author *BMW thief*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴³ Author *Kojo Tamakloe*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ Author *SARPONG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, June 13.

Its worrying that we have to deal with women like this but do they process any data in their brains at all? SAME WITH WHAT THE PASTORS SAY TO THE WOMEN AND APPLY OLIVE OIL ON THEIR PRIVATE PARTS EVEN MARRIED WOMEN.⁵⁴⁵

This teacher lady deserve the rape, becos she is a fool to listen to the fetish prist.⁵⁴⁶

Let his fetism [fetishism] ideologies get him out of prison.⁵⁴⁷

Very unfortunate but this could happen to boys / young men as well, who are naive and not soooooo streetwise, easily lead by evil people with all kind of sweet or manipulative skills.⁵⁴⁸

The teacher has a problem, meeting someone in the street, being convince with this nonsense following him and washing etc. She is stupid, naive and I can't believe she is a teacher. A person like he should not be trusted with children.⁵⁴⁹

Did you say the lady was a teacher? What is she taeaching her students? Shame on her. She should be sacked from the teaching profession.⁵⁵⁰

The luring of women into dangerous situations by pretense of being bewitched and offering solutions to that can be found in the following case too. These, however, make up a rare occasion in the sample; even though readers repeatedly warn of such men. What is implied here as well is that apparently the making of claims of witchcraft is a great threat to some people that they trust strangers. The following cases further establish the sincerity of the fear of witchcraft.

2. August 2011: “Mallam Rapes 4 Girls From One Family”⁵⁵¹

The article dates August 6th 2011 but does not provide an exact date to the events described. The incident occurred in Adadiem near Sampa (Brong Ahafo Region). Police have confirmed that a Mallam called Abukari Gyan “has been sentenced to 43 years in prison with hard labour after pleading guilty to the charge” for raping four girls. The girls “are said to be from the same family”, and age 13, 14, 16 and 18. The perpetrator apparently “posed as a powerful priest”, tricked them into having sex with him under the promise of giving them spiritual assistance which would help them in life. The 14-year-old girl was given a concoction which was supposed to “free her from witches and boost her intelligence at school”, while the 18-year-old was promised success in her marital life. Finally the Mallam threatened the girls that if they told anybody about this they would “risk going mad and or being plagued [plagued] by leprosy.”

Readers’ Discussion⁵⁵²

This readers’ section amounts to 77 comments. There are two major topics discussed: one, like before, raises the question what acts and circumstances constitute rape. The other topic refers to a number of points that

⁵⁴⁵ Author *NICMAN@ATL*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ Author *comfort canada*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁷ Author *Odopa.com*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ Author *Odopa.com*, *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ Author *Human*, *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ Author *peter USA*, *ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ Gh.Web. 2011, August 6.

⁵⁵² The comments are entirely dated only two days around when the article was published August 6th 2011 but were collected April 4th 2016.

can all be subsumed under *the role of Islam*. People put forth that the perpetrator is not a real Mallam, that his understanding of Islam is wrong, while others ask about sexual morals in Islam in general, comparing it to Christianity. Many smaller conflict evolve around these questions:

what sort of nonsense reporting is this. which islamic school does this so-called mallam teach. is he the leader in any mosque in the locality? in anyway who is a mallam? stop this dirty reporting by trying to link islam with the dastardly acts by christian priests, pastors, reverend ministers etc.⁵⁵³

Once more, statements addressing the witchcraft related accusation can only be gathered indirectly. The following three comments illustrate this point:

ITS TIME TO EDUCATE THE GENERAL PULPIC ABOUT THE TRICKS OF THESE FALSE PASTORS AND MALLAMS. WHERE ARE THE IMFORMATION SERVICES VANS WHICH USED TO PLY VILLAGES & TOWNS TO EDUCATE POEPLLE ABOUT GOOD & BAD MORALS OF LIFE?⁵⁵⁴

Hey, Sarpong, hold your reins! Trokosi is something of a mystery to non-adherents. Whether rape or no rape, trokosi is something very dear to my heart, so people with less knowledge or information about the thing should and must just let it be. Do you get me?⁵⁵⁵

Voodoo, I know more about trokosi maybe more than you do. It is nothing but an advantage some old fools use to defile little girls. This crap of sending a girl to the Trokosi god to atone for the wrong of the parents is a wash. No I don't get you because Trokosi has made men from this region to view sex with minors as something that is not serious.⁵⁵⁶

Like in the case before, I want to highlight that to some parts of the Ghanaian public the idea of witchcraft poses a great threat. This case documents that the fear may at times be so scary that people expose themselves to other threatening situations to counteract the perceived machinations of witches. The response of readers, however, once more demonstrates that the danger of witchcraft (as rumored by the Mallam) in the online context is not taken seriously, but even ridiculed.

3. August 2009: “Man jailed 300 months for impregnating a 14-year-old girl”⁵⁵⁷

The article is set in Kumasi August 21st 2009, when a 50-year-old mason, Issaka Moro, at Brofoyedru (near Kumasi) was sentenced to “300 months in jail for defiling and impregnating a 14-year-old girl. The victim had apparently stayed in Brofoyedru with her grandmother but was sent to stay with her elder sister at a different place for some months but was then sent away again. A female teacher accepted to accommodate her but upon her own transfer to a different place “compelled the victim to return to Brofoyedru.” Her grandmother had long moved away so the victim “went to Moro who accepted her to his house.” He then took advantage of her situation by sexually abusing her which resulted in her pregnancy. Her elder sister, upon hearing this, “reported the matter to a Kumasi FM Radio station.” A local division of DOVVSU heard the story and went to arrest Moro who “admitted the offence but alleged that the victim was neglected by the family who accused her of witchcraft.”

⁵⁵³ Author *ONOKWAFO*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, August 6.

⁵⁵⁴ Author *Boronta*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, August 6.

⁵⁵⁵ Author *Voodoo Xebieso*, *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ Author *SARPONG*, *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ Gh.Web. 2009, August 24b.

Readers' Discussion⁵⁵⁸

The article has brought forth 152 comments. Like in the case above the main question readers engage in is if the punishment is too high or too low. A longer debate that unfolds in the comment section addresses the question of what circumstances constitute rape, disputing if the label fits in this case. While the latter point takes up almost the entirety of the debate, there are, as to be expected, comments on the standard topics of politics and 'tribal' accusations. Reactions towards the aspect of witchcraft are very small in number and can only be drawn indirectly. One author underlines that it is not only Issaka Moro who should be punished but also the government should be taken into responsibility as very often women who are mentally ill are being abandoned by their families. I submit the author alludes to the problem of people with mental conditions to be labelled witches by their families before they are very often abandoned.

Anyway it was very bad for mr Moro to impregnated the little girl at that age but it seems nobody care for homeless even mental ills, it is government responsibility to help the little girl but failed all the politician are only interested in their pocket and families and relatives. If you reach Ghana today you can see so many mental ill women with their babies tight behind them waking in the hot sun, after all if the mother is mad what about the kid. May be if mr Moro were not to take that responsibility to accept the little girl what would happened to her life. It seems our political leaders are looking for escaped goat to achieve cheap political point. I am not saying that Mr Moro did well but where were those relative before the little girl went to stayed with mr Moro. We all pretend as if we do not know what is going on in our various countries.⁵⁵⁹

Other authors stress the responsibility of the family of the girl. These remarks authors make thus indirectly establishes the notion that suspicion of witchcraft is not a sensible reason for abandonment:

The family should be punished as well, now sending him in for 300 months, what will happen to the children? The baby and the mother I mean. I think the mother and father of the girl shd [should] have been given the sentences and Morro made to work to pay for the up keep of the Children.⁵⁶⁰

The family of 14 years girl should be punish, why did they cast the little girl away the court should asked them? If I were the judge I will sentence him few months in jail and ask Morro to marriage [marry] her after the sentence.⁵⁶¹

WHAT ON EARTH IS MORE TRAUMATIZING ON EARTH THAN TO BE ABANDONED BY ONCE OWN FAMILY AT AN AGE ONE CAN'T FEND FOR THEMSELVES. THIS GUY LOVES THE GIRL A LOT MORE THAN HER FAMILY DOES. OTHERWISE, THE GIRL WON'T END UP WITH THE MAN IN THE FIRST PLACE.⁵⁶²

Where are the girl's parents? The man has done wrong but irresponsible parenting should be blamed for this. How come a 14 years old girl has no place to live. The stupid man took advantage of her poor situation. How come her own sister could not take her in? What is the department of social welfare doing in Ghana. Do we have to wait for a situation to get worse before we sentence? What a dummy nation. The girl's family must be fined a substantial [substantial] amount for her up-keep. In fact, her family must be punished to send a strong message to irresponsible families. [...] ⁵⁶³

Focus: Sexual Violence and Witchcraft

This case of rape and its relation to witchcraft seems to be based on a different setting than the two cases before. The accusation of witchcraft only features in the defense of the perpetrator, and the article does not

⁵⁵⁸ The comments are entirely dated only three days around when the article was published August 24th 2009 but were collected April 4th 2016.

⁵⁵⁹ Author *Osei Kwami*, *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ Author *Bomber*, *ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ Author *The magnificent Verona*, *ibid.*

⁵⁶² Author *NORTHERN BOY*, *ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Author *Koopong*, *ibid.*

provide more information whether the topic has featured in the preliminaries to the case like it does in the two cases discussed before. It is likely to assume that it does because one can see the motive of the breaking with the girls family as in previous cases. What is noteworthy, nevertheless, is that the perpetrator found it reasonable to make the alleged accusation of witchcraft by the girl's family an important part of his defense, at least so much so that *GhanaWeb* mentions it in the article. As I have mentioned before the accusation of witchcraft as a defense strategy is also apparent in another case (which due to lack of responses from readers was omitted), where a man upon "defiling" a girl of seven years claimed that the girl was a "witch and a thief" and wanted to "frame him up." (cf. "Motor mechanic jailed for defiling seven-year-old girl" (Gh.Web. 2011, December 26)

3.3.5 Miscellaneous Cases

1. November 2010: "Farmer gets seven years for deceit and child trafficking"⁵⁶⁴

According to an article published November 19th 2010, Jonas Acquah, a 23-year-old farmer has been sentenced to "seven years imprisonment in hard labour for deceit and trafficking of a 19 year-old girl from Dawranpong in the central region to Takoradi." The victim was approached by Acquah at her school "and convinced [...] into believing that she had been bewitched by people at home and school." The victim was then brought to Takoradi for Acquah to perform the "ritual" [of exorcising the victim of the alleged witchcraft], where the victim was queried by people who sensed her apprehensive appearance over the strange situation she was lured into by Acquah. The story of the victim was reported to DOVVSU at Takoradi who brought forth the convicts prosecution.

Readers' Discussion⁵⁶⁵

There are only eight comments in this section, which point to topics that occur in the material discussed above. People discuss the sentence and ask for a more severe one, e.g.

Hang the BASTARDS! Living is too good for them – the same applies to all your fucking robbers, thieves, vagabonds, scammers and ill educated slaves – which is most of the Ghanaian population. GHANA SCUM BAGS! NIGERIA RULES! POWER TO NIGERIA! NIGERIA IS GOD'S COUNTRY!⁵⁶⁶

Others blame another 'tribe' for such criminal acts of child trafficking, e.g.

oh ewes when are you going to stop this nonsense and start behaving like normal human beings?⁵⁶⁷

Only one reader actually refers to the alleged witchcraft scam by the perpetrator:

what kind of a dumb ass believes in witches???⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ Gh.Web. 2010, November 19.

⁵⁶⁵ The comments were published between the date of publishing plus two days, and were collected April 4th 2016.

⁵⁶⁶ Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 19.

⁵⁶⁷ Author *jimmy cash*, *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁸ Author *human being*, *ibid.*

Once more there is the motive of luring people into compliance by threats of witchcraft. This further corroborates the existence of this phenomenon in Ghanaian society.

2. June 2011: “Boy strangely found behind steering wheel of locked taxi”⁵⁶⁹

The article reports a case on June 13th 2011 in which a boy, Kingsford Martey, 16, “was found sitting behind the steering wheel of a locked taxi”. The article underlines that it was “under mysterious circumstances” that the boy had entered the car. The boy apparently claimed that his grandmother had given him a pen with which he would be able to open the car “to bring [it] to where 93 witches meet”, as she allegedly instructed her grandson. The driver of the taxi, according to Chief Inspector Olivia Turkson of Tema Police, “had problems with the vehicle anytime he went to work even though there was no mechanical fault.” The driver had now “decided to seek divine intervention”, and went praying. After he came back and found the boy he asked neighbors to assist him to bring the boy to the Police station. There the boy allegedly admitted that “he and the grandmother were responsible for the sickness of his grandfather, who would have died in five days if he had succeeded in taking the car away.” The chief Inspector made clear, however, that “since the Police do not deal with spiritual matters, they were investigating the case.”⁵⁷⁰ The boy has been transferred “to the Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit for further investigations.”

Readers’ Discussion⁵⁷¹

The article is commented on in 13 comments. There is a display of the usual critical attitude towards bringing witchcraft stories to newspapers and discussing witch belief in general, e.g. “Last year a goat was arrested in Nigeria for stealing a car. It was sitting behind the steering wheel. Today a witch is stealing a car in Ghana. Idiots.”⁵⁷² Apart from that there are three commentators who are supportive of witch belief in the sense as it was presented in the article:

Is a spiritual matter, send him to a man of God, not the fake ones, and the whole truth shall be known.⁵⁷³

PEOPLE USE TO COMMENT ON THINGS THAT THEY DONT UNDERSTAND. THIS BOY HAS WITCHCRAFT AND SHOULD BE HELPED BY THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLYHOLYSPIRIT.⁵⁷⁴

TAKE THE PEN FROM HIM, HE CAN EVEN USE IT TO KILL ANYONE.⁵⁷⁵

This article shows an interesting contrast to the other articles. In 13 comments there are only three which appreciate the idea of the existence of witchcraft. This is, however, a rare occasion. It is noteworthy to see

⁵⁶⁹ Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

⁵⁷⁰ One might assume that the author of the article should say that Police will *not* investigate the case (of the grandfather) since they do get involved in spiritual matters.

⁵⁷¹ The comments are entirely dated only a few days around when the article was published November 19th 2010, but were collected April 20th 2016.

⁵⁷² Author *KWASI in EUROPE*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

⁵⁷³ Author *Naa*, *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ Author *KWASI BELGIUM*, *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ Author *Jss Boys*, *ibid.*

that the explanation of the perpetrator in which he resorted to witchcraft and involved his grandmother (a common place) is more readily taken by readers than the same argument made by the perpetrators in the cases before.

3. February 2011: “Chief fined Gh¢500.00 for offensive conduct”⁵⁷⁶

As was reported February 25th 2011 by a *GhanaWeb* article, Nana Fe Bamoah, “chief of Asokwa, a suburb of Kumasi” was ordered by a Kumasi Circuit Court to pay a fine of 500 Ghana Cedi (114.558 Euro by April 2016) for “offensive conduct”. The complainant, Mrs. Comfort Oforiwaa, has been insulted by Bamoah who “accused her of witchcraft and threatened to pull down her house.” Police was called and upon the formal report made by Oforiwaa brought the case before the court.

Readers’ Discussion⁵⁷⁷

This article was commented on 18 times. Most commentators agree that the acting of the chief was inappropriate; some called it “deplorable”, other even “atrocious”. Only five people out of 18 do not directly condemn the act by either remaining silent about the case or by criticizing the judge for the conviction of the chief. None of the commentators makes direct reference to the accusation of witchcraft. Only a few indirectly refer to it by calling it simply an insult:

Entering someone’s private premises with the intention of insulting and or threatening the person is already punishable.⁵⁷⁸

How would you describe a chief that drives to another person’s house just to hurl insults on her – simply primitive and jungle like.⁵⁷⁹

Where is the freedom of speech in Ghana. The Chief can say anything and call the lady any name as long as she was not defame or harm in any way, form or shape. What type of justice do we enjoy in Ghana. The leader of the free world, Obama has been called worse names and no one has been hauled to court to face criminal or civil charges.⁵⁸⁰

It is not clear from the report whether the ‘offensive conduct’ was based on the accusation of witchcraft or what role this act played in the court’s ruling. Moreover, none of the commentators directly refer to witchcraft as a problem, and only indirectly refer to the accusation of witchcraft under the rubric of *insult*.

3.4 Witchcraft: Celebrities and Popular People

Another context to which notions of witchcraft very often connect is that of celebrities or popular people in general. In the cases at hand there is a central element, namely gossip and rumors about the lives of these popular people. This seems to underscore what is claimed by Adinkrah (2015:112, 122f.) and Asamoah-

⁵⁷⁶ Gh.Web. 2011, February 25.

⁵⁷⁷ The comments were published between February 25th and March 3rd 2011, and were collected April 4th 2016.

⁵⁷⁸ Author *JB Awotwe*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, February 25.

⁵⁷⁹ Author *JB Awotwe*, *ibid*.

⁵⁸⁰ Author *Lobito*, *ibid*.

Gyadu (2015:23-25): namely, that the internet (as well as other forms of media) informs the Ghanaian society on the existence and nature of witches. There are three cases where popular people (a Ghanaian actress and two West African football players) are brought into contact with witchcraft to explain certain things about their lives. Moreover, as I argue below, the motive of witchcraft does not only play a role as an element of gossip or rumors for other people to explain the riches and opportunities in life of the elite (cf. ‘the leveling side of witchcraft’, Geschiere 2000:10), but it is also used to account for the brilliant skills of people. As exemplified in the case of actress Rose Akua Attaa Mensah, there is presentation of a similarly positive image of witchcraft as intended by Akua Donkor in Subchapter 3.1.3 (see especially the notion of witchcraft in the ‘Devil Song’ by A. B. Crentsil). Apart from that, witchcraft is used by popular people to account for familial hardship, as exemplified by the case of Emmanuel Adebayor. The Case of Richard Kingson, finally, is an example of a popular figure trying to fend off such rumors. All cases show the potency of the witchcraft label to connect to famous people and be spread throughout the internet.

3.4.1 Case – Actress Rose Akua Attaa Mensah: “I Am A Witch”⁵⁸¹

Introduction to the Case

The following case is documented only on a small scale, but still interesting enough to be presented here. It is reported in two articles (about 1200 words) which are based on roughly the same text with only very few minor differences, entailing 78 comments, and a video recording of the events.

December 25th 2011 at Ghana Movie Awards, actress Rose Akua Attaa Mensah received the award for “Best Actress in Supporting Role (Local Language).”⁵⁸² According to *Peace FM*, the actress declared in her acceptance speech “albeit in a joking manner” that she was a “real witch,” and that “veteran Ghanaian actresses [...] ‘Maame Dɔkono’, and Grace Nortey [...]” are “senior witches”, who have “transferred the witchcraft” to her⁵⁸³. Mensah’s popular name, *Kyeiwaa*, is from a self-titled movie, where she plays a witch, and which has made the actress quite popular in Ghana⁵⁸⁴. Mensah further explained that before her own career in the movies she admired the two Ghanaian actresses, Maame Dɔkono and Grace Nortey, who have also played in witchcraft themed movies, “and wished she could be one of them,” explaining that the award “is a testimony to the fact that they transferred the witchcraft” to her⁵⁸⁵.

‘Anytime I saw them on screen, I was so overwhelmed not knowing that they were going to hand over their witchcraft to me.’ Clutching her hand rather tightly, Kyeiwaa jokingly said ‘So the witchcraft Grace Nortey and Maame Dɔkono gave me is what I have in my hands right now. This is it everybody should look at it.’⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ PeaceFM. 2012, January 10.

⁵⁸² *ibid.*

⁵⁸³ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid.*

As claimed by the *GhanaWeb* version of the article “the audience screamed in shock” in reaction to Mensah’s statement⁵⁸⁷.

Fortunately, video footage of the event and her speech is available, which allows for an investigation of Rose Mensah’s acceptance speech, so that it can be compared to the presentation in the newspapers. The video is released on the channel of a user called *axxoprime* on Youtube, it is 14:07 minutes long, and covers the speech of the presenter who gives her the award as well as her acceptance speech⁵⁸⁸.

The part covering Rose Mensah begins 5:34 and ends 9:45. It covers the announcement of the area of award (best actress in supporting role (local language), quickly introduces the contestants, shows the awarding of Rose Mensah and her acceptance speech. After being announced and making her way to the stage, Rose Mensah calls her grandchildren to join her on the stage. She begins her speech in English:

Thank you and welcome! [Here she switches to Twi:] I thank all Ghanaians and I give a lot of thanks to God for he has done a lot for me. When Grace Nortey’s name was mentioned on stage, I was so happy because in Ghanaian cinema, when we talk about the best actresses for witches, Grace Nortey and Maame Dɔkono are called. Grace Nortey and Maame Dɔkono are the best witches in Ghanaian cinema and I was a very big fan of them. Little did I know that they were passing on their witchcraft on to me so here it is! [Referring to the award] Thank you and I will also like to thank the organizers of this event.⁵⁸⁹

The video is all in all in a rather light or even cheerful atmosphere, showing a lot of laughter when people react to Rose Mensah’s humorous presentation.

Reader’s Discussion

Most of the commentators in the sample agree that the media presentation of the case was over the top, and in an attempt to arouse sensationalism intentionally interpreted wrongly what Rose Mensah said on stage. Most commentators seem to agree that Rose Mensah is not a witch in the literal sense of the word but rather she meant it metaphorically or at least in a “tongue in cheek” fashion (cf. Meyer 2015:236). Only very few readers take seriously the “confession” as it is called by Ghanaian newspapers.

The first commentator in the *GhanaWeb* version of the article, Ben, already puts forward: “As for Maame Dokono and Mrs. Nortey, I’m not surprised [that they are witches].”⁵⁹⁰ He is, however, immediately met with criticism by fellow readers, as for instance by Ricky: “Ben, don’t be stupid, that was a figure of speech!”⁵⁹¹ Apart from the very short exchange between Ben, Ricky, and very few other respondents there is not much dialogue relevant for the discussion of witchcraft belief. Other comments regarding the reality of witchcraft are not met with any response whatsoever. Some commentators propose a Christian solution to the supposed witch problem:

⁵⁸⁷ Gh.Web. 2012, January 10.

⁵⁸⁸ Title of video: “Ghana Movie Awards 2011 – The Kyeiwaa, Funny Face, Majid and Wayosi Moments”, published on channel “axxoprime”, published February 4th 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEGtdpddJ-0>, accessed January 9th 2014.

⁵⁸⁹ I am indebted to Roslyn Mould for the translation of the original acceptance speech in Twi.

⁵⁹⁰ Author *BEN* (comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10).

⁵⁹¹ Author *Ricky*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

Kyeiwaa i think there is a big problem if u are not moved by the fact that ya roles has affected ya christian life. What is life all about, u are funny, which is well accepted, but at the end of it all the Almighty God matters the most. You can act and be a very good christian. Pls think again.⁵⁹²

This is telling us to be carefulling [careful] when watching this movies. lets us read our bible instead of watching this movies. thank.⁵⁹³

More than half of the comments⁵⁹⁴, however, dismiss the claim about the actress having made a factual statement about her witchcraft, some of them, in turn, phrase criticism at Ghanaian journalism. A perspective that occurs frequently in the entire material.

These Ghanaian journalists paaaa when at all will they grow up... this a complete lie... i watched the whole prog. and i can testify she never meant what is being published ... i advise she sue that punk who wrote this ...⁵⁹⁵

I was at the centre and trust me the woman was just making fun of how people perceive her to be. who ever made this story should have known better. A VERY UNNECESSARY REPORT. SHAME. OOOO BOY.⁵⁹⁶

We all watched the program and you can't misinform us. It as out of excitement and joy that she made those statements. She didn't mean real witchcraft.⁵⁹⁷

Sensationalism on side of the media and the grabbing of attention via headlines on the side of Rose Mensah is assumed by some readers to be the main motivation behind this:

Kyeiwaa want publicity, this will be all year round topic.⁵⁹⁸

PERSONALLY DON'T WATCH HER MOVIES SO I CANT JUDGE HER, MAYBE SHE WAS JUST JOKING MAYBE NOT. WHO R WE TO JUDGE, LEAVE HER ALONE, I DON'T THINK A WITCH WILL WANT TO EXPOSE WHO SHE IS BESIDES I AM SURE SHE KNOWS THIS WILL CAUSE MAYHAM IN THE MEDIA WORLD, THE MEDIA WORLD IS HUNGRY FOR A STORY AND SHE FED THEM WITH ONE.⁵⁹⁹

A significant number of readers, furthermore, do not only reject the way Ghanaian media presented the case, but they also abundantly make clear that it is a metaphor that she uses to illustrate her success as actress. This is illustrated by the following quotations:

She is only saying she has got talent thats all. in traditional Akan society and am sure most African or Ghanaian societies when someone has talent they refer to the person as a witch. After all there are bad witches and good witches and if her witch craft makes people to laugh then what is the big deal? well than madam Kyeiwaa.⁶⁰⁰

She is speaking metaphorically and has been taken literally by an ignoramus journalist. Or this article must be a bad metaphor for a joke in its entirety [entirety].⁶⁰¹

Uegene osafo, do u lack sense of discernment or wat? the woman sed dat 'i used to admire maame dokono n Grace Nortey wheneva they acted witch-related movies n wished i cud be one of them...now dat i'v gotten into da movie industry n doing similar thing dat ppl appreciate, i thank them, bcos this plague i hold is a testimony to da fact that they transferred the witchcraft to me' this apparently means, the magic in their good acting is with her now n she's inheriting them... u ppl like

⁵⁹² Author *AMA*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, January 10.

⁵⁹³ Author *maame Ama*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁵⁹⁴ About 45 of the total number of 78.

⁵⁹⁵ Author *Usher*, *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ Author *Nana Yaw*, *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ Author *Maame*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, January 10.

⁵⁹⁸ Author *MAAME POKUA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁵⁹⁹ Author *NANA*, *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ Author *Bra Mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁶⁰¹ Author *Earl Jones*, *ibid.*

misquoting n misinterpreting simple speeches.... it doesnt make u a gud [good] JOURNALIST at all!!! clear this ***barred word*** article.⁶⁰²

At this point, I would like to emphasize that it is clearly stated in the readers' section by some commentators that the notion of witchcraft may well be applied in a metaphorical sense. This is quite revealing considering the usual mode of taking in a literal sense whenever something in the direction of magic is uttered in the African setting.

3.4.2 Case – Richard Kingson: “My Wife Is Not A Witch”

There are more prophets in Ghana today than in the entire Bible. Nigeria, probably, has more prophets than Germany, Israel, Italy and the USA all combined. How come a small nation like Ghana has so many prophets? Have all the stage magicians, Opera-square tricksters and school drop-outs become prophets? When JSS drop-outs like Prophet T. B. Joshua are worth over \$20 million, it is a no-brainer that money is the attraction, and not the message of Christ. (Pastor Nkansah, GhanaWeb commentator)⁶⁰³

The case of former Ghanaian national goalkeeper, Richard Kingson, is tightly connected to Nigerian prophet Temitope Balogun Joshua. It was documented by *Emmanuel TV*, a television station that is entirely owned and operated by the Synagogue Church of all nations. In the video the wife of Kingson was “delivered”⁶⁰⁴ from evil spirits. The “deliverance” was picked up by Ghanaian (and other) media and resulted in calling Mrs. Kingson a witch. The couple was thus forced to return to the Church a week later to comment on, and to reinterpret the meaning of Mrs. Kingson’s deliverance. According to these articles⁶⁰⁵ the “deliverance” dates Sunday September 2nd 2012 while the second visit to the Church dates one week later, i.e. Sunday September 9th 2012⁶⁰⁶. Besides newspaper coverage, there are also two videos documenting the case, which are accessible on YouTube.

T.B. Joshua

In approaching the case one should make oneself aware of who is T.B. Joshua and what is the television station called *Emmanuel TV*.

Temitope Balogun Joshua, a Nigerian minister, appearing in the form of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, is, without doubt, “the most controversial Christian minister in Africa on account of his miraculous performances and practices.” (Ukah 2015:4) With an estimated net worth of 10-15 million US\$, Joshua is also one of the five richest pastors in Nigeria⁶⁰⁷. While apart from his own narrative (accessible, for instance, on his website), not much is known about his life, and Joshua has managed very well to control

⁶⁰² Author *pathetic journalist*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, January 10.

⁶⁰³ Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

⁶⁰⁴ Video “Goalkeeper Richard Kingson & Wife Testify”.

⁶⁰⁵ Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5 and PeaceFM 2012, September 7.

⁶⁰⁶ PeaceFM 2012, September 10.

⁶⁰⁷ T.B. Joshua’s net worth, estimated by Forbes magazine, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/06/07/the-five-richest-pastors-in-nigeria/2/#c03cc163a4dd>, accessed March 8th 2016.

what can publicly be known; especially when it comes to the use of new media, his approach of tactically selecting information has proven successful. This hiding but also highlighting of aspects of his personality has spurred “conspiracy theories.” (Ukah 2015:4f.) His life-time project, The Synagogue, The Church of All Nations (SCOAN) was founded in the end of the 1980s and for the time being remained unnoticed by the Nigerian public. Only through the use of television, starting in the 1990s, SCOAN gained “national and international renown”, drawing people to the Church and providing them with Joshua’s “goods of salvation” such as healing miracles for “all known disease”, “prophecy (particularly concerning tragic events involving prominent politicians), and deliverance of possession by malignant spirits.” But as many follower as there are of T.B. Joshua, the man is also looked upon with disapproval, particularly the Nigerian Pentecostal community has “called [him] ‘fake’, ‘the vicar of the devil on earth’, a man ‘in partnership with Satan to subjugate the church to the will of the devil’.” (Ukah 2015:4)

The little that is known about his early life is based on “self-narrated details” which are “impossible to corroborate.” (Ukah 2015:5) According to the data T.B. Joshua was born June 12th 1963 in Arigidi, Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria and grew up (without his father) in an Anglican family. He attended an Anglican Church community as well as a school also run by the Church. He finished elementary school but dropped out of secondary school, most possibly because of the financial situation in the family. Further, Joshua claims to have taken part in Students Christian Fellowship (SCM), which Ukah (2015:5) interprets to be an attempt to establish “a Pentecostal pedigree as the SCM was one of the important pillars of the Pentecostal ‘revolution’ in Nigeria.” (Ukah 2015:5)

Concerning his legitimation as a Christian minister, one needs to understand that besides the “relationship with the Anglican Church and his alleged involvement with some for of students’ bible study group” there are no further contacts between Joshua and a Church or a religious leader. Ukah (2015:5) states that for emerging Pentecostal pastors it is common to “actively relate” with older leaders “under whom they learn the ropes”, whom they refer to as “‘mentor’ or ‘father-in-the-Lord’”. This lack of a spiritual father after the Pentecostal model of legitimation is what brought much criticism from the Pentecostals upon Joshua. Turning a disadvantage into an advantage, Joshua makes use of powerful images to design a lineage of his own:

When we talk of mentor, we mean someone you want tot be like or someone you believe you have gained from. After reading my bible, I give a total salute to Paul, the Apostle, what God wrought through him after his deliverance. Peter and Paul, the Apostle. But I pray for all the ministers of God. They are all my mentors. (Ukah 2015:5)

In this way, Joshua is not depended upon “human mentors, as he privileges scripture over human tradition.” (Ukah 2015:5) His authority is therefore not rooted in “secular or seminary education” but in experience as he did not attend formal Biblical or theological training, and he did not “apprentice under any known Christian leader or teacher.” All his scriptural training happened in his dreams, as he claims, and thus he can boldly profess that “while other men and women of God attend worldly, human universities, where ‘you

receive the message in your ears”’, he, Joshua, “attends ‘the University of Jesus, where you can receive his message in your heart’”. (Ukah 2015:7)

The design of his Church and ministry also bears witness to the creative freedom that emerges from a situation in which no human mentorship oversees the organization. Therefore no conclusion can be drawn on what specific Church dogma lies in the background of scoan. Küstner (2011:11) finds that both Aladura and Pentecostal elements are reflected in the ministry, and there are a few pieces of evidence which make one or the other option reasonable. As the prophet belongs to the ethnic group of the Yoruba, and “rumors say that he used to be a member of the Celestial Church of Christ, an Aladura church”, one might suggest that there are Aladura inclinations. Moreover, the “grounding history” of scoan is based on a narrative in which Joshua fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and further there is an emphasis on the use of Anointed Water, and a “bond with the ‘prophet healing’” that is known from Aladura Churches. (Küstner 2011:11) The structure and services, on the other hand, rather point to intended affiliation with Pentecostal Churches, while one should not underestimate the fact that Joshua applied several times for membership in the Pentecostal Fellowship Nigeria, which were all turned down, because of the generally very skeptical attitude of Nigerian Pentecostalism. According to the official narrative, T.B. Joshua induced a trance state by fasting and was “controlled by an intelligence from outside of the self”, a “mystical force”, that “subdued his consciousness for 72 hours.” In this time he absorbed the holy scripture in his heart and found himself among Peter, Paul, Moses and Elijah. Further he heard the voice of God revealing to him his holy tasks. Ukah 2015 (6) fittingly compares this to the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ, cf. Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36. Here the “authority of the law and the prophets” is handed over to Jesus, however, in Joshua’s account the group of the bearers of authority includes Paul. An aspect which, as Ukah argues, could be interpreted in that “Joshua is subtly arguing that the legal and prophetic authority of Moses and Elijah, respectively as well as the leadership and apostolic authority of Peter and Paul is united in him.” (Ukah 2015:6) But also his names bear strong symbolic meaning: Joshua, which clearly is an allusion to the Hebraic origin of the Greek name Jesus (cf. Ukah 2015:7), as well as him being referred to by his followers as Man of God, an Old Testament expression for a prophet (Küstner 2011:6). Temitope is the Yoruba meaning for “‘What God has done for me is worthy of thanks’”, while Balogun is another Yoruba name, or title and stands for “warlord or military general.” The symbolism behind his name and the account of his trance state makes Joshua the one to carry out “the work of the father, which is bringing salvation to people through teaching, preaching miracles, signs and wonders, [it] is the work of a savior and a general in God’s army against the kingdom of Satan.” (Ukah 2015:7)

Concerning his reception one can maintain that Joshua, indeed, is a controversial character in the religious landscape of Nigeria and beyond. As mentioned the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, despite several applications, does not acknowledge him, and some pastors, like Chris Okotie, have even gone as far as to criticize Joshua publicly, others have accused him of being a fraud. On the other hand, there are his admirers as for instance “American pastor Benny Hinn, who is zealous about T.B. Joshua’s practices and

actions”, and who said in an interview that “he would not turn down an invitation to [SCOAN].” (Küstner 2011:7) Further followers are Frederick Chiluba, former president of Zambia, and former Ghanaian president John Atta Mills, whose encounters with Joshua have sparked of debates that are reflected also in the material, as well as Bill Subritzky, an independent evangelist and healer of the Charismatic movement in New Zealand. (cf. Küstner 2011:7)

Emmanuel TV

T.B. Joshua’s public ministry, according to the website of the Church, has begun 1987, and at that time was “almost completely unknown to the Nigerian public”. Only when by the mid-1990s Joshua started a TV program called *The Man in the Synagogue* which was broadcasted on some Nigerian TV channels, his popularity began to rise. Ukah (2015:8) expresses this in the following:

It was television that made Joshua into an international celebrity and immensely popular. His charisma is intricately interwoven with media technology, particularly television [...]. The global phenomenon known as ‘Prophet T.B. Joshua’ is a creature of the media, specifically visual media. Television made him, and he has not abandoned the use of television. His healing practices are rooted in front television cameras and CCTVs. His healings are mediated through his own body (he touches, pushes or breathes upon persons seeking healing); healing works through ingestion or sprinkling ‘anointed water’ or healing works through watching him perform on television, touching the mechanical television set and so on.

T.B. Joshua’s television format, Emmanuel TV, advertises for change and miracles by simply watching the program regularly (cf. Küstner 2011:15) “Changing Lives, Changing Nations, Changing the World” thus the message on Emmanuel TV video player accessible over SCOAN website. Since the media law concerning the broadcasting of miracles has changed in Nigeria in 2004, Joshua was forced to establish his own satellite and Internet television from South Africa. Principally addressed at Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and North America, the program operates from outside of the country to evade a law that became implemented April 30th 2004. Considering the proliferation of miracle driven Churches, which since the 1980s, when in the form of the Pentecostal variety, had spread “like ‘wild fire’”, accusations were uttered that pastors were misusing their ministries to “manipulate and cajole their credulous adherents”, and the Churches “have continued to feast on the psychology of the masses who genuinely are desirous of relief from their sordid existential realities”; indeed, it was phrased, some pastors pursue “commercial venture” and use “any means to accumulate profits.” (Ukah 2011: 50) Millions of Nigerian citizens who are too poor to see a doctor or buy medicine, who have failed to reach a decent living standard are reasonably open for Churches that claim to do miracle healing. A lot of that healing is “done on television with testimonies that are often unverifiable. [...] [However], there are Nigerians who have come to grief by their association with some of the more unscrupulous elements of these miracle-peddling groups.” (Ukah 2011:50f.) Having shaped the public discourse in this way, raising concern about “the presence, function and *modus operandi* [sic]” of these Churches, the debate has finally accumulated enough social power that the National Broadcasting Commission changed the law, stating that “all broadcast stations in the country [Nigeria] ‘which indulge in transmitting [...] programmes that profess indiscriminate miracles as events of daily fingertip occurrence

[should] put a stop to this by the 30th of April 2004' [...]" (Ukah 2011:51) Küstner (2011:15) argues in this regard, that it is "Very probable" that the change in law was "mainly meant to restrict T.B. Joshua because of his difficult relationship with the Pentecostal Fellowship Nigeria." A strategy which, if really conceived this way, has obviously proven to be of no effect. With "well over 20 hours of programmes each week" (Ukah 2011:50) the TV of the Synagogue Church of All Nations continues to transmit its prophesies and sermons, to treat divine revelations and "lead humans toward Jesus through salvation and healing." (Küstner 2011:15)

Chris Oyakhilome⁶⁰⁸ and T.B. Joshua are unarguably two of the richest Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria who blur any distinction between the bible and economics, drama and prayer in the process of drawing scathing criticism (or jealousy and envy as some of their admirers claim) from people within and outside the Pentecostal community. (Ukah 2011:54)

Presentation in Media

The case at hand is presented in seven articles (together roughly 3000 words) and 343 comments to six of the articles. Further, there are two videos on the case by Emmanuel TV, which are quite similar in footage. I shall begin by reporting the case as was presented in Ghanaian newspapers⁶⁰⁹.

The first event narrated in the newspapers is based on the visiting of the Synagogue Church of All Nations by Mrs. Kingson September 2nd 2012. According to a *GhanaWeb* article, published September 4th, which is two days after the events⁶¹⁰, Mrs. Christabell Kingson caused "gargantuan turmoil" to the Kingson's marriage after she "confessed to controversial pastor TB Joshua". Allegedly Mrs. Kingson "bewitched her husband" by "putting his career in disarray and making him impotent." She further went into a "trans-like [trance-like]" state where "she told the congregation about how she has been spiritually working on Richard Kingson since they got married [...]". T.B. Joshua then prayed for Mrs. Kingson to lift the "witchcraft spirit" from her. The article emphasizes that after the Kingsons married in 2010 the goalkeeper career of the husband "has been in the nosedive" as he "has been struggling to find a team" after he left the Ghanaian national team. The article ends by speculating on a possible break-up of the marriage due to the stress. In a second article⁶¹¹, published three days after the events (September 5th), besides the information narrated in the first article, there is an emphasis on a) the sexual component (his supposed impotence) and b) the witchcraft aspect. The article comes with the scornful title "Olele Penis is Dead – Wife Confesses"⁶¹², and already in the beginning mentions how Richard Kingson was "rendered [...] impotent" by the woman "he loves" and married just "two years" ago. In two instances the readers are informed that the attack upon Mr. Kingson is of spiritual nature: "[...] she confessed that she had evil powers of a witch and she had used that to make her

⁶⁰⁸ Another successful Nigerian minister and TV host.

⁶⁰⁹ To show that witchcraft sensationalism is not only an African phenomenon one needs to acknowledge that in a similar way the case was reported outside of Ghana, as for instance British newspaper *The Telegraph* quoted Mrs. Kingson to have said: "I used my evil powers to trouble his career. I've been working on him spiritually to the point he could not perform in bed." (Telegraph. 2012, September 11) Further reports of that kind can be found in tabloid papers such as *Birmingham Mail* (Birm.Mail. 2012, September 11), *Daily Mail* (D.Mail. 2012, September 11), and *The Sun* (Sun. 2012, September 11), to name just a few papers that picked up on the story.

⁶¹⁰ Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶¹¹ Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5.

⁶¹² Ibid.

husband impotent”, and “T.B. Joshua prayed for the woman and delivered her of the self-confessed witchery”. A third article⁶¹³, published September 7th, which is almost entirely based on the first one, adds the information that meanwhile Mr. Kingson has taken the case to the social network *Facebook* to refute the rumor on his wife: “My wife is not a witch”, he allegedly posted to his *Facebook* wall. Another article further expands the point of Kingson’s refutation of his wife being witch by pointing out that “his wife was spiritually manipulated into a trance to make the scary confessions to a global television audience.”⁶¹⁴ The text further explains that initially it was Mr. Kingson who sought the help of T.B. Joshua to meet his “personal challenges”, the latter, however, “asked him to bring his wife”, who was then identified to be the cause of the problems, confessing to above mentioned allegations.

The second event refers to the returning of the couple to the scoan, one week later, Sunday September 9th. Richard Kingson, according to article PeaceFM 2012, September 10 returned to the church to “express pain and worry that some persons in Ghana were calling his dear wife a witch.” Allegedly Kingson explained the confession by suggesting that “it was not uncommon for ‘false spirits’ to enter people during deliverance and for such spirits to manifest and say all manner of things through the person being delivered.” Mrs. Kingson also denied that she was a witch and said that she “had no foreknowledge that I had been possessed. I can’t even remember what took place in the Church after I fell down. I was only told what the spirit that manifested had said after I regained consciousness.” Kingson is quoted to pass the blame to other people who through spiritual manipulation of his wife try to embarrass him. A number of articles further propose that Kingson claimed his wife actually “saved the Black stars [national football team] and Ghana from shame” when he in the position of national goalkeeper was offered a large amount of money for a bribe in the 2006 World Cup in Germany⁶¹⁵. According to the articles Mr. Kingson was offered a large amount of money (\$300,000) to let in two goals in a game against Czech Republic during that World Cup, however, his wife insisted she does not love him for the money, and so he did not take the bribe.

As becomes apparent when viewing the videos by Emmanuel TV, the intention and reasoning of Mr. Kingson clearly was to show that his wife, who is being called a witch, is not only not guilty of the accusation and insult but is actually a valuable person not only to him as her husband but also to the nation of Ghana. She, after all, is the person who made him refuse the bribe. Reading the newspaper coverage on the Kingson’s case it becomes quite clear that the interest lies in reporting mainly on three things: firstly, speculating on Mr. Kingson’s alleged “impotence”, secondly, elaborations on the witchcraft accusation—which, as discussed below, cannot be concluded from the Emmanuel TV video material on her confession as the word *witch* is not mentioned a single time—, and thirdly, the bribe situation and its potentiality as a scandal for Ghanaian football.

⁶¹³ Gh.Web. 2012, September 7.

⁶¹⁴ PeaceFM 2012, September 7.

⁶¹⁵ cf. Gh.Web. 2012, September 13; Gh.Today 2012, September 14; Gh.MMA 2013, July 5. Note that article Gh.MMA 2013, July 5 was published July 5th 2013, trying to warm up the story 10 months later.

The Case as Reported by Emmanuel TV

The two videos mentioned before are accessible via YouTube and document both visits of the Kingsons to the Synagogue Church of All Nations, i.e. the deliverance of Mrs. Kingson and the clarifications made by Kingson addressed to Ghanaian media. Both videos were produced by Emmanuel TV, however, they were uploaded to different YouTube channels. One video is 9:02 minutes long, it is entitled “Goalkeeper Richard Kingson & Wife Testify”⁶¹⁶ and was published October 1st 2013 by the official YouTube channel of Emmanuel TV⁶¹⁷. The second video featuring the case is entitled “DELIVERANCE of Wife of the Former Goalkeeper of the Ghanaian National Team”⁶¹⁸, it is 16:21 minutes long and was published September 9th 2012 by a YouTube user called *Prophet TB Joshua*⁶¹⁹, an unofficial T.B. Joshua YouTube channel that is managed by his “fans” from the USA youth ministry of the Good News Church⁶²⁰.

The events narrated in the videos can be put into two parts, one which focuses on the “deliverance” of Mrs. Christabell Kingson that happened September 2nd 2012 (minutes 0:06-0:43)⁶²¹, and a second part which shows the aftermath of Mrs. Kingson’s deliverance on September 9th 2012 (minutes 0:44-16:01). There are a number of points where the video differs from what was reported on the media. The most striking is that the footage does not allow to conclude that Mrs. Kingson was referred to as “witch” during the first part of the videos. Only later, when the couple returned the notion was brought up by T.B. Joshua who dismissed it as defamation by the media; Mr. Kingson again picks up on the notion “witch”, and defends his wife trying to fight off the stigma. A second point is that in none of the articles was correct mentioning of who actually conducted the deliverance. While most articles suggest that T.B. Joshua did it, the videos show that, in fact, *Wiseman Christopher*⁶²² performed the initial deliverance, driving out the ‘evil spirit’. The footage on the deliverance is short (minutes 0:06–0:43), but it allows to see by whom the act is conducted and that it takes place in the Church in front of an audience and in the presence of Mr. Kingson.

At this point, one should briefly add a note to the concept of *Wisemen*. This differs T.B. Joshua’s ministry from other Pentecostals in so far as that the concept seems nowhere else to be found—thus making it a theological speciality, or even uniqueness, of T.B. Joshua. According to the Synagogue Church of All Nations and in reference to Mark 3¹²⁻¹⁸ and Matthew 28¹⁶⁻²⁰, there are “evangelists from all over the world and from all walks of life” who are now “being mentored by Prophet T.B. Joshua at The SCOAN, learning to march with God before being released to march for Him.” There are five men that “have received Divine

⁶¹⁶ Title of video: “Goalkeeper Richard Kingson & Wife Testify”, published on channel “Emmanuel TV” [official YouTube channel] (shorter version), published October 1st 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L65T6b3ktho>, accessed March 3rd 2016.

⁶¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/user/scoanvideos/about>, accessed March 3rd 2016.

⁶¹⁸ Title of video: “DELIVERANCE of Wife of the Former Goalkeeper of the Ghanaian National Team”, published on channel “Prophet TB Joshua” [unofficial YouTube Channel] (longer version) YouTube, published September 9th 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REkSDlmejfw>, accessed March 10th 2016.

⁶¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/user/ProphetTBJoshua/about>, accessed March 3rd 2016.

⁶²⁰ <http://www.hungrygeneration.net/about/>, accessed March 3rd 2016

⁶²¹ The time indicated here and in the following, unless stated differently, reflects the longer version of the video: “DELIVERANCE of Wife of the Former Goalkeeper of the Ghanaian National Team.” I shall make use of the longer version and indicate where I use the shorter one.

⁶²² The notion of *Wiseman* frequently occurs in the Synagogue Church of All Nations. See discussion below.

anointing and joined T.B. Joshua in ministering to the people every week at the SCOAN, used by God to prophesy, heal and deliver people.” The Wisemen mentioned on the website are Wiseman John Chi Meh from Cameroon, Wiseman Racine Bousso from Senegal, Wiseman Daniel Emelandu from Nigeria, and Wiseman Harry from Greece, and Wiseman Christopher Orji from Nigeria.⁶²³ It should be mentioned at this point that during the last couple of years there are indicators of disagreement over, or, at least, a reevaluation of the concept of Wisemen in the Synagogue Church of All Nations. Two indicators point at this: first, since August 2013 Wiseman John Chin Meh has no longer ministered for the SCOAN⁶²⁴, and secondly, probably by August 2015 the information on what is a Wiseman was taken off the official website of the Synagogue Church of All Nations⁶²⁵. Official information on the concept of Wisemen as cited above, could only be retrieved by using the *Wayback Machine*⁶²⁶, a digital archive of the World Wide Web which allows the researcher to go back to a certain date in the history of the official SCOAN website.

The Deliverance

The inquiry, which usually precedes the prayers and invocations of a deliverance at the Synagogue Church of All Nations, begins with the attempt of the Pastor, prophet or, in this case, Wiseman to identify the entity which has caused harm to the people concerned. Wiseman Christopher who stands facing Mrs. Kingson in front of the Church audience asks a question in a very sharp tone into his microphone: “Speak! Who are you in this body?” Mrs. Kingson, swaying, sweating and heavily breathing, is being held by Wiseman Christopher’s assistants who raise a microphone to her mouth: “I am the spiritual husband.” The second question in deliverances usually aims at identifying the damage that was done by the spiritual entity, i.e. the demon or sometimes the more abstract supernatural power that possesses the individual concerned. His question therefore is: “What have you done to this lady?” Her answer, “I have destroyed her” was not satisfying so he goes on to ask, “How?”. Mrs. Kingson tries again by stating “I’ve destroyed everything about her”, but Wiseman Christopher insists, maintaining the sharp tone in his voice: “What have you destroyed? Mention them!” Now Mrs. Kingson switches perspective and speaks no more about herself but about her husband by admitting: “I have destroyed his future. I don’t want him to study. I don’t want him to pray. I don’t want him to do anything.” The dialogue between Wiseman Christopher and Mrs. Christabell Kingson ends here and after the cut quickly shows a next scene in which Mr. Kingson is asked to identify Mrs. Kingson as his wife. Christopher: “Who is this woman to you?” Mr. Kingson: “She is my wife!” The shorter version of the video adds footage of Mrs. Kingson who walks around uncontrolledly while Wiseman

⁶²³ Information on Wiseman from the official SCOAN website can only be accessed over an archive (*Wayback Machine*, see below), <http://web.archive.org/web/20120225211246/http://www.scoan.org/about/wise-man/>, accessed March 31st 2016.

⁶²⁴ The date of Wiseman John’s leaving is taken from a video recorded during SCOAN service conducted by T.B. Joshua, who comments on the case. Title of video: “Why John Chi is Not Ministering for Now as a Wiseman – SCOAN 18-08-2013”, published on channel “Peter Oghogho”, published August 18th 2013, accessed March 31st 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vaCGWr9YQY>. See also a newspaper article on the same subject, accessed March 14th 2016: <http://www.modernghana.com/news/530177/1/tb-joshuas-wiseman-john-chi-relocates-to-cameroon.html>.

⁶²⁵ The date can only be deduced from the recency of this website, accessed March 14th 2016: <https://tbjoshuawatch.wordpress.com/2015/08/12/the-disintegration-of-scoan-continues-now-the-wisemen-are-gone/>.

⁶²⁶ <http://archive.org/web/>, accessed March 31st 2016.

Christopher shouts: “Now go!” at her. In such an instance, judging from a number of deliverance videos of SCOAN, usually the spiritual entity is addressed, and after having been identified through answering all question asked by the minister, it can be commanded to leave the body. Mrs. Kingson fell, which is another common sign of concluding the deliverance, while Wiseman Christopher speaks: “Thank you, Lord, for her deliverance.” Upon touching her head and speaking “In Jesus Name!” Wiseman Christopher ends the deliverance: “You are free, Madame. Rise up.”

Based on this material the notion of “witch” has not come up, nor have confessions regarding Kingson’s potency and virility—both aspects are claimed by newspapers⁶²⁷. Both videos show the same dialogue during the deliverance, but are also cut at the same moment where it seems Mrs. Kingson was about to continue confessing to spiritual deeds. According to the newspapers and some reader’s comments, the Church service was broadcast live⁶²⁸, so the version at hand might be a heavily edited version. If the term “witch” actually was applied to Mrs. Kingson by Wiseman Christopher, T.B. Joshua or any other authority at SCOAN can only be speculated on. Two readers, who claim to have watched it on TV⁶²⁹ do not refer to witchcraft but to the notion of “spirit”, one even explicitly refutes the notion of witchcraft. Indeed, the concept employed by Mrs. Kingson in the Emmanuel TV deliverance video is “spiritual husband”, not witch. The notion of “spiritual husband” regularly comes up in deliverance videos on Emmanuel TV, especially when marriage problems are concerned. One of the “recurring motifs” of evil, witchcraft, and deliverance in African Pentecostal Churches (Gifford 2014:112) is the “spirit spouse” (114). The idea is that people can enter a spiritual marriage by committing acts of “immortality”, by “receiving gifts from an evil agent”, and by “involvement in African cultural entertainment and dances; inheriting a family priesthood [...], wearing seductive dresses that attract spirit husbands”, and many other acts which are considered immoral regarding sexuality and use of alcohol and drugs. (114f.) According to Daniel K. Olukoya, General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, the

majority [of people] who are visited by spirit husbands and wives are unconscious of what is happening to them. To be precise, more than 90 percent are unconscious victims of this sexual exploitation and abuse. Evil spirits are bent on keeping their victims in the dungeon of ignorance. They do not want their victims to come to the knowledge of the fact that they are attacking them. (Olukoya 2001⁶³⁰)

In this case, the marital problems were identified that Mrs. Kingson, without her knowledge, was spiritually married to a spiritual husband. When she spoke, she spoke as the spirit which possessed her and tried to cause havoc to her marriage by destroying the future of the real, physical husband, and preventing him from studying and praying.

⁶²⁷ Title of article Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5: “Olele Penis Is Dead – Wife Confesses”, article 4. PeaceFM. 2012, September 7 is entitled Richard “Olele’ Kingson Explains His Dead Manhood”, and none of the articles cited here presents the case of the deliverance *without* using the term *witch* to describe Mrs. Kingson.

⁶²⁸ cf. Author *ebenezer nii amu first-quao* (comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b); Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5; PeaceFM 2012, September 7.

⁶²⁹ Author *kobby, Manhattan*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7; *ebenezer nii amu first-quao*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶³⁰ The Googlebooks version of the book does not show page numbers.

The Spiritual Marriage of Mrs. and Mr. Kingson

For people or couples that come to seek prayer or deliverance to get rid of spirit possession, witchcraft or disease, illness and ailment, it is required to give a testimony at SCOAN to reconfirm that prayer or deliverance was effective. Usually a person with a spiritual or physical problem is healed or delivered during one session and at the end of the session seals the act by exclaiming: “Jesus Christ has saved me!” Sometimes people are invited again after a couple of days or weeks to talk about their story again. So did wife and husband Kingson, who came back to SCOAN one week later. The second part of the two videos focuses on that visit (minutes 0:44-16:01). This time it is T.B. Joshua who comments on the deliverance and testimony, the Kingsons stand before the Church audience, all facing towards the prophet.

The second half of the video begins with T.B. Joshua’s speech, which appears in the form of an admonition addressed to the people who have denounced Mrs. Kingson. He makes clear that the right reaction to a deliverance would be congratulation and not defamation. That is because in T.B. Joshua’s view a deliverance is not an admission of guilt, but something that can happen to anyone, and if, indeed, the case of possession is too grave one would not dare to come to the Church to receive deliverance:

You see, sometime when we see things happen like this instead of us to rejoice with people that receiving this grace, but one thing we must believe, realize: If you know that you have something strange in you, you would not be bold enough to come here. It does show that really what has happened can happen to anyone.

It is, in fact, not only a question of tact and manners to congratulate somebody after a deliverance but also can become a dangerous thing if the deliverance is turned into ridicule; as Joshua submits: “This people of the world, when they see you ... receive freedom, get delivered, they are sad, they want to put more burden into you. You see them writing nonsense ... saying all sorts of thing what has not happened” He continues his speech, and makes undoubtedly clear that these worldly people do not know that they are not fighting against T.B. Joshua or Mrs. and Mr. Kingson but “fighting against God.”

Because we are not fighting the flesh and blood but the spirit being. It is a very dangerous thing when you see someone being delivered and instead of you to congratulate him and rejoice with him, the word on the pages of newspaper write: ‘Heh, this person is this, is a witch, is a demon, is this, is that. Wow, you too you should be ready, [...] you are a demon already. Because yes, you are a demon already, because you protect the demon you are fighting God. So no one fighting God will succeed, you fight God you fight yourself.

This is a typical narrative of T.B. Joshua, in he makes it clear on that those who fight him do not fight the person T.B. Joshua but they are, in fact, fighting God. The mentioning of “witch” gives away that T.B. Joshua must have been informed by Mrs. and Mr. Kingson before. Mr. Kingson’s main concern when he returned was to clarify that his wife, against the statement of many Ghanaian newspapers, is not a witch. The video continues, and Mrs. Kingson is asked by T.B. Joshua how she felt after the deliverance. Her answer is a typical testimony with Biblical reference. After identifying herself as Mrs. Christabell Kingson, she explains how the deliverance made her overcome sleepless nights and nightmares and helped her “feeling okay”. Further she thanked God for delivering her “and putting a new song into our mouths.” (cf. Psalms 40³)

T.B. Joshua in a clever line of reasoning underlines Mrs. Kingson's statement, and interprets the media criticism as the continuation of the demonic attack on their marriage. He argues:

Thank you. You listen to that? [pointing the audience towards Mrs. Kingson's speech] The purpose of demon is to destroy this marriage, is to separate this marriage. That is why when they were delivered the demon inside people all over the world also are writing nonsense in order to destroy the marriage. But demon is a liar. [people in the background speak 'Amen!'] Glory be to God!

In a similar way also the husband makes his testimony, beginning with a "Praise the Lord! Emmanuel!"⁶³¹, he supports the view of his wife in that her deliverance was successful, they are doing well, adding that the "marriage is now perfect." T.B. Joshua, in the same line of reasoning, summarizes and replies that these people came here for deliverance and they received it. While people outside of the Church tried to attack the marriage through defamation and slander, they did not achieve anything but showed themselves to be, in reality, those who are possessed by a demon, or "Satan" as he says in his reply: "What else again Satan is saying now there? What can anybody do to separate this marriage? They say just words."

The testimony could end at this point but Mr. Kingson is eager to reconfirm the spiritual condition of his wife. Interrupting T.B. Joshua's closing remarks to the testimony, he announces that he wants to clarify something "all Ghanaians, especially the media." Mr. Kingson refers to an incident of attempted bribery during World Cup 2006—a "top secret" which Mr. Kingson, in his own words: "... I have hide it under my pillow, and today I just want to reveal it to the Ghanaians, especially the media." Mr. Kingson, in his function as goalkeeper of the Ghanaian national team, was offered \$ 300,000 if he allows the team to lose 2-0 against Czech Republic whom they were to meet in the following match. He was "confused" over the bribe because if they win against Czech Republic they receive \$ 8,000, compared to the bribe of \$ 300,000. His wife whom he immediately consulted made clear that she loves him irrespective of his money and in this way, "... took a shame that is coming to Ghanaians", indeed, it "was this woman who delivered me and delivered Ghana from it." She has been a real blessing to him, and so it was "... very painful when they called my wife a witch."

T.B. Joshua, returning to his closing remarks, assured Mr. Kingson that this is not against his person, but against T.B. Joshua and therefore God himself. Reminding Mr. Kingson that "... you know what people say about me [in Ghana]", therefore "I should be a role-model to you." What those people say might be formally addressed to Mr. Kingson in the way that, despite his merit and service to the nation as national goalkeeper, they write "in a negative way", but actually they are "talking against me [T.B. Joshua]." T.B. Joshua makes clear that he is aware of the attacks addressed to him by Ghanaian (as well as Nigerian) media that is going on for a decade, he claims to "... have a record if it" both in Ghana and in Nigeria. But he is also aware that this is actually not an attack on his person but on God.

⁶³¹ The interjection "Emmanuel" is regularly used by "followers and admirers" of T.B. Joshua, who, in fact, "instructs" them to use it to refer to him and to "greet one another" with the word. The word, T.B. Joshua argues, is "his own way of generating an alternative to the often used 'Halleluiah' by many other Pentecostal or Christian organisations." (Ukah 2015:6)

And you don't fight pastor or prophet and win. You cannot win because a prophet is a prophet of God. [audience speaks: "Amen!"] You cannot win if you are fighting a prophet, you can never win. [audience applauds] You can never win. It is not possible unless prophet is not of God. If a prophet is of God, you can never win.

So the conclusion is clear: if you "write" about T.B. Joshua in a "negative way" you are "fighting against God".

Readers' Discussion

The main interest of this thesis lies in exploring what people write about witchcraft and how they conceptualize it. Since there is disagreement between how the case is presented in Ghanaian media and in Emmanuel TV, it seems very valuable at this point to pursue the readers' view and thus reconstruct a third perspective. As mentioned in the beginning of this part there are 343 comments in total. The main focus, of course, rests on the question how people react to the idea that Mrs. Kingson is a witch, how they conceptualize it, and what concepts they employ to describe witchcraft. I shall begin by investigating what are the important themes running through the reader's texts.

Looking from a wide angle, the material shows the usual topics which, resonate with the observations made above, and are thus to be expected to occur in this case of witch belief too:

Criticizing Witch Belief

I can maintain that, thus far, no discussion on witchcraft goes without people challenging witch belief with a reoccurring set of arguments. This case is no exception. The rejection of people to accept witchcraft belief is most commonly imbedded in the following arguments:

Witchcraft, juju, and all these bullshit. When is black Africa going to wake up, discard these beliefs and embark on a journey of scientific and technological research to usher in the much needed development? Even our so-called leaders, national footballers, etc. believe in these backward mentality.⁶³²

STUPID SUPERSTITIONS AND BELIEFS THIS IS THE REASON AFRICAN IS BEHIND, STUPID SUPERSTITIONS AND BELIEFS. IF OUR FUTURE IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN THIS BULLSHIT STUFF HOW CAN WE PROGRESS.⁶³³

These statements are very typical of the material in that people regularly contrast witchcraft with notions of progress, future, science and modernity. Another reoccurring notion is that witchcraft is not only detrimental to society but also a false belief:

The 21st century is knowledge century and it appalls me that my country men are employing all their energies into the worship serpents, false gods and whatever they can think of. Witchcraft will not clean our clogged up gutters ad destroy killer mosquitoes. We need to start making good use of our brains!⁶³⁴

Asking who is the main benefactor of witch belief, people readily refer to pastors who are exploiting families with the faith and destroying them. As one can see below, this allegation is also raised towards T.B. Joshua:

⁶³² Author *DRG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶³³ Author *MARTIAN*, *ibid*.

⁶³⁴ Author *Ada Boy*, *ibid*.

These Pastors in Ghana are really destroying families. We need to wake up. Sisters donot talk, brothers donot talk, sons donot talk to their mothers and fathers, daughters the same, uncles, wives, husbands etc. Sad indeed.⁶³⁵

In a similar way people very often criticize not only that people “still” deal with witchcraft, but that Ghanaian newspapers bring these stories again and again; sometimes even exaggerating or inventing parts of a narrative to make it seem even more scandalous, like in this case. The following statements illustrate the attitude of some readers concerning sensationalism addressed at the supernatural:

So you also believe this sensationalism and nonsense? we are in trouble. Where are the devils and on which planet are they residing? i want to know so i will go up to them for eviction.⁶³⁶

GHANAIS ALWAYS BELIEVING IN STUPIDITIE [stupidity] A silly, senseless and ridiculous declaration, watch out if the lady is not going insane. As Ghanaians are fans of stupidities and sensationalism the press have found an easy tube to sell their ridiculous and mischievous stories to them. How ridiculous Ghanaians are when it comes to stories of this nature?⁶³⁷

Jx watched it on tv.de media lied to us de wife is not a witch but rather she was possessed by a spirit but not herself as a witch. peace fm especially should be factual n stop lying to us. [...]⁶³⁸

Passing the Blame

There are a multitude of ways in which the topic is picked up on by readers. One general desire which floats about any discussion on witchcraft and other seemingly detrimental religious and cultural notions and practices, however, appears to be that of explaining why these notions and practices still exist in contemporary Ghana. It is a typical reaction by readers to find a ‘tribe’ or a nation and declare it culturally more prone to witch belief. In this way, this topic also occurs frequently in the material, where people make out a distinctive ‘tribe’ to be culturally responsible for witch belief in Ghana. In this situation, one finds evidence for both ‘tribe’ and nation, which means Akan vs Ewe and Nigeria vs Ghana.

Similar to what is discussed above, the ‘tribal’ dispute is mostly found between Ewe and Akan ‘tribes’ but may also involve the Ga.

Is this woman a Ga or An Akan...? This are the people who like be-witching people even their own children.⁶³⁹

WHY ARE THE Gas like that... practising witchcraft will not help them... even the ashantis are better.⁶⁴⁰

These are typical examples of passing the blame of witch belief to another ‘tribe’. The following quotations illustrate a similar situation which is prominently found in the material: a dispute between Nigeria and Ghana. Only that in this case the conflict is not because of witch belief but because of T.B. Joshua, who stands accused to be a bad Pastor.

⁶³⁵ Author *Sana*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7.

⁶³⁶ Author *ABU*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶³⁷ *ibid.*

⁶³⁸ Author *kobby, Manhattan*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7.

⁶³⁹ Author *richard kings*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶⁴⁰ Author *akon*, *ibid.*

Sh**tgerians are like parasites, nobody wants them on their soil. They're known to be yahooze, 419 frausters, armed robbers, occultists, corrupt. Even their churches a full of kalabule pastors, like this conman Tb Joshua.⁶⁴¹

Thus T.B. Joshua is placed into context with fraud, and thus becomes the epitome of a Nigerian fraudster operating in Ghana⁶⁴². The response to the case shows the typical defense from the Nigerian side:

Only power generate in Lagos alone is more that what you fools are have. Please visit Nigeria and you fools will know that all what your sub-standard newspapers and senseless television stations are reporting about Nigeria is not true. Only Mr. Jimoh Ibrahim owner of Energy Bank financed your ruling party to power. T.B Joshua is not Wayome or cocaine Kings you people have in Ghana.⁶⁴³

The general stereotype this exchange is based on, on the Ghanaian side is: Nigerians are fraudsters, and on the Nigerian side is: the country of Ghana and its commodities of modernity are less developed than in Nigeria.

T.B Joshua

One of the topics in the sample which is discussed most intensively is T.B. Joshua. One can easily and safely deduce from these comments that the controversy around his character is not only a fact in the Nigerian public and religious areas, as Ukah argues (see part above) but also Ghanaian readers show a wide range of reactions; from loyal support to very negative rejection.

Ranging from *unspecified dismissal* to *suspicion of magical or psychological deceit*, people, in a number of ways, reject T.B. Joshua and his ministry. Especially striking are those examples where people speculate on T.B. Joshua to manipulate people with hypnosis or the conjuring up of spirits:

THE END TIME IS TRUELY NEAR ... i can strongly feel that this wife went to this pastor for consultation, and he probably charmed her to say things that she is not aware of. only God knows the truth.⁶⁴⁴

Rubbish, TB Joshua is a fake This is false. Ask how does one explain the woman's confession? TB Joshua has the ability to hypnotize people and make them say anything as confession. That is what has happened to this woman. Richard Kingston is not the only footballer to be dropped by his nation or club after World Cup and international competitions. This is rubbish and he is only in to benefit from Kingston's money. The families are wasting their time by becoming divided on this. The woman is innocent and has been used by the fake man of God for his own benefit.⁶⁴⁵

PEOPLE, BE VERY VERY CAREFUL WITH TB JOSHUA WHO USES HYPNOTISM TO MANIPULATE VULNERABLE WOMEN TO SPEW UNTRUTH. THIS MAN IS NOT A MAN OF GOD. HE IS THE DEVIL INCARNATE AND A FAMILY DESTROYER. BEWARE.⁶⁴⁶

T.B. JOSHUA is a witch ... The things he's doing are not of God. Hypnotizing people to say things they have no clue just to make he T.B. Joshua look great equals to WITCHCRAFTCY.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴¹ Author *Jenny*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

⁶⁴² As I mention above, 419 is a reference to the Nigerian legal system concerning fraud. The other term *kalabule* is also assumed to be of Nigerian origin and refers to similarly dark affairs (cf. http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/dictionary/dict_k.php, accessed April 4th 2016). Hence the insult kalabule pastors which could be roughly translated into *tricksters*.

⁶⁴³ Author *majid*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

⁶⁴⁴ Author *PRAY HARD*, Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶⁴⁵ Author *Kofi Ata*, Cambridge, UK, *ibid*.

⁶⁴⁶ Author *kofi K*, comment in article Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5.

⁶⁴⁷ Author *POW@*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

A spirit can be caused to knock you out over your pronouncements, make you say something you are not aware of or don't know. If u are a xtian [Christian], read II chronicle 18 about the case of the prophet Macaiah. TB Joshua i believe controls a number of spirits which he can use or apply to glorify himself and his church. Beware of such people who parade as prophets. They are able to conjure temporal solutions or magical wonders to woe you into their fold. That is what he did to Mills. Shun churches that perform wonders. Be prayerful and accept your fate, believing that God is able to lead you through. This generation seek wonders but they ll see none untill the coming of the son of man.⁶⁴⁸

Can an evil spirit enter someone during deliverance? My suspicion is: Either she was a witch or T.B hypnotised her.⁶⁴⁹

On the other hand, there are a number of people who come in defense of T.B. Joshua, pointing out that he is indeed an authentic and powerful Pastor, these are, however, smaller in number.

T B Joshua is a rear [real] man of God, Emmanuel TV is Changing live, Changing nations and Changing the world. Why did Kingson went there if he does not believe the Prophet. Prophet T B Joshua always preach on his personal experience and have never condemn any religion but preach of unity (LET LOVE LEAD) we're not fighting the fresh and blood but the devil, and if delivered, will let you understand that the devil in you was acting not the person. Would Kingson be bold to tell the world this.⁶⁵⁰

Mr. Richard Kingson

Concerning the character of the husband, Mr. Richard Kingson, there are not many references in the discussion. The wife is much more focused on by readers. The role of Mr. Kingson to the readers must be described as rather passive. Only very few authors address him directly with remarks concerning the supposed witchcraft of his wife. The only interesting observation one can draw from the material is that only very few people react and comment on Mr. Kingson's claims about the bribe. In defending his wife in front of the Ghanaian public and especially media, Mr. Kingson claimed that during World Cup 2006 he was offered a bribe of 300,000 \$ if he lost against Czech Republic. Only a handful of commentators actually bothered to respond to this despite the obvious scandal:

\$300,000 bribe ... And you did not tell GFA about this until now? Wait until FIFA gets you cos you have to provide some evidence or FIFA will have your ass.⁶⁵¹

OLELE, YOU REFUSED US\$300,000.00 FOR GHANA? WHY, DON'T YOU SEE OUR LEADERS AND POLITICIANS GRABBING BRIBES, AND KICKBACKS AND AT THE SAME TIME STEALING LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER??? AND HOW DID GHANA REWARD YOU??? SHE DUMPED YOU LIKE TOILET PAPER FOR ALL YOU DID FOR THE COUNTRY. I AM GLAD TB JOSHUA HAS PROPHESED A GOOD COME BACK FOR YOU. IF YOU HAVE TO WORK FOR GHANA AGAIN, THINK OF YOURSELF FIRST, LIKE OUR LEADERS AND POLITICIANS ARE DOING. YOU'VE BEEN BITTEN ONCE ... BE TWICE SHY. A WORD TO THE WISE IS IN THE NORTH.⁶⁵²

Mrs. Christabell Kingson: Husband Spirit or Witchcraft?

The presentation of wife is quite different as it has aroused much more comments, and entails more topics than the character of the husband. There are a number of misogynistic comments that rapidly expand from the case of Mrs. Kingson, who is portrayed by those readers as an ungrateful house-wife, to "all Ghanaian

⁶⁴⁸ Author *someone*, *ibid*.

⁶⁴⁹ Author *Isaac Mensah*, *ibid*.

⁶⁵⁰ Author *ksk*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, September 7.

⁶⁵¹ Author *Tintin*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

⁶⁵² Author *THE UNGRATEFUL COUNTRY???*, *ibid*.

women”⁶⁵³, these comments are, however, few in number and address none of the aspects I am interested in. More important is another point that emerges in discussions on the wife, which is a debate on the question whether what has happened to Mrs. Kingson during her deliverance was a case of witchcraft or spirit possession, which is distinguished in the following way:

The one who presented this article is the person creating confusion not TB Joshua. He said the evil spirit tormenting the family manifested through the wife in the presence of the goalkeeper. after He prayed for both of them but did not cast out any witchcraft as presented. The spirit spoke through her but she is not a witch and TB Joshua never said so. ok you can watch Emmanuel tv and find out on youtube and no what really happened. ok. tnks [thanks] for understanding.⁶⁵⁴

Show a thinking ability before you write NATURALLY, The number of spirits on this planet is more than the humans living on it. And these spirits operates [sic] through human beings, it could be your mother, father, a freind etc to operate against your carrier right from childhood. The demon inside her siad [said] that the guy is her driver she does not know him. MAY GOD PUNISH THE DEVIL. After the delivrance the girl did not realised all what she has said. She later said they are husband and wife. This is the work of the devil.⁶⁵⁵

They are everywhere, pray without ceasing. This woman has done nothing wrong. She was not the one talking BUT the spirit in her. Let Olele also get to the synagogue, we shall hear horrible things from similar spirits living in him. ALL of us are at risk my dear brothers and sisters. Those spirits rule the world. Where did Satan and the agents go when they were hurled from heaven? PRAY WITHOUT CEASING ...⁶⁵⁶

The one speaking through Olele’s wife is the evil spirit. If you are a true Christian you will understand that the Bible says we have Holy Spirit and there is Evil Spirits. Evil spirits speaking people is common in the Bible. If you do not believe that God exists then you do not also believe in the existence of the devil. Richard Kingson was at the Synagogue when the deliverance happened. I am a Ghanaian and I prayed for somebody in Bolgatanga and the person spoke making strange comments. She was delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit. She later became normal.⁶⁵⁷

The spirit world explained ... Evil spirit do not enter anybody during deliverance it is the spirit in the person that manifest’s itself. If you’re not possessed with any spirit then nothing will happen but if you are then the spirit will confess. That was what happened. If you don’t understand the spirit world you cannot interpret.⁶⁵⁸

Such debates sometimes spark off more general discussions on witch belief in Ghana. These are, once more, very small in number but still worthy of being cited in full:

IF SHE IS A WITCH, SHE SHOULD HAVE USED HER POWERS TO STAND BEHIND HIM IN THE GOAL-POST AND PREVENT ANY BALLS FROM HITTING THE BACK OF THE NET. SOME USE THEIRS TO MAKE AIRPLANES AND GO THE MOON AND MARS; OTHERS USE THEIRS TO PLAY WITH PEOPLES ‘BALLS’. ASEM BERBA DABI.” [Trouble will come one day]⁶⁵⁹

One might wonder if this is an intentional allusion to the Crentsil song, i.e. using witchcraft to achieve miraculous but ultimately good things, or if it was more an ironic display of criticizing witch belief. Only a very small number of authors easily admit to believing in witches. The following quote is a very rarely seen admission to belief in the existence of witches: “This is a clear lesson for everybody. we should be very very careful about those who are much closer to us.”⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵³ As for instance author *JOE MOORE* in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7

⁶⁵⁴ Author *Gyimah pls.*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁶⁵⁵ Author *Dominic in Equatorial Guinea*, *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁶ Author *koo Theo*, *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁷ Author *The Israelites*, *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ Author *Kwesi*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 13.

⁶⁵⁹ Author *BRIAN WILLIAMS*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7. Translation Roslyn Mould.

⁶⁶⁰ Author *oboh*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, September 7.

People are in general rather hesitant to admit to the belief. But sometimes the admission lies in the questions they are asking:

Hypocrites. Don't we have witches too in Ghana. If there are no witches in the western world, why all those movies about witches, including Harry porter and others.⁶⁶¹

In response to which another author writes:

HARRY PORTER IS ENTERTAINMENT. IN THE WEST, IT IS CONSIDERED KWAKU ANANSE STORIES, JUST TO ENTERTAIN [entertain] PEOPLE. EVEN LITTLE KIDS IN THE WEST DO NOT BELIEVE IN WITCHES, GOBLINS, FAIRIES AND DWARVES. THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN VAMPIRES EITHER. IT IS ALL FUN AND ENTERTAINMENT. HARRY PORTER IS ONE WOMAN'S CREATIVE IMAGINATION. SHE SAT DOWN AND CREATED ALL THESE STORIES, AND SHE MADE MILLIONS FROM THESE STORIES. YOU THINK PEOPLE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES BELIEVE IN SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARVES OR ALLADIN OR NEMO THE TALKING FISH? NO! THEY DON'T BELIEVE THESE MOVIES. THAT IS WHY THEY ARE CALLED FICTION.⁶⁶²

If indeed, people admit to believing that they are often met with anger and ridicule like the following exchange illustrates:

It is rather unfortunate that the poor woman is being accused of being a witch. The spirit that possessed her was the one who was confessing of doing the damage he or she had incurred on Kingson. I have been in a similar situation where my mother-in-law prevented me from having a child, and then later on brought confusion and disagreement between my husband and myself hence the dissolution of our marriage. Witches can cause a lot of damage to an individual, and until you receive deliverance from these withches [witches] you will never attain anything meaningful in life. Let us pray for this couple so that the good Lord who shower his mercies on them.⁶⁶³

DEAR TOMASIA, YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER ARE STUPID FOR SENDING YOU TO SCHOOL. YOU ARE A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE CALL AN IMBECILE. YOUR ANCESTORS ARE SO STUPID FOR MAKING YOU BELIEVE IN WITCHCRAFT. YOU NEED REDEMPTION AND SALVATION. YOU ARE CURSED AND YOU WILL FOREVER REMAIN IN BONDAGE. KNEEL AND PRAY NOW YOU BLIND SOUL. YOUR MIND HAS BEEN MANIPULATED BY CONMEN WHO HAVE A HIGHER IQ THAN YOURSELF. THERE IS NO WITCHCRAFT, IT IS ONLY PEOPLE OF GHANA WHO BELIEVE ANY UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT IS CAUSED BY WITCHCRAFT. GET THAT DEMON OUT OF YOUR HEAD. STUPID GIRL.⁶⁶⁴

What I would like to capture in this Subchapter is that despite attempts of calming down, mediating, and reinterpreting the accusation of witchcraft on part of T.B. Joshua, the public stigma of the witch label seems to still cause suffering even to the Ghanaian elite (as represented here by Mrs. Kingson). Based on the readers' comments in the previous parts of the Chapter, I argue that there is a lot of dissatisfaction or disapproval with the notion of witchcraft. Some people understand it as 'backwardness' others as metaphor, and again others immediately foist off the notion on another 'tribe', that is 'typically' known for their witch belief. However, the threat still remains and obviously has caused much suffering in the life of Mrs. Kingson and her husband, so much so that both had to return to *SCOAN* to scold and correct Ghanaian media. Further, I would like to maintain that the term 'witch' or 'witchcraft' in my view of the original video material of *SCOAN* was not mentioned a single time, and must therefore be media interpretation. Taking into consideration the

⁶⁶¹ Author *Nana akua, hannover*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7.

⁶⁶² Author *PASTOR OSEI*, *ibid*.

⁶⁶³ Author *Tomasia*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 7.

⁶⁶⁴ Author *OLUWA MOKAYODELE*, *ibid*.

other articles on Mr. Kingson, the speculations on his sex life⁶⁶⁵ and his career that has been in “nosedive”⁶⁶⁶, one might understand this as a display of sensationalism.

3.4.3 Case – Emmanuel Adebayor

This case of witchcraft among popular people in Ghana again regards a football player. This time it is the Togolese Sheyi Emmanuel Adebayor who played for teams like Tottenham Hotspur, Arsenal, Manchester City and Real Madrid (to mention just a few). In 2014 Ghanaian newspapers disseminated reports about Adebayor’s growing problems with his family. According to reliable sources, including his own account of the facts, he has claimed that his family is “doing juju on me”. In addition to that the notion circulated in the media that he has banned his mother from his houses because he held her to be a witch. The case at hand is documented in eight articles to which are added 160 readers’ comments.

The primary source for this case is an interview that was conducted by *Peace FM*, a Ghanaian radio station with news website. The debate was carried out by an interviewer (Dan Kwaku Yeboah) having both Adebayor and one of his sisters (Maggie) on the phone. The sister also raised the complaint that he had neglected the “rest of his six siblings with no money to take care of themselves and their mother.” Linked to the article (PeaceFM. 2014, November 20) one can find an audio file of the radio interview. The audio quality of both Adebayor’s and his sister’s responses is very bad rendering some parts inaudible. Only focusing on those parts of the interview where witchcraft and juju related issues are present, the discussion reads as follows: (section begins 0:24) Yeboah: “[Your sister] claims you have sacked you mum from the house you built for her in Togo on the basis that [Adebayor starts laughing] she is a witch. How true is it?” Adebayor: “How true is it? [...] Obviously, I’m not a Pastor, I’m a footballer so I cannot point out a witch. [...] I never sacked my mum from the house, she decided to leave the house.” (The sound quality decreased to the point where no proper transcription is possible.) Then a female voice interrupts until the connection to Adebayor breaks completely for a moment. Yeboah: “Hello Ade. Hello!” Adebayor: “Yeah?” Yeboah: “She’s made a couple of allegations. When was the last time you got in touch with your mum?” Adebayor: “But how am I going to be in touch with my mum if my mum is the one telling everyone that my work will not go forward, so I will just be on my side and do my thing. [...] They should stop talking, talking, talking, they should stop doing Juju on me, they should leave me alone.” Yeboah ignores the part of the juju allegation for a moment and inquires more about the relation to the sister and allegations against Adebayor claiming he has assumed a negative attitude towards his family. The next section that focuses on juju and witchcraft begins minutes 3:07: Yeboah: “Ade, I believe I heard you right, did you say the family is plotting juju against you?” Adebayor: “She [the sister] is one of them (inaudible) she is there [on the other phone line], ask her.”

⁶⁶⁵ “Olele Penis is Dead – Wife Confesses” (Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5).

⁶⁶⁶ Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

Yeboah: “And how did you know?” Adebayor: “I am afraid if you are sleeping (inaudible) and you are seeing your mum running after you (inaudible) you see as if you are doing something (inaudible). How am I going to know [...]” Yeboah: “Because you are claiming that they are plotting juju against you, that’s why I’m asking.” Adebayor: “Yes, obviously because when I’m sleeping I am seeing them running after me (inaudible).” Yeboah: “And don’t you think there is any way this issue could be solved amicably?” Adebayor: “My friend, I don’t know. First of all, for this thing to resolve I called them about a year ago when my brother died. And I told them ... she’s there, ask her ... and I told them they should stop going to juju people, they should stop going left and right. They should sit down at home and we will solve all our problems. They don’t listen to me so I don’t know how you resolve this now.”

A summary based on the articles⁶⁶⁷ allows to introduce to the fights in the family which preceded the radio interview. The underlying issue seems to be entirely based on money. Claims are made by Adebayor that he bought his sister “a house in East Legon for \$1.2m.”, which she, without the knowledge of Adebayor rented to other people⁶⁶⁸. Or that he bought a car for yet another sister, Lucia, at a value of \$35.000, while she in turn complained in a second radio interview that “Ade made her stop schooling with the promise of taking her abroad but she is now selling tomatoes and pepper at medina market in Accra.”⁶⁶⁹ Adebayor concludes his list of allegations by stating that his family has already begun to negotiate over “all his belongings even though he is still alive. ‘The shared my houses, they shared my cars, they say if he dies this car is for you, this house is for you, can you imagine?’ (PeaceFM. 2014, November 20)

Besides the allegations on side of his family also his elder brother, Kola Adebayor, claimed that “Emmanuel [...] is suffering from a mental problem and needs urgent attention otherwise he will suffer total madness”, and family needed to “check on him very well.” Regarding the claims on Adebayor’s part concerning the involvement of juju his brother, in the same interview, admitted that the mother of the family has indeed seen a Mallam “to pray for Adebayor [Emmanuel].” Kola Adebayor disliked this engagement and accused the Mallam “who claims to be working with [his] mom of thievery”⁶⁷⁰. However, he made clear that he loves his mother “and will do everything to protect her. I know how she suffered for us and sold her everything to take care of us. We are the people who made Adebayor as he is today by the Grace of God.” A stance that is shared by the whole of the family. His brother concluded the interview by stating that Emmanuel is a “big liar [liar] and a big fool. [...] He has no respect ... I think people just respect him because of his money. All what he have is vanity upon vanity. I will never forgive him [...]”⁶⁷¹

The case apparently also caught attention among his peer-group of African football players, so that even the father of then “AC Milan star Sulley Muntari”, Alhaji Muniru Sulley, was interviewed by Ghanaian media and commented: “I personally feel they should have all settled the issues within closed doors without

⁶⁶⁷ PeaceFM. 2014, November 20; Gh.MMA. 2014, November 20a; Gh.MMA. 2014, November 20b; Graphic. 2014, November 22a; Graphic. 2014, November 22b; PeaceFM. 2014, November 22; PeaceFM. 2014, November 27; Gh.Web, 2014, December 3.

⁶⁶⁸ PeaceFM. 2014, November 20.

⁶⁶⁹ Gh.MMA. 2014, November 20a.

⁶⁷⁰ PeaceFM. 2014, November 27.

⁶⁷¹ *ibid.*

it becoming public knowledge, things will be more difficult now. I will like to add that my son Muntari is doing his best to take care of me and whatever issues we have we try to settle like a family, I have never lacked anything, all I can say is Alhamdulillah (Thanks to God).⁶⁷²

On a closing note to the case, I shall cite a Ghanaian journalist of *Ghana MMA*: “It’s funny how people always accuse other people of using juju or witchcraft immediately something goes wrong in the family. This is an African mentality that needs to stop.”⁶⁷³

Readers’ Discussion

A larger portion of the comments to the case are rather benign towards Adebayor’s position and deliver analyses of the situation, very often giving the African context as a reason that allows for such a seemingly exploitative arrangement between family members in the first place. Readers call it “evil mentality” or “African mentality” and repeatedly make it out as a hindrance to the progress of Africa:

Hv [have] you seen any rich people even leaving fortune for their children example Bill Gates who once said his children must fight for their own they shdnt leave [live] in his Glory,,,, Those of you who dnt know what family can do to destroy you shd wait till it happens to you... Africans are jst [just] so much witchhunters sleeping in others glory... Adebayor is not there what will there [they] do? the Bible knows how some parents can go to the extreme thats God said obey your parents like some of us will jst [just] shoot them dead for their unwillingness to help their Children.. Adebayor dnt reply any thg [thing?] frm [from] the media or about your family again if they like they can go to BBC OR CNN, ALJAZEERA do u know how many guys that guy has help so why wont he helped hs [his] own family? UNGRATEFUL FAMILY.⁶⁷⁴

The problem’s that this family is having between them and Adebayor is that they think Adebayor is little to be proud over them, because they knows him from day one since he was born, but that’s wrong, they didn’t make him to succeed is only GOD that makes someone to succeed, they have to respect him no matter what he deserve a respect from this family. Who’s ever wants to solve this problem need to point it blank to them, THEY HAVE TO RESPECT HIM (ADEBAYOR).⁶⁷⁵

It... its sad for my bro ADEBAYOR, BUT what can we do? Africa is not developing just because of this primitive styles of Charracter. Africans are lazy, refused to work, relying on someone. Even bringing all the wealth home, they will never assist you to develop it, they will never support you to live with it, rather think to kill you. EVIL MENTALITY, its for my uncle, my brother, my sister, and so i dont have to do any work, foouoooooilllllls.⁶⁷⁶

He does not take care of you. why should he take care of you. Dont you have your own hands. Its good he has decided to speak. Problem of Africans. One person succeeds everyone else puts dowb [down] their ***barred word*** to eat and to waste. They even want to leave [live] better than you live. At your own sweat. Why give such a woman a platform to speak such ***barred word***. sell wild if you must to survive but leave your sibling alone.⁶⁷⁷

What ***barred word***. What should the guy do. i put my mother in a home he [she] decides to get out of the house and rather curses me. I buy a house my sister rents it without my knowledge. How does one feel in such situation? pls stop accusing the guy cos he is also human and has a heart. It is not cheap money ooo. it is hard work. If the family will not discipline themselves first then i support him but if they change then he can do likewise.⁶⁷⁸

This family needs God’s guidance. Why should they allow the devil into their lives. My candid opinion is that they need to render an unqualified apologize to Adebayor, after that I expect him to accept and reconciled with the family. It is his responsibility to take care of the mother and as for the ‘big men and women’ they should leave their brother alone.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷² Gh.Web, 2014, December 3.

⁶⁷³ Gh.Web, 2014, December 3.

⁶⁷⁴ Author *dd*, *ibid*.

⁶⁷⁵ Author *Wofa Yaw /Denver, Colorado*, *ibid*.

⁶⁷⁶ Author *CONGO KABILA-MAN*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, November 20.

⁶⁷⁷ Author *rose*, *ibid*.

⁶⁷⁸ Author *Yaw*, *ibid*.

⁶⁷⁹ Author *Pastor Steve*, *ibid*.

It gladdens my heart, and I am not surprised, that out of over 30 people that have commented on this story so far only one person sides with the family. What kind of ***barred word*** is this? Instead of begging for help they are threatening the guy. What kind of arrogant sense of entitlement is this? No wonder we still are where we were centuries ago.⁶⁸⁰

If Adebayor is criticized by readers then it is because of the tensions he seemingly allows between him and his mother, including the alleged insult of witchcraft. Still readers generally agree with him on his attitude towards his siblings who are portrayed as unjust and greedy, however, the care for a good relationship to the mother is a popular idea amongst commentators, so that they, for instance, advise Adebayor to reconcile with her or keep on supporting her at least. What is interesting in this part is the fact that readers insist on reconciling Emmanuel with his mother irrespective of the claims she was a witch:

Adebayor is only responsible helping his mother but apart from that he is not responsible for any of his siblings any day anywhere. This are grown folks and they have to be responsible for their own actions. [...] The African mentality waiting for my brother to feed me got to stop that makes people lazy and liability to those successful in family. People must learn to strive, toil their blood to make it and become who they want in life instead of depending one rich person in family to keep them alive. We must grow from our ancient mentality because we are in 21st century. We must learn the modern trend of life instead of waiting to be fed by our rich brothers and sisters. Would you ask your rich brother to have sex with your wife? If the answer is no why do you expect him to feed you as a grown person? No it doesn't work like that. people condemning Adebayor are just like his family they all ***barred word*** parasites and should be ashamed.⁶⁸¹

Never Never neglect your mother who gave birth to you, whether a witch or Juju Woman. She can Cause your death death now. Curses can work on you. To be safe, Love your mother, explain things to her and give her what she wants. She went to all the places because probably Shei neglected her. Shei wife too might be a cause. Many ladies try to corner their men. Listen, a mother can advise the child on whom to marry because they know best. All those commenting, make sure u don't neglect your mother. A trap has been set. If Shei does not reconcile with them right now, the next 5yrs will be very bad. He may fall sick, not because of any juju, but the mouths that are agst [against] him. My bro, don't let not people distract you, as a matter of urgency get to your mother and settle matters for long life.⁶⁸²

this guy could be in his mid 30's now and he still thinks he will attract big clubs. The money is not flowing like it used to be so he has started finding scapegoats. He must go on his knees and beg God to forgive him for calling the woman who sold all her property and belongings to see him and his other sibblings through the hardships of life a witch.⁶⁸³

HUMAN ATTITUDE, WHEN THINGS ARE GOOD WE NEVER SEE WITCHES BUT AS SOON AS LIFE TRIES TO TEST OUR MENTAL STRENGTH WE SUCCUMB AND FAIL WOEFULLY. LIFE IS NOT ALWAYS SMOOTH SAILING, IT IS UPS AND DOWNS, STRAIGHTS AND CURVES, LETS LEARN TO MANOUVRE THROUGH FOR THERE IS ALWAYS LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. MY MOTHER, NO MATTER WHAT MY SWEET MOTHER DOES TO ME 'SHE REMAINS MY LIFE GIVER' AND I WILL CONTINUE TO LOVE HER MORE AND MORE.⁶⁸⁴

How on earth can somebody in this world thinks their mom or family dealing against them juju! In what way, he's just narrow minded dude.⁶⁸⁵

Why accuse your mother of witchcraft against you? How can a highly-westernized fella like you even come up with this thought? You should rather be defending her against such nonsense. You MUST apologize to her and help her the best way you can before she "leaves". If you think you're having a terrible time now, wait till she is no more. That's when you'll wish she were still here, just for you to have a little fun-filled family feud.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁰ Author *Al*, *ibid*.

⁶⁸¹ Author *Prince J.*, *ibid*.

⁶⁸² Author *Nana – Hear the Truth*, *ibid*.

⁶⁸³ Author *Shoe Legger*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, November 27.

⁶⁸⁴ Author *papa gaga*, *ibid*.

⁶⁸⁵ Author *gardo*, *ibid*.

⁶⁸⁶ Author *DIAMOND*, *ibid*.

African Players always have this kind of issues and its baffling n embarrassing. The more civilized societies and European players dont go thru this nonsense and outdated issues. Never heard from an England players saying his parents are witches or trying to bring him down. Is it lack of proper ed education or what?⁶⁸⁷

Additionally, quite a number of readers find it important to advise Adebayor to refrain from belief in and fear of juju, witches and vampires and instead to submit to Christ:

I suggest you give your life to christ mr. Adebayor and stop this witchcraft ***barred word***. The [they] are powerless if only you embrace Jesus Christ as your lord and saviour [savior]. As for your mum please bring her back she deserve your care. Nothing you will ever do to pay her back for all she did for you. Her bringing you to this word is something you can never pay her back.⁶⁸⁸

I do not beleive in JUJU and do not think JUJU can over power the influence the Christ in me. It is only ***barred word*** maroons who believe in JUJU this is why Africans for that matter are 2million years behind development because we have dirty old fashion mentality of some black magic which are always primitive assumptions. I believe in one thing. CHRIST THE KING. NOT SOME JUJU. if Juju exist why can't they use same JUJU to enrich themselves instead of asking for his help. now that is common sense. don't tell me 1+1 = 3 because your analyses lack basic common sense. Juju does not exist period.⁶⁸⁹

Africans and property and juju. Aden. The boy is working hard to earn a living, and then you have some lazy people who just want to inherit property without work. It seems to be in every family. And then when you wise and say no, they say you are wicked. Well, so be it. He wised up, he is not wicked. How long can one keep splashing money on lazy folks. They hate to work, but love to enjoy life. Life doesn't work that way. Ecclesiastes 3:13, "For people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor for these are gifts from God." It didn't say for people should let others enjoy for them. If you want yours, go and work for it. Adebayor, my advice to you is that stay in church and be prayerful especially knowing that your family members love the black magic power aka juju. God is the Supreme power, so stick with Him and nothing they do to you will work. God bless.⁶⁹⁰

ADEBAYO INVEST IN SHARES AND TREASURY BILLS, IF YOU SHOULD RETIRE NOW NO FAMILY MEMBER WILL CARE FOR YOU. SO THEY HATE U. YHEY [They] ONLY LOVE YOUR MONEY. DO INSURANCE POLICY FOR YOUR CHILDREN. INSURE YOUR LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST AND STOP THE FEAR OF JUJU.⁶⁹¹

Hmmm shamful. This is what we know as africans. Its a pity when all family memebbers rely on just one person for support when we can work and sort ourselves out. No wonder prostitution and crime is on the increase. Its all becoss of these pressures. God save us all from vile family members. Adebayor forget about these witches and vampires. Be prayerful.⁶⁹²

These two comments need to be mentioned as they hint at a common place that can be found in the entire material: if it comes to witchcraft accusation there must be a Pastor in the background who orchestrates the same:

Pastors and juju men are behind the confusion in Sheyi Adebayors family we have female soccer let Maggie also register and play women soccer. They are a disgrace to the family always looking into the private affairs of Sheyi including his wallet no amount of money can satisfy them. It's a shame.⁶⁹³

Pull the string closer and you'll find out that it was a so called man of God who told him that his mother is a witch. That's what most of them do to destroy families and milk the believers. I strongly agree that he apologizes to his mother immediately.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁸⁷ Author *DIEGO*, comment in article Gh.Web, 2014, December 3.

⁶⁸⁸ Author *Mr. Sylvester*, comment in PeaceFM. 2014, November 20.

⁶⁸⁹ Author *To the deaf*, *ibid*.

⁶⁹⁰ Author *I KNEW IT*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, November 20.

⁶⁹¹ Author *KAKA*, *ibid*.

⁶⁹² Author *vampires not family*, *ibid*.

⁶⁹³ Author *Zanu*, *ibid*.

⁶⁹⁴ Author *apetupre-usa*, comment in article Gh.Web, 2014, December 3.

The noteworthy thing about this case lies in the use of the typical elements of witchcraft accusation which I have rarely found in such concentration in the sample. There is the idea of *one's mother predicting one will not advance in one's work*, the notion of *seeing one's mother in a dream chasing after one*, and the claim of *family doing juju against one*. As discussed above, these notions show in the material at other places, as for instance, in the revelation of witchcraft in a dream⁶⁹⁵, as well as in the idea of making the wife, mother or grandmother responsible for problems in one's career⁶⁹⁶. However, the case of Emmanuel Adebayor, for the first time in the sample, shows all these notions densely combined. The footballer responded to the direct question of the interviewer whether his mother is a witch, he responded that he was not a Pastor, which shows that in some way Adebayor shuns the direct assertion. The other implications, however, are very clear and thus the reader is led to conclude that he does hold his mother for a witch, and the family equally accountable for the juju that is done on him. At this point I would like to stress again, that when I embarked on this study I had expected to find many more examples like these. As I discuss in the next part, the accusation of family members for witchcraft does exist, however, in my collection this case entails the richest discussion of such phenomena.

3.5 Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam

There are some accounts in the sample where witchcraft and sports meet, this entirely regards football. In most of such cases, people employ magic to win a certain game or to boost or destroy a certain career of a player. There is Michael Essien, Ghanaian football player, who was ruled out of playing for the World Cup 2010 due to a knee injury he could not recover from, and which was attributed to his father who supposedly bewitched him⁶⁹⁷. Then there is former locally and internationally successful Ghanaian football player Nii Odartey Lamptey who in an interview with a British football magazine claimed that his "local nursery club" (where his career began) bewitched him too. Apparently, they "hired witch doctors to punish him for deserting them to Europe" early in his career when he "sneaked out of [Ghana]" to sign a contract with a European football club.⁶⁹⁸ Apart from this newspapers regularly feature stories where witch-doctors predict wins and losses, like in a case where a 35-year-old witch-doctor predicted Botswana's win over Ghana in a match January 24th 2012⁶⁹⁹. Less striking examples of the use of magical concepts in football is the habit of calling coaches *witch-doctors* when they are successful, like in the case of French football coach, Philippe

⁶⁹⁵ cf. "Woman lynched for denying she is a witch" (MyJoy. 2010, August 14). The revelation of witchcraft in dreams is "part of a stock of indigenous ideas about dream interpretation" (Meyer 1999:195), and is easily found in stories on witchcraft accusation. My first interview in Gambaga has brought this to light immediately as I explain in the introduction. See also Adinkrah 2015:59; for a more general discussion on the connection of *nightmares* and *witchcraft*. Regarding the psychological basis and interpretation of the connection in folklore see Davies 2003).

⁶⁹⁶ cf. "40-year-old arrested for killing grandmother" (Gh.Web. 2013, June 30); also see the case of Mr. Kingson, and the case regarding the Ghanaian football player, Michael Essien in the following part.

⁶⁹⁷ Gh.Web. 2010, June 2.

⁶⁹⁸ Gh.Web. 2009, July 3.

⁶⁹⁹ Gh.Web. 2012, January 24.

Troussier, who received the title “le Sorcier Blanc”, the white witch doctor, in his years in Africa⁷⁰⁰. Or Claude Le Roy, also referred to as white witch-doctor “due to his ability to conjure up unexpected success”⁷⁰¹.

Witchcraft related events in football, however, are not always to be taken lightly like the latter. During the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations Ghanaian coach and former Serbian football player, Goran Stevanovic, claimed that “some of his players turned on each other using witchcraft [...]”⁷⁰² He said: “We all need to help in changing some players’ mentality about using ‘black power’ to destroy themselves, and also make sure we instill discipline and respect for each other [...]”⁷⁰³ The incident was picked up by media with mixed feelings. Some journalists were not surprised to read that “the Ghana national soccer team’s coach in his assessment of Ghana’s poor performance at the just-ended 2012 Africa Cup of Nations attributed the alleged use of witchcraft by some players.” The author states he knows about players “embracing these primitive practices in modern sports” which consequently hinders the progress of football in Ghana and in Africa in general by a “lack of focus, consistency, and effective planning.”⁷⁰⁴ Other journalists are much more concerned with such rumors which are a drawback for the Ghana Black Stars (the national football team) on their way to the needed improvement: “The need to re-energize the Black Stars brand is most important because sponsors are quite careful not to associate their brand with a bunch of people who esteem black magic or witchcraft over hard work and discipline.”⁷⁰⁵ The accusation by coach Stevanovic has continued to occupy newspapers as well as fans. Some of the latter group have even been “calling for his [Stevanovic’s] head” following the poor performance of his players and the subsequent “allegations of witchcraft he had since made against members of the Ghana squad.”⁷⁰⁶

Consequently, it is especially around the times of international cups like the World Cup or the African Cup of Nations journalists and columnists agree that African football is full of references to magic and witchcraft.

In Ghana, there are those who believe that when it comes to the game of football there are other forces at play other than the players, which influence the result of the games. The pundits refer to teams consulting witchdoctors who perform special spells and magic to ensure a specific outcome of the games. Magic or ‘Juju’ is an age-old belief passed on from generation to generation and has been central, according to the pundits, to football in Ghana for a very long time.⁷⁰⁷

Stories circulate of the supposed success of witch-doctors magically changing the fate of a match or, at times, not doing so and not helping the team who called upon their magical abilities when the fees do not meet. Albeit in a casual manner and conversational tone, one article reports of a “witch-doctor from the

⁷⁰⁰ Gh.Web. 2010, June 22; Mod.Gh. 2014, July 27; Graphic. 2014, December 23.

⁷⁰¹ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-soccer-nations-congo-idUKKBN0L40TU20150131>, accessed April 12th 2016; PeaceFM. 2012, October 26.

⁷⁰² Gh.Web. 2012, February 25.

⁷⁰³ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ Gh.Web. 2012, February 29b.

⁷⁰⁵ Gh.Web. 2012, February 28.

⁷⁰⁶ Gh.Web. 2012, February 29a. Concerning the witchcraft accusation by Stevanovic see also: Gh.Web. 2012, March 3 and Gh.Web. 2012, June 8.

⁷⁰⁷ Gh.Web. 2013, July 15.

suburbs of one of our large cities” who was called to magically support one of the teams. Unfortunately, the game was won by the other team so the squad who ordered help from the witch-doctor went to see him for a “refund”. However, the witch-doctor responded with his own complaint that they had not paid the fee as agreed upon before. He cursed them so that they continued losing until they were able to pay back the fee which by then had increased many times over.⁷⁰⁸

Entertaining an audience with stories like these, in view of the occasion of coming football events, does not belie the critical attitude which is kept by some of the journalists, columnists and commentators reacting upon the stories. One journalist writes: “As the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) gets underway in South Africa, it is pertinent to critically examine the role of witchcraft in African football.”⁷⁰⁹ In his view many Africans believe in “magical abracadabra” and not only rely on “the importance of coaching and technical skills, talent, training and team spirit [...]” Some players as well as team official consult “witch-doctors and spiritualists” before the tournaments and by equipping themselves with “charms or muti”⁷¹⁰ hope to win. But if these witchcraft spells are in fact potent, the same author inquires, “why is it that an African team has never won the world cup?” No matter if witchdoctor, Sangoma, Pastor or prophet, they all should first precisely predict the outcome of the next matches and thus prove their ability. The author finds, such a challenge is important “in order to get people across the region to abandon this superstitious belief.” Charlatans and their exploitation of the football game needs to stop, as “Thousands of witchdoctors ... operate across African” and “too much money is spent in consulting and contracting them by sport officials.” The author closes by stating that the money could be better used to improve “training techniques and hiring good coaches and players.” In contrast to the seeming aspect of entertainment the author believes: “Accusation of witchcraft are undermining team spirit and solidarity. It is causing division and confusion among players.”⁷¹¹

The following case of Kwaku Bonsam and the claim he made during World Cup 2014 is in many points exemplary of the last authors display of the intervention of witch-doctors into the game of football.

Nana Kwaku Bonsam

Among the recent generations of indigenous priests in Ghana Nana Kwaku Bonsam, born Stephen Osei Mensah, has achieved and maintains the closest and most stable media attention. (cf. Nrenzah 2015:120)⁷¹² Situated in “modern post-Damuah development,”⁷¹³ where the emergence of a “new form of charismatic Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana” has lost “lots of indigenous religious features”, the new form of Traditional African Religion exemplified by Bonsam shows the “resilient nature of indigenous religions”.

⁷⁰⁸ Gh.Web. 2013, July 15.

⁷⁰⁹ Gh.MMA. 2013, February 6.

⁷¹⁰ *Muthi* is a Xhosa word for *witchcraft* or *medicine*, cf. Ashforth 2005.

⁷¹¹ Gh.MMA. 2013, February 6.

⁷¹² Here Bonsam is referred to as “arguably the most important protagonist of this new Ghanaian religious development.”

⁷¹³ Osofo Okomfo Damuah, “a disrobed Catholic priest and founder of Afrikania” combined elements of the Christian religion with Traditional African Religion, which can be seen, for instance in his name (Osofo, “a title for Christian priests”, and Komfo, “a title for traditional priests/priestesses”). (Nrenzah 2015:22; cf. de Witte 2005)

(Nrenzah 2015:114) Figures like Bonsam, unlike Damuah, changed the perspective to “look inwards to the indigenous religions themselves” (Nrenzah 2015:116)—a bold and at the same time conflict provoking attitude that not only reflects in Bonsam’s Christian and Islamic Ghanaian environment but also in his own family (see below). However, once convinced by the role he understands he has to play, it is perhaps this intransigency in his attitude that made Bonsam’s project so successful. In his own words he argues:

Ghana is plagued with both spiritual and physical problems because we have left the worship of our forefathers. For Ghana to develop like China and Japan we need to go back to our indigenous worship; this is because these two countries are developed without help of the West because they dwell on the religion of their fathers. (Nrenzah 2015:124f.)

And to clearly state the expense of his project, “[...] my aim is to spread IR [indigenous religion] to the world.” (Nrenzah 2015:125) His spiritual name reflects the controversy around his personality. Nana “is the title of reverence that prefixes the name of a god, a chief, a priest, an elder or an important personality in Akan society.” In case of Kwaku Bonsam the title refers to his function as a priest who serves a deity. The name Kwaku refers to his gender (male) and the day of the week he was born (Wednesday), and the name Bonsam is the “Akan Christian term for Satan”, which, in point of fact, “created a stir when he emerged on the national religious scene in 2008 with the proclamation that he would champion a return to the practice of the indigenous religion in Ghana.” (Nrenzah 2015:124) Such far-reaching claims can perhaps be understood as bold response to the provocation of a radio host who asked why “in a time when indigenous religion was no longer in vogue and had lost its relevance” Kwaku Bonsam would come on the show. (Nrenzah 2015:125) Bonsam’s response was a clear testimony for Traditional African Religions, as he was not introducing something new but going back to “the religion of my forefathers.” (Nrenzah 2015:125) This apparently “set the tone for the clashes between Kwaku Bonsam and agents of Christianity in the years to come.” In a country where Christianity and Islam both have a powerful and far-reaching arm in society, the worship of indigenous gods, together with such bold claims of their potency, a name that is linked to “Satan”, and the fact that his project does not stop at the boundaries of other religions, are not easily overlooked, and have, understandably “bolstered his charisma.” (Nrenzah 2015:125) This has been given a boost which radiated into the “indigenous religious landscape” where other such individuals “felt encouraged to publicize their credentials and activities from this time on.” (Nrenzah 2015:125)

Bonsam, himself from an Adventist background, highlights an incident in mid 2006 as the beginning of his conversion narrative. As a reaction to him helping a stranger in dire need to the hospital and paying his doctor’s bills, Bonsam was invited to the North of Ghana by the father of that stranger. He was also given an effigy as a present which he brought back home. After some time Bonsam began to hear strange noises coming from that effigy. Afraid of their source he brought the item to a Pastor who prayed over it and burned it thereafter. Surprisingly, Bonsam found it back again soon after. Throwing it away, and even trying to bring it back to the North proved to be unsuccessful. However, it was in the North where he learned that the man who gave him the effigy (and who meanwhile had died) was an indigenous priest. According to the tradition he had to keep the effigy, and he was told that “when the time comes” the effigy will tell him what to do.

One day after these incidents he met group a priests and priestesses who were dancing on the street. And it was there that it came over him, as he “suddenly became possessed and started dancing.” In that state of trance he lost himself and, as he was later told, “performed magical feats like conjuring up money, clothes and food.” He had not control over his powers and did not know how this had happened to him but over time he came into contact with “deities from different sections of Ghana”, and these gods started to train him “in the art of the priestly job”, as “[t]hey revealed herbs for healing diseases and granted [him] the ‘eye’ for seeing and talking to spirits.” This also changed the way he related to people as it made him “more humble and graceful.” (Nrenzah 2015:127f.)

Bonsam’s native environment did not welcome his transformation at first, as, for instance his mother argued: “In the beginning I could not bring myself even close to tolerating the whole idea. [...] I am an Adventist ... I am a Christian. So I asked myself ‘why should my son be a priest?’” However, other family members developed a different attitude, so that his aunt eventually even became his initial spokesperson: “Anytime he became possessed, I could communicate with the gods in his behalf as he was unaware of himself or what he says in that state. Also, since none of the family was ready to worship deities, I readily took up that task to support him.” So his environment began to “loosen up” and grew more accepting of his new status so that over a narrative of revelation by a deity, Bonsam’s call to priesthood finally was legitimized and authenticated. (Nrenzah 2015:129ff.)

His first public appearance was on radio, which was apparently also revealed to him as “an instruction from gods”, and the confidence he drew from this allowed him to bring to public attention the topic of indigenous religion; “a religion that is still shrouded in secrecy in Ghana.” Despite these obstacles in popularity, Bonsam came out bold and determined as he made clear: “I, Nana Kwaku Bonsam, came up with the idea of advertising my religious product and I was not afraid at all, I came out boldly. [...] So when I was coming I made up my mind that if even I will have to die for the faith of my ancestors to come alive, I am prepared to die because I knew Kofi oo Kofi would never fail me.” To “inaugurate his mission” radio became his “main mode of public outreach”. This has been extended in space and media so that today Bonsam follows a “globalizing agenda, which has extended his activities to other African countries, Europe, and the USA.” (Nrenzah 2015:132f.)

A display of his media competence, which certainly became a stabilizing factor for his agenda, can be found in his 2008 “media battle with a Charismatic-Pentecostal pastor”, which he won. (de Witte 2015:223) Bonsam “had proclaimed in the media that many pastors secretly got ‘juju’ powers from him so as to ensure success for their churches and [he] threatened to publicize their names.” (de Witte 2015:223f.) Bonsam was able to be recognized not only in his work as an indigenous priest locally in Ghana but also his personality has found wide appreciation in online media. His website⁷¹⁴, his accounts on *Twitter*⁷¹⁵, *Facebook*⁷¹⁶, and

⁷¹⁴ Website of Kwaku Bonsam: www.kwakubonsam.com, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷¹⁵ *Twitter* profile of Kwaku Bonsam, <https://twitter.com/BonsamNana>, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷¹⁶ *Facebook* profile of Kwaku Bonsam, <https://www.facebook.com/nana.bonsam>, accessed February 12th 2016.

*Google Plus*⁷¹⁷ illustrate this. The advantage of Bonsam's campaigning on new media is summarized by de Witte (2015:224) as follows:

Unlike his colleagues whose power thrives on secrecy and seclusion, Kwaku Bonsam derives his persuasiveness from spectacular media shows. The appearance in cyberspace of traditional African religious specialists [...] suggests that indigenous religious resources may become extra powerful and compelling when cast in global formats of commercialized spirituality in the new religious spaces opened up by the internet.

Yet another indicator for the impact Bonsam has on the internet is underscored by fact that he even made an appearance on American-Canadian digital media and broadcasting company *Vice Media*⁷¹⁸. Operating in 36 countries⁷¹⁹ and, besides having been awarded for outstanding work on several occasions⁷²⁰, *Vice* became significant enough to host guests such as the president of the United States of America⁷²¹, produce a documentary on the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant with genuine local footage⁷²², or conduct daring projects like interviewing former "Cannibal Warlords of Liberia"⁷²³ or "Sneaking Into A Ukrainian Military Base"⁷²⁴. Bonsam's name was not mentioned, however, and he was merely introduced as "juju priest". Local footage shows *Vice* journalist Thomas Morton being involved in rituals performed by Kwaku Bonsam. The documentary was focused on "Sakawa scams"⁷²⁵ in Ghana, and therefore became a controversial subject from the view of Bonsam. He later complained that he felt cheated having been involved in a project which, as he claims, had been announced differently:

What this video says about me [Bonsam] is not true. The journalist, Thomas Morton, came to Ghana and said he is a student researching African Traditional Religion. I agreed to partake in it. He did not say that he was making a video about scams.⁷²⁶

Underlining his self-understanding as a traditional priest who is in good command of internet-usage he further pointed out that the journalist must have underestimated him so that he would not find out about the nature of the documentary. Unsatisfied with the confusion of Sakawa with his variety of Traditional African Religion, Bonsam reprimanded that "Not all traditional priests in Ghana are associated with Sakawa." Apparently, the journalist "did not do his research" as in his self understanding he is "an international

⁷¹⁷ *Google Plus* profile of Kwaku Bonsam, <https://plus.google.com/+kwakuBonsamNanakwakubonsam/posts>, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷¹⁸ The documentary featuring Bonsam can be found here: "Internet Scamming in Ghana", published on channel "VICE", published March 1st 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o26Eks801oc>, accessed February 12th 2016. Bonsam is introduced around minute 7:20.

⁷¹⁹ *Vice Media, Inc.* on Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_Media,_Inc, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷²⁰ e.g. 15/4-27_Guardian-Vice; Television Academy Emmy Awards, <http://www.emmys.com/shows/vice>, accessed February 14th 2016.

⁷²¹ Title of video: "President Barack Obama Speaks With VICE News", published on channel "VICE news", published March 16th 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a01Rg2g2Z8>, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷²² Title of video: "The Islamic State (Full Length)", published on channel "VICE News", published August 14th 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjHb4C7b94>, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷²³ Title of video: "The Cannibal Warlords of Libera (Full Length Documentary)", published on channel "VICE", published June 13th 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRuSS0iiFyo>, accessed February 12th 2016.

⁷²⁴ Title of video: "Sneaking Into A Ukrainian Military Base: Russian Roulette in Ukraine (Dispatch 2)", published on channel "VICE News", published March 4th 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y57vy4vWb-E>, accessed February 14th 2016.

⁷²⁵ *Sakawa* is a frequent topic in Ghanaian news and entertainment media. So-called "Sakawa-boys" are rumored to use occult powers to "perform successful internet fraud". (Armstrong 2011:2)

⁷²⁶ The comment can be found on Kwaku Bonsam's *Google Plus* profile, <https://plus.google.com/+kwakuBonsamNanakwakubonsam/posts/R1xpr3V8PG9>, accessed February 12th 2016.

traditional priest” with global experience⁷²⁷. He concluded that he is well aware of how easily people can be tricked but he made sure he does not “care to be involved with such bad things.” Rather he tends to “help people and not lead them into false hope.”⁷²⁸

Another popular feat of Bonsam’s media attention can be found in the case I present below.

Kwaku Bonsam vs. Cristiano Ronaldo

June 4th 2014 and the following days Ghanaian online media continually reported on a claim made by Kwaku Bonsam situated in the preparations of 2014 FIFA World Cup. Allegedly, Bonsam has declared himself to be responsible for the knee injury of Portugal’s captain Cristiano Ronaldo. Ghana’s national football team, the Black Stars, were set to meet Portugal June 26th, and to enable his home team to have a chance, Bonsam professed in an interview with Kumasi-based *Angel FM* to “have conjured a special powder from his gods, mixed with several leaves and concoctions which have been placed around a caricature of” the player⁷²⁹. Ronaldo, who suffered from “tendonitis in his left knee as well as ... a muscle problem in his left thigh” should thus be kept from playing against the Ghana Black Stars.⁷³⁰

I know what Cristiano Ronaldo’s injury is about, I’m working on him [...]. I am very serious about it. Last week, I went around looking for four dogs and I got them to be used in manufacturing a special spirit called Kahwiri Kapam. I said it four months ago that I will work on Cristiano Ronaldo seriously and rule him out of the World up [Cup] or at least prevent him from paying against Ghana and the best thing I can do is to keep him out through injury. This injury can never be cured by any medic, they can never see what is causing the injury because it is spiritual. Today, it is his knee, tomorrow it is his thigh, next day it is something else.⁷³¹

It is claimed by newspapers that “Kwaku Bonsam has gained worldwide fame for his claim [...]”⁷³². Newspapers like the British “Daily Mail, the Metro, the Sun, the Evening Standard and the Mirror”, as well as American newspapers such as “New York Daily News, Washington Post”, and even some Australian ones are said to have reported on the case⁷³³.

On June 6th 2014 a newspaper reports that “Portugal will be without inspirational captain Cristiano Ronaldo for their friendly match against Mexico ... ahead of the 2014 World Cup.”⁷³⁴ They comment on the missing of Ronaldo by referring it back to Kwaku Bonsam’s claims: “Bonsam’s spiritual machinations appear to be working so far with the world best player struggling to regain fitness with just seven days to the

⁷²⁷ *ibid.*

⁷²⁸ *ibid.*

⁷²⁹ Mod.Gh. 2014, June 4.

⁷³⁰ *ibid.*

⁷³¹ *ibid.*

⁷³² Mod.Gh. 2014, June 5b.

⁷³³ Indeed, interest by newspapers outside of Ghana was undoubtedly there, cf.: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2648733/Cristiano-Ronaldo-injury-claims-Ghanaian-witch-doctor-Portugal-ace-struggles-fitness.html>, <http://www.goal.com/en/news/89/africa/2014/06/04/4860608/i-am-behind-ronaldo-injury-problems-claims-witch-doctor?ICID=SP>, <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2014/jun/04/cristiano-ronaldo-portugal-ghana-witch-doctor>, <http://metro.co.uk/2014/06/04/cristiano-ronaldo-will-miss-the-world-cup-because-of-incurable-injury-caused-by-witch-doctor-4750307/>, <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/the-beautiful-blog/ghanaian-witch-doctor-injured-cristiano-ronaldo-blog-entry-1.1817124>, <http://www.standard.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup-2014-ghanaian-witch-doctor-claims-responsibility-for-cristiano-ronaldos-injury-9487538.html> (all accessed April 7th 2016).

⁷³⁴ Gh.Web. 2014, June 6.

commencement of the 2014 World Cup.⁷³⁵ On the same day another curious headline gets picked up by Ghanaian newspapers “Portugal witch doctor hits back at Ghana”⁷³⁶. According to *Modern Ghana*, in a “retaliatory spiritual attack”, Portuguese witch doctor, Mel Sigurson, allegedly claimed to be the cause of the injury of Ghanaian defender Jerry Akaminko⁷³⁷. According to the newspapers Mel Sigurson suspected “foul play” over the injury issues of Ronaldo. He then “investigated spiritually” to discover that Kwaku Bonsam was indeed behind the attack. Thus, in turn, Mel Sigurson returned the spiritual attack on Akaminko⁷³⁸. In his own words, as reported by *Modern Ghana*, he said:

I discovered that some of our World Cup opponents were and am [are] still working on the team. So I have decided to pay them back in their own coin with injuries. ... They touch my key men, I touch their key men.⁷³⁹

The article adds that Ghana’s leading football news website has searched Portuguese media for evidence to verify the claims about Mel Sigurson and his proclamations “but nothing has been found yet.”⁷⁴⁰ The message was picked up on by several newspapers, illustrated with impressive titles such as “The Battle Of The Witch Doctors”⁷⁴¹. The case is not further pursued by media; however, a few days later a similar story made its way into media. According to the source a Serbian witch-doctor has predicted that no African team will make it to the next round:

Following Kwaku Bonsam’s hoax-eruption days back when the Ghanaian witch-doctor took responsibility for Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo’s injuries, another soothsayer in the circle somewhere has sprung up with numerous predictions prior to the World Cup kicking-off late yesterday. Macho Kalashenkirov, popularly known for his foretelling of Malaysia’s missing plane, the Serb has predicted some events which are ostensibly utter-mind blowers.⁷⁴²

Media Reaction

Bonsam, however, did not only receive favorable reactions. Several journalists and columnists take a different, much more critical view on Bonsam’s claims, as they accuse him of “enriching his own coffers and embellishing his own name to the well-being and reputation of his nation.”⁷⁴³ They call him an “evil and selfish glory hunter”, the “self acclaimed [...] most powerful witch doctor” in Ghana, who “had the effrontery to brag about causing harm to the World’s most popular footballer [...]”.⁷⁴⁴ More than the media presence that is given to the “clear ludicrousness” of Bonsam’s claims, these journalists and columnists resent the image of Ghana that is thus produced. During a World Cup billions of people look at single countries very closely when they participate. Some authors fear this will “undoubtedly create [the impression] in the minds of people towards Ghana – as a nation crawling in ‘fetish priests’ with ‘black

⁷³⁵ *ibid.*

⁷³⁶ *Mod.Gh.* 2014, June 6.

⁷³⁷ *ibid.*

⁷³⁸ *ibid.*

⁷³⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁴¹ *PeaceFM.* 2014, June 6.

⁷⁴² *Gh.Web.* 2014, June 13b.

⁷⁴³ *Gh.Web.* 2014, June 7.

⁷⁴⁴ *Gh.Web.* 2014, June 9a.

magic’.”⁷⁴⁵ Others see Bonsam’s assertion as a threat to Ghana’s ability to “bond with strangers” because of their “open mindedness” and fun loving nature” which has been proven before during major sporting events. In South Africa 2010, they claim, “‘The whole world’ was behind us [...]” While now, “for the first time, we risk going into a major tournament as black sheep and some to some extent public enemy number one.”⁷⁴⁶ All because one “self style spiritual father of the BLACK STARS insisted on how he had assigned some special demons ... to render Ronaldo’s injury incurable [...]”⁷⁴⁷ Apparently, Bonsam understands himself as the “spiritual advisor” of the black stars⁷⁴⁸, and fulfilling this function would mean to increase the chances of them winning, by magic. However, journalists are concerned that global public will much more likely sympathize with Ronaldo:

How on earth would a serious media house give Kwaku Bonsam a platform on a sports program when we have credible voices and brains of the game? The hard truth is Ronaldo means more money to FIFA than the entire Black Stars Team put together. Singularly, he sells more jerseys than our whole national team players put together. His over Fifty Million fans on facebook alone is nearly twice the population of Ghana. FIFA would rather have him at Brazil than Ghana as a nation. ... Apart from the fact that the world craves to have the best player in the world to feature at the global showpiece, Africa has paid a lot of price for the West’s perception of Africa a still stone-aged barbaric continent. Hosting the tournament in South Africa four years ago did leave a much positive impression on the continents. ... We will never be forgiven should the world’s most popular footballer miss this tournament coincidentally due to this useless claim. It is about time the so called witchdoctors in this country shut up and allow us apply the scientific approach to the game that has brought many nations so much success.⁷⁴⁹

Readers’ Discussion

There are in total 310 comments in the articles used for the readers’ discussion. Commentary to the case of Kwaku Bonsam’s spiritual attack on Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo shows much of the usual arguments which are to be expected: refusal of magical belief and dismissal of the person performing it. Some people take it on a rather light note:

Nobody should take this man seriously...he is just a fake seeking attention.⁷⁵⁰

Will Ghana bring the cup home even after defeating Portugal? So does Ghana stand to benefit from this? Just seeking attention!! Let’s do things that will enhance the image of the Black Race!⁷⁵¹

Other commentators react in a very agitated way:

Simply ***barred word***, are you behind akaminko and Kwarasey’s injury as well? Ghana is Crying for sharp attackers which we lack for so many years, if you claim you have power why not conjuring magic for us to have Ronaldo type of attacker in our team? If you have any power as you claim why not clearing your own dirty face. ***barred word*** bulldog and ***barred word*** who does not need an attention at all.⁷⁵²

The usual criticism concerning media presentation of magical or witchcraft related issues can also be found:

⁷⁴⁵ Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁴⁶ Gh.Web. 2014, June 9a.

⁷⁴⁷ Gh.MMA. 2014, July 11.

⁷⁴⁸ Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁴⁹ Gh.Web. 2014, June 9a.

⁷⁵⁰ Author *Mirabel*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 5.

⁷⁵¹ Author *yawner*, *Ruuuuubbisssshhh!!*, *ibid.*

⁷⁵² Author *JJ*, *ibid.*

I don't blame Kwaku Bonsam I blame the media who has nothing good to offer but ***barred word***.⁷⁵³

A website unable to screen bad reportage from good ones. Shame on ghanaweb.⁷⁵⁴

Further, there is criticism phrased towards belief in magic in general:

CAUSE ANY SENSATION IN SPORTS. BCOS IT DOES NOT WORK. IT IS ALL ILLUSIONS AND TRICKS. INDIA, HAITI, BENIN, THE JUJU POWERHOUSES, SO-CALLED ANYWAY, HAVE NEVER ACHIEVED ANYTHING IN SPORTS. IT IT THE RUSSIANS, CHINESE, GERMANS AND AMERICANS WHO DOMINATED THE OLYMPICS. MAGIC IS AN ILLUSION, IT NEVER WORKS. IT ONLY PUTS MONEY IN THE POCKETS OF THE JUJUMEN AND MAGICIANS.⁷⁵⁵

HARMS NO ONE. BUT WHEN SUPERSTITION IN INSTITUTIONALIZED IN SUCH DESTRUCTIVE WAYS, WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTION. CHECK OUT THE CHILD WITCHES IN NIGERIA AND THE WITCHES CAMPS IN GHANA. THERE IS NO COMPARISON BET WHAT WE DO IN AFRICA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD. WE CAN ONLY COMPARE THIS TO MEDIEVAL EUROPE. IT IS DISGRACEFUL.⁷⁵⁶

Another common, argument known from above, is expressed in 'tribal' disputes, which is also represented in this case in very rude and insulting tone:

You this fucking Asantes accuse Ewes of Juju. Yet your own juju men steal babies for sikaduro and go around jujuing people all over the world. What a DISGRACE to Ghana. Which Ewe man have you seen doing this? You steal your own cats and eat fight over the cooked meat then turn around and blame Ewes. Fucking primitive apes!!!⁷⁵⁷

However, other commentators point out that magical beliefs are not something genuinely African or Ghanaian:

What about Mel Sigurson claim about Jerry Akaminko? People like Tawia Acheampong are so full of themselves look witchcraft, magic and juju has being with mankind since time. Have you heard about Friday 13, the black cat, What about dracula. This is not the first time juju had appeared in football [...].⁷⁵⁸

I think the article is well-written and the analysis well-constructed. but please understand that the white-man too has his ways, charms and superstitions. it is only through their relentless savagely-refined propaganda machine that the white man have over centuries, made the African to hate himself and African institutions. they have their own way of crippling our players, such as chemicals, sexual temptations, theft-allegations etc. I suspect the writer is Europeanized enough to say that 'but these are legal'!⁷⁵⁹

A major concern in this article, and a point that was observed before, is the fear of commentators of a strange outside image of Ghana. Commentators agree in that such display of magical belief is detrimental to the international reception of Ghana:

THE WHOLE WORLD IS READING WHAT WE PUT ON THE INTERNET (GHANAWEB). KWAKU BONSAM SHOULD BE CAREFUL OF WHAT HE SAYS. IF THE BLACK STARS WILL WIN THE WORLD CUP, THEY MUST PLAY ALL THE STRONG TEAM AND WIN THEN THEY CAN BE CALLED THE REAL CHAMPIONS. BUT IF YOU TAKE PEOPLE OUT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO WIN, THEN YOU ARE NOT A CHAMPION. HE ACTUALLY IS NOT HELPING GHANA AND I WILL SUGGEST HE SHUT HIS MOUTH UP.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵³ Author *ddt*, *ibid*.

⁷⁵⁴ Author *They Say They Say*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 6.

⁷⁵⁵ Author *PROF*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁵⁶ Author *PROF*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 11.

⁷⁵⁷ Author *FUCK YOU*, *ibid*..

⁷⁵⁸ Author *Mr. N*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁵⁹ Author *syncopa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 9a.

⁷⁶⁰ Author *ERICUS*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 6.

This is very serious, somebody's life, this is a big treat, Kwaku Bonsam must be very careful of saying things, don't think only Ghanians [sic] are reading from this net, is all over the world, so Bosom be careful of saying things other wise you will get your self in trouble. If you have powers to prove than protect the black stars for not a single ball enter their net, than to play with somebody's life. don't you know that you are intimidating [intimidating] him and his family? what are you trying to prove Kwaku? if it true of your saying, than i advice you to reliase him immediately and again becareful [be careful] of your sayings. A WORD TO A WISE IS ENOUGH.⁷⁶¹

Complete foolishness. Ghanains [sic] encourage this guy to continue his ***barred word*** comments and don't seems to see the impact its will cause later. How do we want the world to see us ...⁷⁶²

PLS STOP PUBLISHING THE BONSAM'S GARBAGE AS IT TARNISHES GHANA'S IMAGE.⁷⁶³

When you've someone openly claiming he behind the injury of soccer opponent what do you expect from the world? How do you want the world sees us? Our football merit will be view differently than the rest of the world. The media should have think twice before publishing kb ***barred word***. We have ex -coach whoaccused [who accused] our players of using juju against themselves, kb also has joined them attacking opponent. Oh nation of juju soccer.⁷⁶⁴

Unlike in other articles, this one has gathered a lot of reactions from Christians who see a need in counteracting Kwaku Bonsam with Christian slogans:

Very low mind, cheap popularity, I break it in the name of JESUS...⁷⁶⁵

NOBODY CAN DO ANY JUJU TO GHANA. GOD IS WITH GHANA WITH HIS BLOOD GHANA WILL DO WELL ... POWER OF GOD IS ABOVE EVERY POWER.⁷⁶⁶

The Bible says there are evil spirits moving around. And if this spirit destroys legs, it is evil. How many good legs are in Bonsam's village. And the name Bonsam. What does it mean? Rings some bell!!⁷⁶⁷

Look at how the devil has blinded this illiterate, to be proud of some one's agony. Is Christian Ronaldo the only player who's gonna play for Portugal? May God have mercy on you to see the 'TRUE LIGHT' before you die.⁷⁶⁸

Ghana is the only lawless and stupidest country i know on this universe. I said it before, kweku bonsam has nothing ... he has no magic or whatever, completely no nothing. just go spray a bottle of TB Joshua anointing water on him and see, all his dirty witchcraft powers will burn into ashes ... the man is just a peace of shit and nuisance to the entire world at large ... if he claims to have spiritual airplane to fly to cripple Ronaldo, why won't he find cure for HIV? why can't he redeem Ghana from economic depression? Call him TB Joshua to silence him. This dirty man is nothing, he has no magic. If he claims to have magic, let him conjure rain to fall or let him conjure the sea to be silence or raise the dead. stupid ass hole.⁷⁶⁹

Our almighty God will intervene him one day including his oracles, bloody nonsense man if so then why not him amend that his ugly burned face, cos he's challenging almighty God. May thurnder fire him there.⁷⁷⁰

A final collection of articles, which is different from the others, shows some interesting interpretations and assessments of Kwaku Bonsam's actions. There are rather humorous comments like: "Hahahaha, Kwaku is only playing mind games with the whites."⁷⁷¹ Or:

⁷⁶¹ Author *akay*, *ibid*.

⁷⁶² Author *East Coast*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 6.

⁷⁶³ Author *KOFI YESU*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 6.

⁷⁶⁴ Author *Bishop*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 6.

⁷⁶⁵ Author *maxx Owusu*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 5.

⁷⁶⁶ Author *NANA*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 6.

⁷⁶⁷ Author *Mawuna*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁶⁸ Author *kk*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, June 5.

⁷⁶⁹ Author *Golgata*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁷⁰ Author *Muftah*, *ibid*.

⁷⁷¹ Author *kwame*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 6.

Kwaku Bonsam just want to psyche the Portuguese and cause fear and panic in their camp. People saying that he is disgracing Ghana are hypocrites. How is he disgracing Ghana? What about the Portuguese spiritualist who also made a similar remark that he is behind the injury of Akaminko?⁷⁷²

Then there are positive responses toward the acceptance of Ghanaian traditional religion:

I can't stop laughing at the anti-Bonsamists, who are repulsed by his actions simply because they are so thoroughly imbued with Euro-centrism/self hatred/inferiority complexes, that they are almost ready to reach for skin lighteners, since their brains have already been (lightened) reprogrammed to instinctively accept European values, regardless of it's obviously ridiculous nature, eg: white Jesus, invisible god, ghosts, spirits, angels, etc. all of which are missing in action, no evidence of these things ever existing anywhere, except in the mindset of the blind who are led by the can't see.⁷⁷³

Ghanaians are a funny bunch of people. Every Sunday and Friday they troop to the churches and mosques to worship. They have abandon their own traditional religion for alien ones and they call that civilisation. Until we respect our own religion, we will forever play second fiddle to the rest of the world. We must celebrate people like Kwaku Bonsam. If T B Joshua had said that, you will surely get people to defend him. Down with so-called Christians and Muslims.⁷⁷⁴

What is the difference between praying to jesus or allah to help us in a certain situation and a traditionalist using juju to do da saame??? THERE IS NONE!!!! Dey are all using spiritual forces. Isn't dat what da whole world is doing???⁷⁷⁵

HELO POEPL E ITS TIME FOR EVERY BODY TO SHOW SOME LOVE AND HIS SURPORT [support] TO HIS NATION, THIS IS MR BONSAM'S SURPORT [support], TO WARNING [warning] AND LET THEM FEAR AND SHAKE WHEN THEY MEET GHANA.⁷⁷⁶

What is the motivation behind a witch doctor like Kwaku Bonsam to engage with football? Considering Bonsam's obvious aim for world wide significance (cf. Nrenzah 2015:132f.) and his display of media competence (cf. de Witte 2015:223; also see Subchapter 3.5), it seems reasonable to make use of any platform possible to increase his popularity. But the World Cup 2014 was not just another occasion of that kind. In fact, there had been a previous clash between Kwaku Bonsam and T.B. Joshua. As narrated in Nrenzah 2015 (272) Bonsam was angry about a case that involved Richard Kingson, the goalkeeper. Apparently he had "praised celebrated Nigerian pastor Prophet T.B. Joshua, attributing the team's victory in a World Cup qualifying game against the Egyptians (6-1), to the God-Man's spiritual intervention." To Bonsam this was unacceptable since "all well-meaning Ghanaians around the world prayed for Ghana to win that match—indigenous priests, pastors, Muslim *Mallams* and many other individuals, and T.B. Joshua should not get to take all the credit for the victory."

In this light, it seems a reasonable move to preempt T.B. Joshua and become the first West-African religious leader who carries his magic and powers to the international forum and demonstrate it there—his very early move⁷⁷⁷ is another clue that hints in this direction. Rivalry between Bonsam and Joshua is also illustrated by another situation⁷⁷⁸. April 15th 2014 Citi FM Online reported that Kwaku Bonsam wanted to go to Italy on April 18th to meet with Pope Francis. Bonsam had planned to raise a complaint in front of the

⁷⁷² Author *Kwabena Mamu*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁷³ Author *CHARCOAL SELLER*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁷⁴ Author *Yaw Gyamfi*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁷⁵ Author *Da truth preacha*, *ibid.*

⁷⁷⁶ Author *STEPHEN OSEI, NORWAY*, *ibid.*

⁷⁷⁷ The first article that deals with Bonsam's claim dates June 4th 2014, while the World Cup began June 12th, while the match between Ghana and Portugal dates June 26th.

⁷⁷⁸ Rivalry at least from Bonsam's perspective since thus far T.B. Joshua has remained rather silent on the matter.

“most powerful Christian leader” over Nigerian Pastor T.B. Joshua. According to the interview Bonsam claimed that “T.B. Joshua is not a man of God. When you are a spiritual man you can see that T.B. Joshua is not a man of God.” He has good editors on YouTube and on his TV station but he “uses tricks”. Bonsam wants to see the Pope to ask him “why he is not taking action”. Further he said, that if T.B. Joshua had any powers in the spiritual he could have contacted him there. But since he does not, he needs to see the Pope to ask him “to call T.B. Joshua to order.”⁷⁷⁹ The curious connection between Bonsam and Joshua is further underlined by commentators who put them into a similar frame:

BONSAM IS LEARNING FROM NIGERIAN CON MAN TB JOSHUA. JOSHUA HAS BECOME A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE DOING THE SAME THING. LOOK, THERE IS SO MUCH MONEY TO BE MADE, THAT IS WHY NANA BONSAM IS DOING THIS. GHANAIS ARE VERY IGNORANT PEOPLE, EVEN THE EDUCATED ONES, SO THESE CHARLATANS ARE IN GOOD BUSINESS. THE DEVELOPED NATIONS MIGHT LAUGH AT BONSAM, BUT MANY GHANAIS WOULD [would] GO TO HIM. THE IS NOT A FOOL, HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING.⁷⁸⁰

WHAT KWAKU BONSAM IS DOING IS THE SAME THAT PASTORS LIKE TB JOSHUA ARE DOING.⁷⁸¹

However, dealing with media remains a gamble. Bonsam could neither be sure how the match between Ghana and Portugal would end, nor how long the newspapers would focus on his case in a favorable way. Nor can one foresee how newspaper readers react upon the case. There is plenty of room for interpretation; however, one of the leading themes is clearly expressed in a way that gives Bonsam a negative, selfish look: *how can this person for his own fame ridicule our home country Ghana in front of the entire world?*

Still, one needs to consider Bonsam’s incessant demands for a national identity and consciousness that is expressed through his comment on Ghana’s religious heritage, his involvement in and commentary to the Anita De-Soso case, and which is also expressed in the above comments of reader’s in his defense. In this way, his dismissal of De-Soso’s claim, witch-doctors and dwarfs were to blame for the depreciation of the Cedi, is not simply to be understood as rejection to (in his role as a “witch-doctor” who, amongst other, was accused by De-Soso) take responsibility. When he questions why Ghanaians prefer to trade in US Dollars in the first place, and reprimands that his fellow citizens do not “respect our cedi”, and moreover the claim that “there is not spirit behind our cedi”⁷⁸² but their own behavior, it seems much more likely to suspect campaigning towards national identity and not religious turf war.

⁷⁷⁹ CitiFM. 2014, April 15. Other claims of Bonsam about T.B. Joshua regard Bonsam’s allegation that the latter had to take responsibility for the death of former Ghanaian president, John Atta Mills. (Gh.MMA. 2014, June 9a)

⁷⁸⁰ Author *oko Fio*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 9a.

⁷⁸¹ Author *PROF*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 7.

⁷⁸² PeaceFM. 2014, February 13a.

4 Analysis: a New Formation of Witchcraft Criticism in Ghana?

This Chapter brings together all the theoretical considerations as presented in the first Chapter and discusses them against the background of the findings from the material Chapter. I suggest three main foci: Firstly, I put emphasis on the question what role do online media play in regards to witchcraft discourses. Secondly, I shall return to the question regarding the modernity of witchcraft, where I discuss the contributions of the main proponents of the *modernity of witchcraft paradigm*, as introduced in Chapter Error: Reference source not found, in relation to my findings. Thirdly, I conclude with a part that emphasizes that the idea of witchcraft is not necessarily always meant in a literal sense, but can, in fact, be metaphorical to some degree.

4.1 The Online Setting as ‘Contested Space’

As presented in the literature review, there is a growing interest of anthropologists to investigate the presence of witchcraft related topics in media. Especially when it comes to film this connection is obvious. In relation to Austen and Şaul (2010), Haynes (2010), Okome (2010), and, most importantly, Meyer (2015, 2010a, 2008a, and 2003) one can see that rumors about witchcraft are prominent features of Nigerian as well as Ghanaian film. These videos are watched on the entire African continent and spread Christian witchcraft imagery, reproducing the “danger of witchcraft as a real force [...]” (Meyer 2008a:228) In regards to the shaping of witchcraft imagery on the minds of people, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015⁷⁸³) argues that it is “both by Christian preaching and by its coverage in the media, where stories abound of the lynching of suspected witches.” Asamoah-Gyadu clearly states that “Witchcraft beliefs are reinforced by ongoing media stories, rumors, and perceptions.” Adinkrah (2015:112), as cited above, concurs with the role of media in being a “powerful influence in the acquisition of local witchcraft ideology [...]” The question is to ask whether one can also say this about the online context? Indeed, Adinkrah claims that such news websites, as I present and discuss in Chapter 3⁷⁸⁴, enforce the belief in this fashion. Thus the online discourse appears as a context in which people learn “who witches are, what they do, and what society does to control them.” (Adinkrah 2015:112)

4.1.1 The Media Perspective on Witchcraft

Adinkrah’s (2015:112) estimation seems to be true, if one only considers the number of reports which feature the notion of witchcraft. Journalists regularly embellish their descriptions and emphasize on the scandalous

⁷⁸³ These quotations and references refer to the online version of the article. Therefore page numbers are not available.

⁷⁸⁴ He mentions the websites *Accra Mail*, *Ghana Crunch*, *Ghana MMA*, *Ghana Review*, *Ghana Web*, *My Zongo* as “Ghana-based” websites with such a focus.

aspects of any witchcraft narrative. This can, for instance, be seen in Subchapter 3.4.1 *Case – Actress Rose Akua Attaa Mensah: “I Am A Witch”*, where the author of the article ‘advertises’ the supposed self-disclosure of actress Rose Mensah as a “*shocking* revelation”⁷⁸⁵ (my emphasis), during the Ghana Movie Awards in 2011⁷⁸⁶. Another such example can be found in the case of the supposed bewitching of Ghanaian football player Richard Kingson, where the mentioning of ‘witchcraft’ can be revealed as an interpretation by the journalists. The term ‘witchcraft’ was never used during the deliverance⁷⁸⁷, but it was claimed by Ghanaian media that Mrs. Kingson has “bewitched her husband”, brought “his career in disarray and [made] him impotent”, and a “witchcraft spirit” had to be lifted from her⁷⁸⁸. Another article on the same subject puts it even more dramatically by stating that Mrs. Kingson “confessed that she had [the] evil powers of a witch and she had used that to make her husband impotent”, so that “T.B. Joshua prayed for the woman and delivered her of the self-confessed witchery.”⁷⁸⁹ The reactions by Mr. Kingson, his wife as well as T.B. Joshua are a vivid display of the potential conflict between the media interpretation of spiritual matters, and the interpretation of religious experts (like in this case T.B. Joshua). While Mr. and Mrs. Kingson both denied that Mrs. Kingson was a witch, and Mr. Kingson even came up with the *narrative of the bribe* to whitewash his wife’s name, media expert T.B. Joshua points at the ‘actual’ problem, and in authoritative religious language sets his boundaries. Reminding Mr. Kingson of how negatively people write about his own person in Ghana, T.B. Joshua offers Mr. Kingson to see him as a “role model”, because he knows that if journalists write negatively about Mr. Kingson they actually aim at T.B. Joshua. But the attack does not end there because actually “you are fighting against God” when you fight against T.B. Joshua⁷⁹⁰. In this way, T.B. Joshua elegantly evades any responsibility he might have to take. After all, the possession of Mrs. Kingson was revealed in his Church, and later was interpreted as witchcraft, causing Mrs. Kingson’s psychological harm. To reinterpret the accusation of witchcraft by Ghanaian media, T.B. Joshua suggests indirectly, that the calling of witchcraft is an expression of hatred towards Mrs. Kingson. Instead of ‘rejoicing with the person who was delivered’, people, or more concretely Ghanaian media, ridicule the deliverance, write nonsense and invent things that actually did not happen.

The attitude of journalists to focus on, or even invent, witchcraft scandals, however, must not overshadow that there are also reports which by their own content deliver enough material to feed the ‘need for supernatural narratives’⁷⁹¹. Clearly, some of those stories need no further inventing of sensationalist or scandalous aspects in the narratives. Looking at the case of Anita De-Soso⁷⁹², one can see that the summoning of supernatural agents to account for an economy that is in disarray, is a recurring motive

⁷⁸⁵ PeaceFM. 2013, December 2.

⁷⁸⁶ The video recording of the speech does not display any screaming but rather is the audience in laughter.

⁷⁸⁷ The video material on which the case was released through SCOAN, and does not contain any mentioning of witchcraft.

⁷⁸⁸ Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁷⁸⁹ Mod.Gh. 2012, September 5.

⁷⁹⁰ cf. 3.4.2 *Case – Richard Kingson: “My Wife Is Not A Witch”*.

⁷⁹¹ If there is such a need in the first place. Scandalous stories like these can be found in the material (cf. Chapter 3), however, as I shall discuss below, there is a growing discomfort of readers to engage with such stories.

⁷⁹² cf. 3.1.4 *Case: Anita De-Soso and “Dwarf Economics”*.

employed by Ghanaian politicians as well as religious leaders⁷⁹³. Moreover, there is the case of Emmanuel Adebayor⁷⁹⁴ who openly accused his family of ‘plotting juju’ against him, and who indirectly admitted to accusing his mother of being a witch. Adebayor claimed she has told him that his career will not move forward, while he also saw her in his dreams chasing after him. The case resembles another case regarding Ghanaian football player Michael Essien, who during World Cup 2010 sustained a knee injury and accused his father of having caused this by bewitching him; also there is Nii Odartey Lamptey who claimed that his local club has bewitched him too⁷⁹⁵. Reports like these do not need to be embellished in terms of witchcraft as they are already presented in that fashion by their protagonists. There is no doubt that Ghanaian online media hold witchcraft, especially when it regards rumors about celebrities and popular people, to be a topic of interest. Other examples of this kind that should be mentioned, (but had to be omitted in the discussion because of a lack of readers’ responses) refer, for instance, to Nollywood actress Tontoh Dikeh who allegedly declared she is a witch in 2011⁷⁹⁶. There is a report of the supposed involvement in “Fetish activities” by late rapper Da Grin, where a woman “allegedly confessed” to having initiated him into a cult and thus catered for his career⁷⁹⁷. In a similar way like the case of Mrs. Kingson, there is the case of Nigerian “bad boy actor” Jim Iyike who was forced to fend off rumors of having been “delivered from witchcraft at the Synagogue Church of All Nations”⁷⁹⁸. Then there is an example from the music business, where highlife musician Opa bene (Kofi Dada Boadu) claimed to have been rescued from “the spell of witchcraft” in 2013⁷⁹⁹. Moreover, there are occasionally reports of strange, witchcraft related occurrences. There is, for instance, an article by *Ghana MMA* according to which in 2014 a woman in Indonesia gave birth to a lizard. The claim is critically assessed in the article by making reference to a team of scientists who dismiss the notion. However, the attention-grabbing title remains: *Unbelievable: Woman Gives Birth To Lizard And Guess What Happened To Her Thereafter*.⁸⁰⁰ Then there is an article by *Peace FM Online* which narrates the supposed transformation of a woman into a bird in a village in the Volta Region of Ghana. Here the story is uncritically presented as factual, without, however, successfully catching the response of readers as there is not a single comment⁸⁰¹. One of the articles in particular demonstrates this pattern of entertaining the supposed need for witchcraft narratives in Ghana. The article makes use of dramatic language reporting a case of a boy who was “strangely found behind steering wheel of [a] locked taxi”, and who is described to have entered the car “under mysterious circumstances [...]”⁸⁰². The article involves the stereotypical grandmother ‘witch’ who

⁷⁹³ In this respect, I have mentioned the names of Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Pastor T. B. Joshua, Alhaji Collins Dauda, and Reverend Isaac Owusu Bempah (cf. 3.1.4 Case: *Anita De-Soso and “Dwarf Economics”*), who have all made reference to the supernatural in accounting for political or economic issues.

⁷⁹⁴ Subchapter 3.4.3.

⁷⁹⁵ cf. 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

⁷⁹⁶ MyJoy. 2011, August 1.

⁷⁹⁷ Mod.Gh. 2011, February 23.

⁷⁹⁸ Graphic. 2013, October 2.

⁷⁹⁹ Gh.Web. 2013, December 20.

⁸⁰⁰ Gh.MMA. 2014, June 13.

⁸⁰¹ PeaceFM. 2014, August 25.

⁸⁰² Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

provided the magical items which enabled the boy to enter the car, and, who was also made responsible for the sickness of the grandfather of the family.

Such cases support the view of Adinkrah that online newspapers and media outlets circulate such stories. According to my survey, however, witchcraft sensationalism is not the main interest of online newspapers, and certainly not the most successful means to draw readers' attention. Very often the readers' sections remain empty when it comes to reports about 'strange' events, like the transformation of animals into humans, or vice versa, or the giving of birth to animals by humans. The attraction of readers of getting involved in such reports seems to increase with the degree of the fame or 'importance' of the person featured in the article. This would account for why the report on Mr. Kingson's wife or Emmanuel Adebayor has caught much more comments than those cases of lesser publicly known media personalities like rapper Da Grin.

Furthermore, it is important to take note of the fact that when it comes to cases of witchcraft and violence (as discussed in Subchapter 3.3), the style of reporting becomes much more sober and distanced. It appears to me that the authors of such reports desist from dramatizing the actual violent effects of witchcraft accusations. To base this claim I offer the simple observation that authors (unlike in cases regarding celebrities and popular people) hardly investigate into the narratives of the accusations themselves (or put forward speculations on the wicked acts of witches). They rather report the outside circumstances such as who accuses whom, what happened to the accused, how does Police or other Ghanaian state agencies react?

Applying the formula of Adinkrah (2015:112) according to which media inform the Ghanaian public on "who witches are, what they do, and what society does to control them", one can see that 'witches' (who fall prey to homicide or violence, including deprivation of liberty) are either "women" aging 40⁸⁰³, 62⁸⁰⁴, 72⁸⁰⁵, 75⁸⁰⁶, "grandmothers" aging 70⁸⁰⁷, 71⁸⁰⁸,⁸⁰⁹ and "wives" aging 30⁸¹⁰, 16⁸¹¹, and 13⁸¹².⁸¹³

What witches do is described by:

- *the appearing of the 'witch' in a dream*⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰³ *Murdered*, article *Pastor Whips Church Member To Death* (Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b).

⁸⁰⁴ *Murdered*, article *Woman lynched for denying she is a witch* (MyJoy. 2010, August 14).

⁸⁰⁵ *Murdered*, article *Grandma set ablaze* (Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d).

⁸⁰⁶ *Murdered*, article *Two brothers lynch woman, 75, they accused of being a witch* (Gh.Web. 2012, December 19).

⁸⁰⁷ *Murdered*, article *Male relative beats old lady to death* (Daily. 2014, July 14).

⁸⁰⁸ *Physically assaulted*, article *Spiritualist, two others assault woman, 71* (Gh.Web. 2011, May 2).

⁸⁰⁹ Also, there are two cases where the age is not specified: *Murdered*, article *40-year-old arrested for killing grandmother* (Gh.Web. 2013, June 30); *Physically assaulted, refused treatment in hospital*, article *'MY GRANDMA IS NOT A WITCH'* (Mod.Gh. 2011, September 12).

⁸¹⁰ *Chained for nine years*, article *Woman Chained Nine Years* (Gh.Web. 2010, June 9).

⁸¹¹ *Locked up in hencoop for four years*, article *Girl spends 4 years in 'hencoop', accused of witchcraft* (Gh.Web. 2012, January 11).

⁸¹² *Chained to a tree for over a year*, article *Girl chained to tree at Ashaiman* (Gh.Web. 2013, August 27).

⁸¹³ In one case the age is not specified: *Physically assaulted, emotionally abused*, article *Man Charged For Beating 'Demon Possessed' Wife* (PeaceFM. 2014, April 16).

⁸¹⁴ MyJoy. 2010, August 14.

- *being in possession of souls*⁸¹⁵
- *taking responsibility for deaths of family members of the accusers*⁸¹⁶
- *the causing of illness*⁸¹⁷
- *causing problems in the family, like making one member lose his football skills*⁸¹⁸, or *causing family a member to have a “stealing habit”*⁸¹⁹
- *being inexplicably found in military security premises, having been in company of other witches*⁸²⁰
- *terrorizing one’s family*⁸²¹
- *being possessed by an evil spirit*⁸²²
- *being made responsible for the misfortune of one’s parents*⁸²³

One needs to add that very often the readers are *not informed* on *what witches do* other than that they are being accused of witchcraft⁸²⁴. This, taken together with the rather shallow examples of *what witches do*, as summarized above, further corroborates the interpretation that journalists who write about the violence of witchcraft accusation are much less interested in witchcraft phenomenology than if it comes to discussing the vices and virtues of celebrities and popular people.

In regards to Adinkrah’s final point, *what does society do to control witches*, there is no information in the material. On the contrary, reports like these twist the statement and ask *what can society do to contain or even stop witchcraft accusation*. Looking at the cases of violence that were just presented, one can see that the following measures are taken against the violent outcome of witchcraft accusations:

- *perpetrators are put into Police custody*⁸²⁵
- *perpetrators are brought to court and sentenced*⁸²⁶
- *projects are enabled to register and coordinate the work of ‘healing Churches’*⁸²⁷
- *Police admonish Ghanaian citizens to abstain from the practices of lynching, physically assaulting or banishing supposed witches, or else they will be “severely” prosecuted*⁸²⁸

⁸¹⁵ Dagbon.net. 2010, July 12.

⁸¹⁶ Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

⁸¹⁷ Gh.Web. 2013, June 30.

⁸¹⁸ Daily. 2014, July 14.

⁸¹⁹ Gh.Web. 2014, August 1.

⁸²⁰ Mod.Gh. 2011, September 12.

⁸²¹ Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

⁸²² Gh.Web. 2012, January 11.

⁸²³ Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁸²⁴ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b; Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d; Gh.Web. 2011, May 2; PeaceFM. 2014, April 16.

⁸²⁵ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b; MyJoy. 2010, August 14; Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d; Gh.Web. 2012, December 19; Gh.Web. 2013, June 30.

⁸²⁶ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b; Gh.Web. 2011, May 2; PeaceFM. 2014, April 16.

⁸²⁷ Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

⁸²⁸ Gh.Web. 2012, December 19.

- *some cases are brought to the attention of the public through local media outlets which then arrange 'rescue' operations*⁸²⁹

To conclude, I shall argue that there are broadly two motives behind Ghanaian online media treating the topic of witchcraft. There is the *entertainment* aspect which resonates with Geschiere (2000:2)⁸³⁰, and regards the spectacular narratives of rumors about high society. There are reports on the machinations of witches among the Ghanaian elite, be it popular people like Mrs. Kingson, politicians like Akua Donkor, actresses like Rose Mensah or the families of football stars like Emmanuel Adebayor or Michael Essien. Moreover, one can maintain that while some commentators seem to enjoy these speculations on the supernatural, others strongly criticize such articles and ask for, what in their view is, *better journalism*. These reports stand in contrast to the *informative* or at times even *alarming* message of reports that focus on actual cases of violence in response to witchcraft accusation. Here the motivation on part of the authors is very low, and for rare exceptions even non-existent, in delving into the narratives and eliciting the scandalous details of witchcraft phenomenology. Rather authors focus on presenting a 'closed' case in which the details of the magical crime of the accused remains in the background while the social context of the actual crime is revealed: the accusers are named and often shamed, their motivations are mentioned, and the consequences of their actions are presented⁸³¹.

4.1.2 The Media Recipient's Perspective on Witchcraft

In the introduction I have quoted Howard (2008:502) who speaks of 'participatory websites' which function as an empowerment to local agents, and enable a "hybrid" discourse that is based on both "local and institutional interests." It has been my aim from the beginning to include these alternative voices, which now allows one to further understand the online context as a contested space. I shall argue that while Adinkrah's and Asamoah-Gyadu's assessments seem to be correct to some degree when it comes to the overall media discourse⁸³², the picture would be incomplete without taking into consideration the comments that readers make on the subject. Here one can find a much wider picture which emerges from the presentations of witchcraft related subjects. Considering that such voices make up a significant part of what constitutes *witchcraft discourses in the Ghanaian Online Setting* it is important to investigate them in great detail.

There is a wide range of interpretations by readers on what is the meaning of witchcraft and how they judge the nature and meaning of witchcraft narratives in the online setting. As stated before, the surprising finding of this thesis is that there are almost no readers who engage in discussing the *dangers of witchcraft* or

⁸²⁹ Gh.Web. 2010, June 9, Gh.Web. 2012, January 11.

⁸³⁰ In this respect, also see Geschiere 2008:220.

⁸³¹ They are arrested and brought to justice.

⁸³² Considering the slight modifications I have suggest above.

witchcraft phenomenology, but rather assume a critical, skeptical and, at times, openly dismissive attitude towards the subject. Rather than fearing—or at least being entertained by—the machinations of the elite and their magical ventures, or the “nightly escapades of witches” (cf. Geschiere 2008:220), such commentators, in fact, discuss the dangers of witch belief to society. If there are comments which pick up on the critical side of witchcraft (and not witch belief), they do not directly confront witchcraft as a spiritual threat but rather see it as a religious offense. Putting order into the statements, one arrives at the following topics:

Witchcraft as an Offense to (the Christian) God

If witchcraft narratives or the labeling of people as witches is taken seriously by commentators, they very often respond with Christian admonitions. People remind the supposed witch of asking God for forgiveness, seeking deliverance, staying away from witchcraft⁸³³ as they may cause problems to the entire country of Ghana by making God angry⁸³⁴. A most interesting statement in this regard is forwarded by commentator *ELSIE HAICK*⁸³⁵ who makes reference to Ex. 22¹⁸ and points out that what most other commentators regard as the “murder” of Ama Hemmah is actually “nothing wrong”, considering that one “shall suffer not a witch to live.” Another remarkable and very rare statement of this kind is made by author *Jss Boys*: “TAKE THE PEN FROM HIM, HE CAN EVEN USE IT TO KILL ANYONE”,⁸³⁶ which expresses concern that a boy who stole cars with a magic pen, could use the same as a magical weapon.⁸³⁷ Other commentators on similar cases inquire why people don’t take seriously “witch craft and wizardry” because such “forces of darkness” are asserted in the Bible⁸³⁸. Also interesting in this regard are the warnings by author *Pelicles* who states that “Witches are real but we do not have to attribute any mishap to them.”⁸³⁹ Author *Kankafour* can verify that “Witchcraft is real”, because that is why there is a camp for witches in Gambaga. The same author still finds it important, that the supposed murderers of Ama Hemmah must be “punished severely to send a clear message to those who are intolerant of other beliefs”⁸⁴⁰. I should highlight that this interpretation differs considerably from how other commentators assess the situation. Most other commentators criticize the supposed perpetrators as following a false belief in witches. Author *Kankafour*, on the other hand, understands the crime to have been an attack on other people's beliefs. People (in this case the perpetrators) “must lean to live peacefully with others [i.e.]” The witch in this way becomes simply an adherent to

⁸³³ Author *Cudjoe*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2; Author *Kofi*, *ibid.*; Author *Sammy*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17; Author *AMA*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2012, January 10; Author *maame Ama*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10; Author *KWASI BELGIUM*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, June 13; Author *Naa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

⁸³⁴ cf. the case of Anita De-Soso, where black magic becomes a government issue. Author *PK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, July 20; Author *Ghanaba*, *ibid.*

⁸³⁵ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁸³⁶ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

⁸³⁷ Gh.Web. 2011, June 13.

⁸³⁸ Author *GHANAVIA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19; Author *ENEMY OF NATIONAL DEMONIC CONGRESS*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, May 2.

⁸³⁹ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁸⁴⁰ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

another belief system in Ghana, and is not perceived as a threat to society. This comment is the only one of this kind in the entire sample.

Generally speaking, statements like these are rare, and discussions hardly ever focus on the dangers of witchcraft. As discussed in Chapter 3, the comments that are skeptical of witchcraft belief are much more present than any other statements regarding witchcraft. In fact, the *skeptical stance*, discussing with other readers about the negative sides of witchcraft beliefs, makes up a significant part of the material.

Problematizing Witchcraft Belief

This skeptical view is produced by readers as well as a number of columnists who contribute ideas to the witchcraft discourse that challenge the beliefs. Understanding readers and columnists as the typical subjects of participatory discourse, one can witness very visibly a contestation to this media space.

This concerns especially politics but also very generally culture and society as such. In this context there are statements like that of *GhanaWeb* columnist *Kofi Kyei-Mensah-Osei* who writes:

In the ninth year of the twenty-first century: The rest of the world is moving fast forward, their leaders are doing their damndest to improve the living standards of their people. [...] In Ghana, our president dithers and our parliament is busy with witchcraft and wizardry business.⁸⁴¹

One of the major concerns that is expressed in articles of this kind is that of the “irrationality” of Ghanaian society, culture and specifically politics. In this regard one should mention *GhanaWeb* columnist *Kofi Akosah-Sarpong* who has been very outspoken and over the years, and published at least 17 articles on the subject⁸⁴². His example regards NPP minority leader Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu who became the target of “parliamentary juju” when something (supposedly juju) has been fixed beneath his chair. The aim was to harm the politician. *Kofi Akosah-Sarpong* comments on the case in the following way:

This is happening at a time when Parliament is almost evenly divided between the Majority and Minority caucuses and every effort is being made to subdue political opponents in the Legislature. [...] While this may look scary, morally reprehensible and bordering on criminality, with its traditional spiritual consequences, the implications are far-reaching, bordering on the health of rationality and civility of the parliamentarians involved, and the signal it sends to Ghanaians and other Africans. It also undermines the on-going Ghana-wide campaigns to refine certain destructive cultural values, of which juju is one of them, in the development process.⁸⁴³

The critical perspective towards magical beliefs is a wide spectrum of ideas, where, however, one notion is generally shared, namely that ultimately the ‘irrational’ beliefs are an obstacle to progress, or perpetuate the

⁸⁴¹ Gh.Web. 2009, January 27.

⁸⁴² “Irrationalizing the Ghanaian Parliament” (Gh.Web. 2009, January 26); “Culture challenges and counterknowledge” (Gh.Web. 2009, February 5); “Africa’s Evil: An Examination” (Gh.Web. 2009, April 4); “Bumps, but Africa’s democracy rises” (Gh.Web. 2010, May 15); “Battling child witchcraft accusation” (Gh.Web. 2010, August 1); “The Daily Graphic and the Enlightenment” (Gh.Web. 2010, November 5); “Scientists, Journalists Collide with Superstitions” (Gh.Web. 2010, December 27); “Implanting Fear Breaks The Sacrosanct Cradle of Progress” (Gh.Web. 2011, May 26); “Under the Siege of Prophetic Trance” (Gh.Web. 2011, July 10); “Africa and the Culture Question” (Gh.Web. 2011, August 16); “The Twisted African Democratic Revolutions” (Gh.Web. 2011, September 2); “The President, God, and Progress” (Gh.Web. 2011, September 14); “Campaigning for Africa’s Research and Development” (Gh.Web. 2011, October 13); “Why The African Politician Cannot Be Juju Dabbler” (Gh.Web. 2011, December 27); “Africa’s Inhibitive Values, International Ideals Collide” (Gh.Web. 2012, March 14); “What is the Use of Our Education in Ghana?” (Gh.Web. 2014, November 1).

⁸⁴³ Gh.Web. 2009, January 26.

retardation of certain regions of Ghana, or even the entire country. Contributors like *Africabi*⁸⁴⁴, *Ibrahim Hardi*⁸⁴⁵, *Kofi of Africa*⁸⁴⁶, *Francis Xavier Tuokuu*⁸⁴⁷, *Philip Kobina Baidoo*⁸⁴⁸, *Francis Kwarteng*⁸⁴⁹, and *Samuel Adjei Sarfo*⁸⁵⁰ (to name just a few), at least once or more regularly, write pieces in which they admonish the superstitious attitude of Ghanaian society in regards to politics and other settings.

Columnists as well as readers are eager to identify the cause of the problem, and thus engage in debates, which (if it comes to readers) very often results in heated discussions on fault finding, assessing the role of society, media, culture or religion in perpetuating the negative and violent sides of witchcraft beliefs. I suggest there are mainly three addressees of fault finding in discussions: a) detrimental religious and cultural notions and practices, b) Christian Churches, and c) media sensationalism.

Detrimental Religious and Cultural Notions and Practices

There are deep concerns and worries about “certain cultural practices”, which “pose challenges to their progress and need to be refined.”⁸⁵¹ The idea of “cultural or religious practices” that need to be critically assessed, even abolished, changed or at least alleviated is quite popular here⁸⁵². Most prominently discussed are topics like *witchcraft*, *Trokosi*, *female genital mutilation*, *ritual murders*, and *early marriage*. Authors who address such issues are motivated to inform their readers about those practices and discuss how Ghanaian society, and especially politics could mitigate them. Hence, for the most part these articles are calls for a more rational handling of religious and cultural practices which are viewed as “outdated”⁸⁵³, “destructive”, “frightful”, “irrational”, “hampering”⁸⁵⁴ and the like. There is a spectrum of positions within the context of dismissing aforementioned religious and cultural practices; arguments that are themselves based in religious criticism or even religious (mostly Christian or Muslim) convictions. All this falls into the category of witchcraft criticism since all proponents agree that those practices are based on unfounded beliefs. Hence a Christian may well be a fervent believer and at the same time be a skeptic if it comes to witchcraft.

One such example that was repeatedly presented as a remarkably negative symbol of outdated and harmful cultural practices, in this case witchcraft belief, is that of *Baby Mercy*. In July 2006 the baby was accused of being a witch and consequently abandoned by the mother, Zoyen Teiva, who had also been

⁸⁴⁴ “There are no Witches in the Bible” (Gh.Web. 2010. November 27). *Africabi* is sometimes alternatively spelled with ‘k’ (*Afrik - abi*).

⁸⁴⁵ “Northerners should all be part of the solution” (Gh.Web. 2014, January 7).

⁸⁴⁶ “Ignorance, witchcraft & cannibalism” (Gh.Web. 2014, February 5).

⁸⁴⁷ “The Underdevelopment of Northern Ghana” (Gh.Web. 2009, March 20).

⁸⁴⁸ “What is Child Abuse, Trokosi” (Gh.Web. 2010, March 5).

⁸⁴⁹ “Ghana’s Many Problems: The Promise of Humanism 2” (Gh.Web. 2014, October 2).

⁸⁵⁰ “Of Witchcraft, Magic and Miracles” (Gh.Web. 2014, December 18).

⁸⁵¹ Gh.Web. 2009, January 26.

⁸⁵² cf. articles Gh.Web. 2010, November 5; Gh.Web. 2011, December 30; Gh.Web. 2014, August 8; Gh.Web. 2014, August 12.

⁸⁵³ Gh.Web. 2014, August 12.

⁸⁵⁴ Gh.Web. 2009, January 26.

accused of witchcraft when she was in primary school. After the incident Teiva also died, “from harassment from her community”⁸⁵⁵ as reported. One commentator located the source of the problem clearly in culture:

Baby Mercy and her mother’s witchcraft ordeal, emanating from the absurd parts of the Ghanaian culture, becomes doubly disturbing when even schools, as centres of rationalization, refuse to admit Teiva because her family and community have accused her of being a witch.⁸⁵⁶

Other commentators even connect larger developmental problems to witchcraft accusation. Following Ghana columnist *Francis Xavier Tuokuu* this cultural practice plays a vital role as a driving force in the diaspora from the North of Ghana which, in turn, is one of the factors of its “underdevelopment”:

Well-to-do people from the north who work in the south and the Diaspora do not want to go back there for fear of being killed by witchcraft. This has led to retardation of development in the area for several decades.⁸⁵⁷

Readers who comment on incidents like these raise similar criticism and draw similar conclusions. There are statements in the material Chapter which express the concern clearly. People are inquiring: “When is black Africa going to wake up, discard these beliefs and embark on a journey of scientific and technological research [...]”⁸⁵⁸. Further, such commentators explain that the obstacle for progress lies in the “STUPID SUPERSTITIONS AND BELIEFS”, and they ask for a different ‘future’⁸⁵⁹, as they perceive the “21st century” as the “knowledge century”. This they cannot reconcile with the belief in witchcraft, as it does not make a contribution to society. For instance, by cleaning “our clogged up gutters and destroy killer mosquitoes.”⁸⁶⁰ The refusal to accept witchcraft as an aspect of modernity is clearly formulated by these participants in the Ghanaian online discourse.

Embedded in this discussion lies another interesting point: *the accusation of witch belief*. Throughout the material, the idea of witch belief can even become an insult, especially in the context of ‘tribal’ conflict this is a recurring element, where people are eager to establish a contrast between ones’ own ethnic group and that of other people. As I say above, the conflict mostly exists between Ashanti and Ewe, and very often takes a rude and very insulting tone. What is striking in this context is that in all instances where ‘tribal’ aggression comes up, the belief in magic becomes degraded to something ‘backward’, ‘dark’, ‘occult’, and ‘primitive’. Images of the ‘dark bush’, where modernity has not yet reached, emerge from the arguments, and the idea is brought forward that the opposing side, Ashanti or Ewe, is culturally more inclined to entertain these outdated beliefs. There clearly is an awareness of readers as well as journalists and columnists of what some have called *detrimental religious and cultural notions and practices*, and moreover there is a wish to explain how these practices and beliefs are still a part of Ghanaian society. The conflict between modernity

⁸⁵⁵ One might wonder at this point what kind of ‘harassment’ brought her death, or whether ‘harassment’ is a euphemism for having been lynched by a crowd of people.

⁸⁵⁶ Gh.Web. 2009, February 5.

⁸⁵⁷ Gh.Web. 2009, March 20.

⁸⁵⁸ Author *DRG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁸⁵⁹ Author *MARTIAN*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁸⁶⁰ Author *Ada Boy*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

and tradition is not an outside observation but is very much rooted within Ghanaian online discourses. This is expressed in the recurring motive of trying to identify a certain ‘tribe’, and to call into responsibility.

Christian Churches Perpetuating Witchcraft Fears

Considering the literature on witchcraft in Ghana it is claimed over and over that some brands of Pentecostalism fertilize the soil on which witchcraft flourishes. This is expressed, for instance, in film and the characters of the “charismatic pastor” and the “evil pastor” (Meyer 2008a:228). One has been corrupted by witchcraft, while the other delivers the protection against it. In the same context, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015⁸⁶¹) conclusively states:

In Africa, successful Christian ministry [...] is impossible unless one takes into account the supernatural evil implied by the word “witchcraft.” Grasping the power and influence of evil, including witchcraft, is critical, not only for realistic pastoral care, but also for understanding African responses to the Gospel throughout Christian mission history. For example, the spectacular growth of African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) in the early twentieth century is linked, in particular, to the inability of Western missions to come to terms with the reality of supernatural evil, especially witchcraft, and to articulate a Christian pastoral response to it. Historic Western mission Christianity has generally been perceived to be powerless when it comes to dealing with supernatural evil.

A central motive in the critical assessment of the problem of witchcraft belief in readers arguments is to blame Churches for the continuation of witch beliefs and practices. A recurring idea expresses that it is mostly the competition between Churches which struggle for the recruitment of members and which results “in the creation of falsehoods, forgeries, lies, pretentions, magic, juju, and 419 in the present-day churches.”⁸⁶² Authors like these criticize that pastors make use of such discourses to impress their Church members. Others speak of “fake churches” and “fake pastors” which perpetuate “superstition and the resultant primitive barbaric acts” which “still exist in Ghana.”⁸⁶³ The motive of manipulating “weak minds” to steal money is a prominent description of the problem, and therefore some people call for the closing down of “All one man churches in Ghana”⁸⁶⁴, while other authors go as far as to demand the transformation of Churches into schools. This could enable “rationalism” in the country to cure “this collective madness” through “knowledge”⁸⁶⁵. In conclusion such authors state, “if we spent half the time we spend on church/religious activities on efforts to find solutions to our problems, we would have developed by now.”⁸⁶⁶ The opposition between religious beliefs and notions of progress, however, does not arouse the same connotations as in the West where the opposition to the supposed irrationality of religion is scientific rationalism. Also, there are examples of commentators who dismiss the so-called ‘backward’ belief in witchcraft, and demand “we Ghanians [sic] and for that matter Africans start looking for scientific solutions”, while they still “thank God” for certain things, and thus maintain a Christian perspective.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶¹ Cited from the online version of the article.

⁸⁶² Author *Ketasco Headmaster*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

⁸⁶³ Author *Teye Koliko*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 16.

⁸⁶⁴ Author *Yajaki*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁸⁶⁵ Author *Ozymandias*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁸⁶⁶ Author *OneGhana*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁸⁶⁷ Author *Grandma not a Witch*, comment in article Mod.Gh. 2011, September 12.

While for some commentators the affront lies in the fact that pastors make use of occult forces (cf. Meyer's notion of the "evil pastor"), others dismiss the necessity of Churches in dealing with witchcraft in the first place. In this way, they challenge the notion of the success story of ministries answering to witchcraft fears. For some Ghanaian Christians witchcraft does not necessarily have to be a part of the sermon at Church. People express adherence to the Christian faith, however, abstain from witch hunting practices, as expressed in the following statements:

How can a pastor do that? [Kill an accused witch] Did Jesus ever cain [cane] patients he healed? Africans uptil now donot know what a worship means. We donot really worship God rather we seek power, richness over powerless, uneducated volks. [...] If you are sad and you want help from God, Allah, Onyame Chineke [...] go on your knees yourself and pray donot ask any pastor for help because God loves you equally as the pastor. Open your eyes always!!!!⁸⁶⁸

We need to stop accusing people for our own actions. It's about time pastors advise lazy people to get jobs rather than give them false prophecies. [...] Please people we need to open our eyes. We need to love one another just as Jesus loves us.⁸⁶⁹

[...] The Pentecostal churches in Africa are part and parcel of all these problems. [...] They promise these ignorant people, they will be blessed with health and wealth. Failure for one to achieve his or her goals is always blamed on spirits, witchcrats [witchcrafts], curses, involvement with traditional healers (fetish priests), and so on. These newer Pentecostal churhes [churches] reject traditional culture, but also have a supernaturalistic vision of reality, with a discourse of GOD and the devil, miraculous interventions, and an instrumental understanding of religion, all of which accord with aspects of traditional thinking, including the dynamics of WITCHCRAFT. The head of the Ghana pentecostal churches local and International must have questions to answer. His men are raping married women, destroying families, stealing from innocent ghanaians in ghana and abroad, disgracing CHRISTIANISM and even threating [threaten] our Presidents. (Author *Bechemniiba (Paris)*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, August 1.)

I believe it is rather the man who is demon possessed and needs deliverance. The man does not know Christ. How can one inflict wound on others for the sake of deliverance. For, the battle we fight is not carnal but spiritual. This is a criminal case. Sentence him to life imprisonment.⁸⁷⁰

Being a Ghanaian Christian, as clearly expressed in the above statements, does not necessarily entail belief in witchcraft and the seeking for deliverance from it. It must, however, remain the task of another study on the subject to find out who these Christians are, how they envision African Christian Theology, what topics they prefer, and why they dismiss the belief in witchcraft or at least condemn any violent 'solution' to the 'problem' of witchcraft. I would like to stress at this point that a central element, which can be found in this stance (see quotations above), is the perceived misrepresentation or even distortion of the Christian message where readers mention their difficulties in reconciling Christian beliefs with aggression against witches.

Criticizing Media Sensationalism

As stated before, Ghanaian online journalism makes use of sensationalist witchcraft stories as means of entertaining the Ghanaian public. This is, however, not met with equal enthusiasm by participants in the discussions. The discontent of commentators who criticize media sensationalism which thrives on witchcraft narratives is based on a number of concerns. Some commentators are simply unsatisfied with the dishonesty

⁸⁶⁸ Author *Concerned African*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

⁸⁶⁹ Author *ESTHER USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁸⁷⁰ Author *Sammy*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17.

of media reporting, as can be illustrated, for instance, by the case of Rose Mensah whose self-revelation of witchcraft was clearly exploited (see Chapter 3.4.1). Readers complain about lies and distortions of what actually happened, and they ask when will “These Ghanaian journalists [...] grow up”, and suggest that the actress should sue them,⁸⁷¹ dismissing their reports as “UNNECESSARY”⁸⁷². Author *ABU* specifically attests the problem of the situation by stating that “Ghanaians are fans of “stupidities and sensationalism [sic]”. He criticizes “How ridiculous Ghanaians are when it comes to stories of this nature?”, and puts forward that “the press have found an easy tube to sell their “ridiculous and mischievous [sic] stories”⁸⁷³. Commentators, moreover, understand witchcraft as a “smoke screen” that conceals the actual responsibilities⁸⁷⁴. They loudly express their claim for “constructive news”⁸⁷⁵.

At this point I would like to draw the attention to an observation made by Birgit Meyer⁸⁷⁶ (see Subchapter 1.2.6). She reports about complaints criticizing the high popularity of witchcraft related topics in films as a disgrace to the country of Ghana, as they produce an image of Ghanaians as superstitious and obsessed with “ghosts, witches, and juju”. (Meyer 2010a:42f.) As presented in the introduction, Meyer gives focus to voices like that of the former mayor of Accra, Nat Nunoo Amarteifio, who criticizes that Ghanaian movies are too focused on superstition, witchcraft, and the like, and make Westerners think “Africa is still in total blackout [...]” (Meyer 2010a:43) The recurring idea is that Ghanaians are misrepresented, and people do not wish to see their mother land to be represented as a ‘superstitious’ country. As I argue above, one can observe a similar motivation when it comes to media criticism as expressed in the readers’ section.

This leads me to conclude that narratives which are flavored with magical or witchcraft related elements can draw media attention, which in turn can be exploited by either the newspapers or the individuals who make those claims. In some cases⁸⁷⁷ the ‘pepping up’ of stories through witchcraft narratives⁸⁷⁸ successfully draws readers’ attention. In regards to the same desired effect on the personal level, however, such stories can easily backfire, as is especially the case with Akua Donkor and Anita De-Soso. Here the attempt of including the notion of witchcraft, or other spiritual forces has caused more negative reactions than positive ones.

In this respect, it is also important to realize that such witchcraft narratives are not only interesting in Africa. It has been shown before by reference to some examples that witchcraft also has made its way to the British tabloid (and elsewhere); see the case of the ‘bewitching’ of football player Kingson⁸⁷⁹, or the so-

⁸⁷¹ Author *Usher*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁸⁷² Author *Nana Yaw*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10; cf. also Author *Maame*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁸⁷³ Author *ABU*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁸⁷⁴ As in case of the reference to ‘dwarfs’ by Anita De-Soso, see author *Philip Kobina Baidoo Jr.*, article Chronicle. 2014, February 25.

⁸⁷⁵ Author *Vandal kitw3*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 25.

⁸⁷⁶ cf. 1.2.6 *Witchcraft and Popular Culture in Ghana*.

⁸⁷⁷ Akua Donkor, Anita De-Soso, Rose Mensah, Mr. and Mrs. Kingson, and Emmanuel Adebayor (sub-chapters 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, and 3.4.3).

⁸⁷⁸ Which to some commentators is understood as ‘blatant lies’.

⁸⁷⁹ See section *Presentation in Media* in Subchapter 3.4.2 *Case – Richard Kingson: “My Wife Is Not A Witch”*.

called “Battle Of The Witch Doctors”⁸⁸⁰ in the Bonsam-Ronaldo case, which was also reported on by different European media outlets⁸⁸¹. It seems to be the case that sensationalist journalism on witchcraft narratives is not only a way to entertain or impress Ghanaian but also British readers—which further deconstructs the view that only Africans were impressed by magical stories.

Focus: Criticizing Witch Belief – Early Modern European and Contemporary African

I would like to make a final point that regards readers and commentators who argue against witch belief, and do so specifically from a theological position. Such comments bear a surprising resemblance to the arguments of critics of witch belief during the times of the European witch-crazes and before.

Berner (2012:142) raises the question whether these critics were rather operating on the margin of atheism or if they should count as proponents of Christianity who find the foundations of their disapproval with witch belief in Theology? The life and work of one of the key figures in the history of European witch belief critics, Reginald Scot, is presented and discussed to approach this question. There is both skeptical and theological argumentation in the work.

Es ist zwar möglich, die Begriffe ‚Skeptizismus‘ und ‚Rationalismus‘ auf das Werk Scots anzuwenden, doch können diese Begriffe nur auf die empirische Ebene seiner Argumentation bezogen werden, nicht auf die theologische Ebene. Scots Haltung kann als ‚skeptisch‘ bezeichnet werden – aber nur in Bezug auf die Begründungen, die von den Anhängern des Hexenglaubens vorgebracht werden, nicht in Bezug auf theologische Begründungen überhaupt. Seine eigene theologische Argumentation verstärkt zwar die Kritik des Hexenglaubens, ist aber nicht als ‚rationalistisch‘ zu bezeichnen, insofern als sie den Glauben an die Bibel als das Wort Gottes einfach voraussetzt. Scots Theologie ist in dieser Hinsicht eher als ‚fideistische Religiosität‘ einzuordnen.“ (Berner 2012:167f.)⁸⁸²

Indeed, reading into the work of Reginald Scot one can easily and quickly see his critical position. In the very beginning of his work *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) Reginald Scot suggests that the idea of “one God [as the] author of good things, and another [as] the ordeiner of evil” originated from the “Martionists” (cf. Marcion⁸⁸³), thereby highlighting the heretical background of such a differentiation. But even worse, as he continues, there are now people who “[...] make the divell a whole god, to create things of nothing, to knowe mens cogitations, and to doo that which God never did; as, to transubstantiate men into beasts, &c.” (Scot 1972:2) The author further develops his argument by stating that even if the Devil was capable of bestowing upon his *allies* such powers, it does not follow as necessity that what one calls witches must have such powers in the first place. Changing from theological to rational criticism, Scot then explains that even if all “divels in hell were dead, and all the witches in *England* burnt or hanged”, rain and hail would fall and

⁸⁸⁰ As titled by PeaceFM. 2014, June 6.

⁸⁸¹ See section *Kwaku Bonsam vs. Cristiano Ronaldo* in Subchapter 3.5 *Witchcraft and Sports: Ghanaian Football and Kwaku Bonsam*.

⁸⁸² “While it is generally possible to apply the concepts of ‘skepticism’ and ‘rationalism’ to the work of Scot, one can only do so on the empirical level of his argumentation, and not the theological one. Scot’s attitude can be called ‘skeptical’, however, only in reference to the arguments which are forwarded by the supporters of witchcraft belief, and not in reference to theological reasoning as such. His own theological argumentation fortifies the criticism he phrases towards witch belief but cannot be understood as ‘rationalistic’ in that it assumes belief in the Bible and in the word of God. Scot’s Theology in this regard must be rather understood as ‘fideistic religiosity’.” (Translation Riahi)

⁸⁸³ 2nd century Christian heretic from Sinope. (May 2006:765)

there would be storms nonetheless; pointing at the weather magic of witches whereupon they are hanged or burned. But natural phenomena are not caused by witchcraft, they are caused by “the constitution of the elements, and the course of the planets”—“a perfect and perpetuall order” that God has made. In short: it is God and not witches that “raiseth the winds and stilleth them”, and brings “the raine and snowe.” (ibid.) Following his main strategy, Scot forearms his argumentation with references to the Bible to conclude that like “Prophet *David* [...] we ourselves” should confess to be the “causes of our afflictions.” Afflictions that should not blame witches when it is oneself who should ask “God for mercie.” (Scot 1972:278)

In regards to the verse in Ex. 22¹⁸, Scot (1972:278) argues that it is “one of the cheefe points in [the witchcraft] controversie [...]” However, this text, which inspires to executed witches, “is grounded upon a false translation”. Scot writes “You shall not suffer a witch to live [...] where the word in everie mans eare soundeth to be a poisoner, rather than a worker of miracle.” (ibid.) Another section in the Old Testament, which is often quoted when it comes to witchcraft, regards the ‘witch’ of Endor. Scot argues that this piece, again, has suffered from misinterpretation. Neither witches, nor the Devil, nor the woman of Endor, or “yet hir familiar” can foresee the future. Scot puts his trust into “*Paule* and *Peter*”, who say “that prophesie is the gift of God, and no worldlie thing.” The woman therefore is a fraud and can do no more than enchant men.⁸⁸⁴ (Scot 1972:90)

In regards to the New Testament, Scot also mentions a few texts, like the case of *Simon* who is referred to as “sorcerer” (KJV)⁸⁸⁵ (Scot 1972:64), or the admonition of Paul to the Galatians⁸⁸⁶ (Scot 1972:64).

In summary, Scot puts forward that these points suffer from issues of translation and interpretation, and do not allow to establish Biblical support for the belief in witches. Moreover, Scot points at the fact that Jesus Christ did not speak of witches, and asks why one should then believe that these women could do miraculous things, and are not deceivers instead:

Also, when Christ knew not these witches, nor spake one word of them in all the time of his being here upon earth, having such necessarie occasion (if at leastwise they with their familiars could doo as he did by the spirit of God, as is constantlie affirmed) whie should we suppose that they can doo as they saie, but rather that they are deceivers [...]. (Scot 1972:278)

Besides Reginald Scot, his contemporaries, earlier and later critics such as Johann Weyer, Anton Praetorius, and Friedrich Spee, there has been such criticism centuries before. A particular interesting example is that of Fray Lope de Barrientos, Bishop of Cuenca (1382-1469)⁸⁸⁷. In his criticism the Bishop asks the question which answer one should give ...

... to the belief that there are certain women called witches, who are said and believed to accompany the Pagan Goddess Diana at night, together with many other women who ride of beasts and travel through many towns and places, and are said to be able to harm animals or make use of them. (Baroja 2001:277f.)

⁸⁸⁴ Scot also refers to the character of Jezebel, and dismisses the notion of ‘witch’ in 2. Kings 9²²: “And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her *witchcrafts* are so many?” (My emphasis) (In the edition of Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1972:62), the reference to Jezebel (in Scot “Isabel”) on the margin says 2. Re. 9, 22, instead of 2. Kings 9²², which must be an error.

⁸⁸⁵ Acts of the Apostles 8⁹⁻¹¹.

⁸⁸⁶ Gal. 3¹ (KJV): “O foolish Galatians, who hath *bewitched* you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (My emphasis)

⁸⁸⁷ <http://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/b/barrientos.htm>, accessed November 29th 2016.

Fray Lope de Barrientos suggests that no one should “believe such an absurd thing”, as they only exist in dreams or imagination. “Anyone”, he continues “who believes such things is an infidel and worse than a pagan, to judge from the way that they conceive these things.” (Baroja 2001:277) Fray Lope de Barrientos continues to explain in detail the physical properties of people, and thereupon denies the possibility that any human being could do what some who have been accused of witchcraft were believed to have done, namely to fit through “crannies” in order to kill animals. To the Bishop, believing such things is not only a display of a “lacking in common sense”, but it is “to hold that these women have the bodies of those who are in Glory, and can enter as Christ entered the place where disciples were, *januis clausis* (when the doors were shut.” (Baroja 2001:277f.)

I shall argue that commentators like Scot or Barrientos also exist in the Ghanaian online discourse. Especially one commentator by the name *Africabi* has produced comments as well as articles that both take elements of empirical skepticism towards witchcraft belief, as well as theological perspectives. In this context one needs to specifically mention one of *Africabi's* articles entitled “There Are No Witches In The Bible”⁸⁸⁸, in which the author discusses both theologically and rationally why the Biblical understanding of the witch is different from Ghanaian one. The article begins with a definition:

A witch is believed to be an evil person, usually a woman or a child, and in some few cases a man, who is alleged to have acquired spiritual/satanic powers from the Devil, willingly or unwillingly, to do harmful and destructive things to people.⁸⁸⁹

Africabi then carries on discussing prominent references to witchcraft that can be found in the Bible. He comes to a conclusion which is very close to that of Reginald Scot. It is quite remarkable to see that two critics from such different times and contexts follow a similar line of argumentation. As presented above, both discuss the phrase “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”⁸⁹⁰, and the woman of Endor⁸⁹¹. While Scot calls the woman of Endor, not a witch, but a fraud, *Africabi* also denies the label ‘witch’, however, for different reasons. Retelling the narrative, where he lays the emphasis on the act of summoning “the spirit of Samuel from the dead”, and raises the question:

Do you consult a witch to summon the spirit of a dead person? No. You consult a psychic, a medium, jujuman, or ‘witch doctor’. This woman of Endor had a place of work, where she plied her trade. She was not a witch, she was a psychic, a bokor or okomfo. She was consulted and probably got paid for her spiritual services.⁸⁹²

⁸⁸⁸ Gh.Web. 2010. November 27.

⁸⁸⁹ Gh.Web. 2010. November 27.

⁸⁹⁰ Ex. 22¹⁸ (KJV).

⁸⁹¹ 1. Sam. 1²⁸.

⁸⁹² Gh.Web. 2010. November 27.

In regards to the New Testament, Africabi also refers to Simon, and adds a reference to “sorceries” in the Book of Revelation^{893, 894}.

Like Scot, Africabi agrees that this is a problem of translation and interpretation. He closes the section on the Biblical texts by asking, like Scot, whether Jesus Christ ever spoke of witches. His answer sounds clearly:

No! Jesus never said anything about witches or witchcraft in the entire Bible. However, not a day goes by today without some pastors in Ghana hammering on the issue of witches and witchcraft, spreading fear, sowing discord, destroying friendships and tearing families apart.⁸⁹⁵

On a final, rational note, the author states that what people generally deem to be witches “are just powerless seniors suffering from old age illnesses like Dementia and Alzheimer’s, and other brain disorders.” *Africabi* closes by stating: “As Christians, there is no basis for believing in witchcraft. It is unchristian and unbiblical. There are no witches in the Bible.”⁸⁹⁶ It should be added that in another piece Africabi refers to the Biblical narrative of Abraham and Sarah, who, upon her childlessness, was not blamed to be a witch, as in contemporary Ghana might be the case, as the author writes: “IF ABRAHAM WAS IN GHANA SOME PASTORS WOULD BLAME HER BARRENESS [sic] ON SOME INNOCENT WOMEN. SHAME ON THESE PASTORS.”⁸⁹⁷ This further underlines Africabi’s intention of entertaining theological criticism against displays of witch belief in the Ghanaian online witchcraft discourse.

The similarities in the argumentation style of medieval and early modern critics of witch belief with the modern African commentators suggests that there is a common logic in raising arguments against witchcraft accusation. As demonstrated, there are slight differences in the argumentation to make them fit to either critic’s context. This common logic of reasoning underlines the commonalities between concerned African and European voices through history.

4.1.3 Summary and Comment

In a yet unpublished article, Leo Igwe sheds new light on the function of (print) media in witchcraft discourse in Ghana, which differs from the view of Adinkrah. Media are not only a platform for publishing sensationalist stories on the dangers of witchcraft but also work as a forum for the accused. Igwe (2016:1)

⁸⁹³ Rev. 9²¹ (KJV): “Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their *sorceries*, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts”; and Rev. 18²³: “[...] for by thy *sorceries* were all nations deceived.” (My emphasis); Rev. 21⁸ (KIV): “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and *sorcerers*, and idolaters [...] shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone [...]” (My emphasis) Rev. 22¹⁵ (KJV): “For without are dogs, and *sorcerers*, and whoremongers, [...]” (My emphasis) The meaning of the last quotation is not self-explicatory: “For without are [...]”, according to Strelan (2003), Rev. 22¹⁴⁻¹⁵ shows an “entrance/outside polarity” (Strelan 2003:150), and “outsiders” to the “holy city” are the dogs and sorcerers (ibid.:148), or in other words, *they are without* “The tree of life [mentioned in Rev. 22¹⁴], which “is [...] in the middle of the holy city, [...]”, and is “far removed from any taint of pollution and inaccessible to the polluted ones outside.” (ibid.:152)

⁸⁹⁴ This texts cannot be found in Scot, while Africabi does not mention Jezebel.

⁸⁹⁵ Gh.Web. 2010. November 27.

⁸⁹⁶ Gh.Web. 2010. November 27.

⁸⁹⁷ Author *AFRICABI*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

argues that in contrast to the “dominant paradigm in the academic literature on witchcraft”, where media appear simply as distributors of ‘uncanny’ narratives, they actually also assist in strengthening the “responses to witchcraft accusations” of victims in the Dagomba communities. The coverage of cases of accusation in the northern parts of Ghana is bound to many obstacles for journalists, who sometimes themselves are believers in the powers of witchcraft⁸⁹⁸, or who, even if willing to engage in covering such stories, are faced with dangerous journeys, or are afraid of being involved in the conflicts they want to report on. While Igwe corroborates the sensationalist attitude in the newspapers, in his discussion, he presents two intriguing cases which show a different function of media. He argues, “when accused persons take their own stories to the media” the role of media takes a different shape. By presenting both sides of the conflict, media “provide channels to dispel and challenge occult fears and anxieties and serve as platforms to learn about ideas that negate and reject explanations and interpretations of misfortune based on witchcraft and magic.” (Igwe 2016:15f.)

This observation can be partly corroborated from my findings, in that there are cases where local media outlets were brought to the attention of cases of deprivation of liberty and thereupon orchestrated rescue missions of the victims⁸⁹⁹. As I demonstrate above, the major topics in the witchcraft discourse are expressed through the witch-hunt metaphor (about 30% of the material). Moreover, there are nine cases of murder⁹⁰⁰, eight cases of physical assault⁹⁰¹, four cases of deprivation of liberty⁹⁰², and three cases of sexual assault⁹⁰³ one case of child trafficking⁹⁰⁴: cases which were all, in one or the other way, connected to witchcraft. Only in a few of these cases the help of radio shows was sought to end the suffering of the victims. In at least two cases, media did, in fact, grant their support by bringing the cases to the public attention.

At this point, it is reasonable to once more respond to the claims made by Njogu and Middleton (2009:xi) that only “a minute portion of African urban dwellers and virtually none outside the elite of larger cities” has access to internet in Africa. I emphasize above that such a statement might quickly lose its

⁸⁹⁸ According to a “leader of the Anti-Witchcraft Campaign Coalition”, Igwe reports, media practitioners are involved in educational programs to educate them on “the constitution of Ghana and the universal declaration of human rights” which does not allow accusations.

⁸⁹⁹ cf. “Woman Chained Nine Years”, Gh.Web. 2010, June 9; “Girl spends 4 years in ‘hencoop’, accused of witchcraft” Gh.Web. 2012, January 11.

⁹⁰⁰ “Pastor Whips Church Member To Death” (Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b); “Woman lynched for denying she is a witch” (MyJoy. 2010, August 14); “Witchcraft, Grandma set ablaze” (Gh.Web. 2010, November 26d); “Housewife Murdered Over Witch- craft” (Daily. 2014, September 25); “Man guns down 78year old woman... for stealing fowl” (Chronicle. 2012, February 13); “Two brothers lynch woman, 75, they accused of being a witch” (Gh.Web. 2012, December 19); “40-year-old arrested for killing grandmother” (Gh.Web. 2013, June 30); “Murder suspect remanded in prison custody” (Gh.Web. 2014, January 12); “Male relative beats old lady to death” (Daily. 2014, July 14).

⁹⁰¹ “Fetish Priest, three others in court for assaulting a witch” (Gh.Web. 2009, June 15); “Spiritualist, two others assault woman, 71” (Gh.Web. 2011, May 2); “MY GRANDMA IS NOT A WITCH” (Mod.Gh. 2011, September 12); “Court grants bail to child molester” (Chronicle. 2012, February 22); “Pastor in trouble for assault on alleged ‘witch’” (MyJoy. 2012, August 15); “Couple and a student charged for subjecting girl to trial by ordeal” (Gh.Web. 2012, September 5); “Man Charged For Beating ‘Demon Possessed’ Wife” (PeaceFM. 2014, April 16 and Gh.Web. 2014, April 17); “Farmer Beaten for cutting down a witch Tree” (Gh.Web. 2014, May 28).

⁹⁰² “Woman Chained Nine Years” (Gh.Web. 2010, June 9); “Girl spends 4 years in ‘hencoop’, accused of witchcraft” (Gh.Web. 2012, January 11); “Girl chained to tree at Ashaiman” (Gh.Web. 2013, August 27); “Fetish Priest ‘Detains’ Boy, 13, Over Witchcraft” (Daily. 2014, July 9).

⁹⁰³ “Fetish priest jailed 20 years for rape” (Gh.Web. 2009, June 13); “Man jailed 300 months for impregnating a 14-year-old girl” (Gh.Web. 2009, August 24b); “Mallam Rapes 4 Girls From One Family” (Gh.Web. 2011, August 6).

⁹⁰⁴ “Farmer gets seven years for deceit and child trafficking” (Gh.Web. 2010, November 19).

validity as one only needs to consider the growing numbers of access to the internet on the African continent during the last couple of years (see chart *Internet Use in Africa*⁹⁰⁵ in the beginning of Subchapter 1.3.2 *Internet Use in Africa—Ghana in Particular*). In addition, one should consider language use in the comment section, specifically the standard of English, which shows high performances as well as grammatically and lexically broken language. If one now correlates the grammatically correct English to a higher educational background, which, in turn, is an indicator of the social stratum of the commentators, one should realize that the existence of broken English in the material demonstrates the participation of less well educated commentators. Those who possibly come from lower social strata, but who, as much as the elite, participate in the online discourse.

Taking these commentators as genuine African voices whose commentary on the issue of witchcraft provides an alternative way, one can see a difference to what has been revealed through in situ studies in African contexts. There is a group of people whose interest in the subject raises quite different topics and allows to draw quite different conclusions. I suggest, one needs to take seriously these commentators (readers as well as columnists and journalists) who repeatedly make claims like: “how far we are behind as a nation” in terms of moving “towards civilization” with the baggage of witchcraft belief⁹⁰⁶. A belief that is “COMMON AMONG EDUCATED AND UNEDUCATED IN GHANA” which is “A DISGRACE FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY IN THIS CENTURY”⁹⁰⁷. Authors like this very often return to the idea that in the “21st century” there is no more room for “primitive ideas of blaming everybody else bars ourselves for every misfortune that befalls us.”⁹⁰⁸ Comparisons are made to other nations which have overcome these beliefs, and the idea is raised that this has enabled them to development and progress⁹⁰⁹. Repeatedly, commentators make use of notions like “backward(ness)”⁹¹⁰, “stoneage [sic] crap”⁹¹¹, “medieval [sic] times”⁹¹², “dark age”⁹¹³, which speaks a clear language. Taking seriously those alternative voices, there are people who find the reason of the lack of the perceived progress of Ghana is the continuation of belief in witchcraft with its heavy humanitarian costs⁹¹⁴. Those voices repeatedly cry out for justice of the wrongly accused⁹¹⁵, feel

⁹⁰⁵ I would like to cite Zeleza 2009 (28f.) again and point at the fact that the internet use in Africa has grown “faster than the world average between 2000 and 2005 [...]” Just to point at the example of South Africa, which in 2009 had a penetration rate of 27.2% only six years later rose to 49.00%.

⁹⁰⁶ Author *Krakye Kwakye*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

⁹⁰⁷ Author *COUPLE, USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹⁰⁸ Author *KIKI MUSAMPA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *kwesi mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹⁰⁹ Author *B. Agyarko*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; also Author *SA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹¹⁰ Author *JUSTICE*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17; Author *SA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *The Mask* comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

⁹¹¹ Author *zorro*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹¹² Author *kwesi mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹¹³ Author *freeman*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹¹⁴ I would like to stress once more that readers, columnists as well as journalists throughout the material clearly heavily focus on the question what society can do to stop witchcraft accusations and their violent consequences; the question what society can do to control witches or witchcraft is dealt with only on the rarest occasions.

⁹¹⁵ e.g. Author *NANA Ø !!.*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9; Author *Suicide Bomber*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9; Author *freeman*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *KWABENA*

ashamed before the outsider's view at the 'superstitious' country of Ghana, pass on the insult of being a witch believer to another 'tribe', and, as I shall discuss more distinctly below, show a different understanding of the modernity of witchcraft as what is discussed in contemporary academic literature. These commentators are well aware that modernity in Africa may host the ghosts and witches of former times, but their argumentation makes clear that it is not appreciated and integrated, but resented, and people hope to overcome it.

In terms of economy, I submit this conflict is best illustrated in the readers' and columnists' response to the case of Anita De-Soso. Indeed, this is a display of magical explanations to an economic crisis, which is framed in terms of the predicament that the Comaroffs describe. When De-Soso claims that "black magic" and "dwarfs" have caused the Cedi to depreciate, and that it is "the activities of magicians, who conjure up money as part of their stock trade", or considering her claim that "the activities of black marketers, currency speculators and other [...] 'saboteurs'"⁹¹⁶ intensify the problem, it seems quite fitting to understand this as an example of *occult economies*. This is the place where "money [is made] from nothing", like the alchemist who "weave[s] gold from straw," or these are the "pyramid schemes," "financial scams", "aggressively speculative investment in the stock markets of the world." (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:281) Considering the reactions of journalists, columnists, readers, and, at times even representatives of religions (Kwaku Bonsam, Mahamadu Alhassan), one finds voices that rationally dismiss such magical narratives. People demand a reaction from politics that is rational and 'modern' in the sense that it draws a distinction between what is magical and what is economical or political, irrational or rational. Returning to the phrase of Comaroff and Comaroff (1993:xii), one should see that the "antinomy between tradition and modernity"⁹¹⁷, at least in the online context, seems to be intact. Modernity is even proclaimed by some participants as a solution to social and economic problems (which give way to witch belief in the first place).

4.2 What is 'the Modern' in the Modernity of Witchcraft?

As I discuss in the introduction, recent Anthropology has produced a large amount of studies which again and again underscore the fact that the modernity of Africa is capable of containing witchcraft in a way that yields ever new forms of magic in response to the challenges that come with that modernity. The material presented above and the discussions of it can clearly support this assessment.

In relation to critics of the modernity paradigm (cf. Englund and Leach 2000:226), I want to briefly point the attention to the conceptual background of the notion of the modernity of witchcraft. What is actually meant by modernity? I concur with a light version of the criticism phrased by Englund and Leach (2000) in

DUODU, LONDON, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; *Author Nora Owusu*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, December 19; *Author gabby Dk*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, May 2.

⁹¹⁶ MyJoy. 2014, February 10.

⁹¹⁷ While magic would fall into tradition.

that ‘modernity’ constantly runs the risk to become a “buzzword”, and one may wonder what more can be said about the modernity of witchcraft than merely stating that it happens in contemporary times?⁹¹⁸ In the prominent literature on the modernity of witchcraft, there is hardly a single definition of the term that goes beyond discussing the woes of modernity in the form of economic imbalances and the suffering they cause.

4.2.1 “Unloved Modernity”⁹¹⁹

The content of what one could say about modernity in social scientific or academic discourses in general is clearly not exhausted with the implicit definitions in literature on the modernity of witchcraft. It has not even scratched the surface. This thesis cannot and does not need to provide an encompassing debate on the general understanding of modernity. I am interested in the *emic understanding of modernity and witchcraft*, which I would like to compare, to the understanding of it as used in Comaroff and Comaroff (1993), as well as Geschiere (2000). I shall just very briefly draw the attention to a few questions, laying down possible trajectories for more philosophically grounded debates on the *modernity of witchcraft*.

Reading Comaroff and Comaroff (1993:xii), and trying to get an understanding of their concept of modernity, one can find ideas like the transition from “savagery to civilization, from the mystical to the mundane.” As I discuss above, a central element in the discussion circles around *economy, neoliberal capitalism* in specific, which causes unprecedented clashes in African societies which lead to an increased belief in witchcraft⁹²⁰. Witches, as I have cited before, “embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself, of its inescapable enticements, its self-consuming passions, its discriminatory tactics, its devastating social costs.” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxviii) But what is, and what is not, modern about these witches in the first place?

Discussing modernity in the European context is not any easier than in the African context, which once more brings Riedel’s (2014:94f.) observation to the foreground: why is the “touchstone” (Prüfstein) of modernity moved to Africa in the first place? Kirchner (2012:22) argues that the definition of modernity is not easy to come by, and the term is “often used as a makeshift solution [Verlegenheitslösung] which relieves sociological texts from having to discuss in clearer words what exactly is being differentiated when one talks about a modern society”⁹²¹ (Nassehi⁹²² cited after Kirchner 2012:22). The list of attempts to differentiate modernity from other epochs in human history is long and covers an impressive range of academic and social scientific fields and disciplines. It has yielded self-entwined titles such as Wolfgang Welsch’s *Unsere*

⁹¹⁸ In their criticism, the authors refer to Peter Geschiere’s *Modernity of Witchcraft*. (Englund and Leach 2000:226)

⁹¹⁹ The title of this Subchapter is borrowed from Wolfgang Ebbach 2014.

⁹²⁰ cf. witchcraft as “a finely calibrated gauge of the impact of global cultural and economic forces” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxviii).

⁹²¹ Translation Riahi.

⁹²² Nassehi, Armin. 2003. *Geschlossenheit und Offenheit. Studien zur Theorie der modernen Gesellschaft. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.*

*postmoderne Moderne*⁹²³, where the author admonishes that one needs to carefully distinguish between four instances: early modernity (*Neuzeit*), early modern modernity (*neuzeitliche Moderne*), and radical modernity of the 20th-century (*radikale Moderne*), and postmodernity (*Postmoderne*). (cited after Kirchner 2012:24) This observation is focused on the different “awarenesses of time” (*Zeitbewusstseine* [sic]). In contrast to this classificatory scheme, Gumbrecht (1978)⁹²⁴ has presented a conceptual historical analysis which suggests three possible meanings of the term modern: *contemporary*, *new* and *temporary*.

Discussions like these seem to be largely left out in the literature on the *modernity of witchcraft*. One could suggest that the notion of modernity as indicated in the literature fits to what Wolfgang Eßbach (2011:144) refers to as “unloved modernity” (*ungeliebte Moderne*). The author argues that this conception of modernity has received its theoretical profile in the course of the experiences during World War I and the following three catastrophes of the 20th-century: “*Archipel Gulag, Auschwitz, Hiroshima*”, which express “modern perversions of development”, and a “break in the continuity of civilization [...]” (Eßbach 2011:155f.)⁹²⁵ This disappointment of modernity is now applied to Africa and thus becomes a modernity that is tailored to suit, first and foremost, the inequalities created by capitalism, and therefore primarily framed in negative terms. There is an enormous disappointment about a modernity: modernity, after all, is not able to provide development and civilization to the peoples of the earth. In this way, one can state that despite the existence of numerous other ways of coming to terms with what in the world’s societies can, or even should be understood as modern, one can only find the *disappointed view* of a project which has dismally failed. This view, however, as I discuss above, stands in stark contrast to those Ghanaian voices which formulate their hopes in regards to modernity as a tool to achieve a wealthier, better educated and just society in Ghana.

4.2.2 “Secular Magic in a Rational Age”⁹²⁶

I assume that to some degree the disappointment over modernity in the West has fostered the continuing deconstruction of it as a display of human rationality. In a recent reopening of the debate of the *disenchantment of the world* by Landy and Saler (2009), the authors warn of an easy solution to the problem. Here, Weber’s famous dictum is honored by being used as the opening phrase of the book. Landy and Saler point out, when Weber proclaimed the disenchantment, “he neglected to mention [...] that each time religion reluctantly withdrew from a particular area of experience, a new thoroughly secular strategy for re-enchantment cheerfully emerged to fill the void.” (Landy and Saler 2009:1) The authors reveal three types of approaches toward the problem of magic in modernity they find in the literature (2009:3f.): *binary*,

⁹²³ “Our Postmodern Modernity”. Welsch, Wolfgang. 1988. *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*. Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora.

⁹²⁴ GUMBRECHT, Hans Ulrich. 1978. *Modern. Modernität, Moderne*. In: Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (eds.). *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Bd. 4. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

⁹²⁵ Translation Riahi.

⁹²⁶ This title is borrowed from the subtitle of the collection of Landy and Saler (2009): *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in Rational Age*.

dialectical, and *antinomial*. I submit it is valuable to consider these to further the disentangling the problem of modernity and witchcraft (2009:3):

a) the ‘binary approach’ posits that “any lingering enchantment within Western culture must of necessity be a relic, a throwback, a corner of unenlightened atavism yet to be swept clean [...]”

b) the ‘dialectical approach’ claims that “modernity is itself enchanted, unbeknown to its subjects, in a deceptive and dangerous way [...]”

c) the ‘antinomial approach’ observes and accepts “the fact that modernity embraces seeming contraries, such as rationality and wonder, secularism and faith [...]”

In their view, only the antinomial approach is worth following, as it delivers “a more nuanced understanding of the nature of modernity” (2009:3).

Implicit, and later more concrete examples of the dialectical approach can be found in Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Terry Castle. (Landy and Saler 2009:4ff.) Marx, for instance, has employed an abundance of “metaphors and similes of enchantments—specters, ghosts, fetishes, and so forth—linking the modern world with the religious world”. (Landy and Saler 2009:4f.)

Disapproving of the continuing influence of the binary and dialectical approaches onto contemporary scholarship, the authors appreciate attempts in recent years to “rethink the discourse from a vantage point that rejects the ‘either/or’ logic of both of these slants.” (Landy and Saler 2009:6) This is also where they—convenient for this topic—tend towards post-colonial scholars, who,

for example, have argued that the binary approach was more ideological than real, a useful conceptual tool for Western colonial purposes that obscured tensions and contradictions within the modern world; the seeming ‘universal’ distinction championed by the Western metropole between modernity and tradition, or secularism and superstition (Landy and Saler 2009:6)

In addition Landy and Saler discern a ...

growing awareness [among post-colonial scholars] that there are forms of enchantment entirely compatible with, and indeed at times *dependent* upon, those features of modernity usually seen as disenchanting the world. (Landy and Saler 2009:7)

The question now is what type of understanding can be found in the prominent authors on the modernity of witchcraft? It seems that the very project of the modernity of witchcraft is based on a dismissal of the *binary approach*, where enchantments are understood as relics or as “a throwback” which yet needs to be overcome (Landy and Saler 2009:3). This is rejected by the Comaroffs (1993:xii) by calling specifically that a “long-standing European myth”. On first sight it may seem that the *antinomial approach* is popular among the post-colonial scholars as it seems to accept the possibility that modernity contains seemingly contradicting things like “rationality and wonder, secularism and faith” (Landy and Saler 2009:3). For some authors this appreciation of magic in modernity, however, does not seem to go far enough. For Kapferer, for example, “the nineteenth-century issue of the problem of reason has returned to centre stage.” (Kapferer 2003:19) He admonishes that ...

the old divide between the anthropological Self and the anthropological Other may have disappeared, the potential differences having been flattened out in a homogenising, globalising sweep.

Considering this criticism, where the “modernist” as well as the “postmodernist anthropologists” have left “unexamined the assumptions and logics implicated in their own analytical categories”, produces a picture in which “humanity is united in a common irrationality”, which in turn “sustains the hegemony of metropolitan assumptions rather than decentring them.” (Kapferer 2003:19) To Kapferer there is a refusal to address magical practices themselves. Thus they are left “even today” as “anthropological exotica”, are “boxed away into familiar sociological and rational categories: witchcraft as resistance, witchcraft as the folk explanation of misfortune, or witchcraft and sorcery as type of ‘social diagnosis’ [...]” Kapferer maintains that there is “a tendency towards a too easy glossing of the phenomena in question, a brushing aside of dynamics that are not immediately and externally self-evident.” (Kapferer 2003:20)

In view of this, I submit that from a Religious Studies (Religionswissenschaft) perspective the difference between modernity and tradition as well as the rational and irrational is not a trivial question and cannot be as easily discarded as is apparently the case amongst some anthropologists. Belief in the supernatural makes up a distinctive element of human behavior and cognition, something which is at the heart of what Religious Studies is interested in. One cannot easily give up drawing a line between the rational and irrational, especially not if this very difference is produced and maintained on the emic level in Ghanaian online discourse. Generally speaking, one might wonder if anthropology is trying to ‘fix’ the *magic of witchcraft*? Despite all the affirmations how well it fits into modernity, thinkers seem to continue being deeply intrigued by it, not, however, by its specific and concrete phenomena at the space where they originate (Stroeken’s 2012:19; Kapferer 2003:3f.). Instead witchcraft is thrown together with things which are, speaking in the words of Kapferer *external to it* (ibid.). So trying to ‘fix’, or bring down the debate on a rational level to address the malcontent (or is it misfit) of witchcraft, one inescapably implies there is something wrong with magic or modernity, a modernity which, perhaps very naturally, contains witchcraft or magical beliefs. As suggested by Joshua Landy and Michael Saler (2009), one must accept that “modernity [that] embraces seeming contraries, such as rationality and wonder, secularism and faith”, (Landy and Saler 2009:3) without discarding the whole modern endeavor and improperly mingling it with its magic (cf. the *dialectical approach*).

4.2.3 Summary and Comment

All these considerations and the criticism that was addressed at the proponents of a modernity of witchcraft are not meant as dismissive criticism. I am well aware of the importance of these works, commendable efforts that have brought witchcraft in Africa back to social scientific attention, and which yield most surprising and intriguing results from decades of studies. However, I must conclude that the deeper one goes in debating the *modernity of witchcraft*, as presented in the larger part of contemporary Anthropology, the

more both modernity and witchcraft lose their boundaries; boundaries which help to make the observation that witchcraft in modernity is not a trivial phenomenon but a remarkable one, and it is the task at hand to understand how these two (indeed charged and contrasting) notions become reconciled and integrated, or estranged and separated in everyday Ghanaian discourse.

The Comaroffs' concept of modernity seems to rest only on one aspect: the failing of modernity in regards to the exploitation of the rest of the world by the West under the pretext of bringing civilization. This seems to be the central message in terms of how witchcraft is related to modernity. This negative image, however, makes a premature decision on modernity and witchcraft, which blurs the view on possibly significant differences—in this case this regards the genuine Ghanaian understanding in the online context of the relation of modernity and witchcraft. Such a view on modernity is much less enthusiastic about the inclusion of witches into modernity, and moreover, is based on the elementary distinction between rationality and irrationality as a part of modernity.

4.3 Witchcraft and Metaphor

A smaller section of the discourse on witchcraft in the Ghanaian online setting oscillates between metaphorical and non-metaphorical meaning. The metaphorical aspects of the concept shall be at focus in this Subchapter. Regarding metaphor as a fruitful approach in the study of witchcraft is not entirely new as I shall discuss below. In this Chapter, I shall elaborate on this idea and make the argument that one must remain open to the possibility that participants in the witchcraft discourse favor a metaphorical meaning of witchcraft over a literal one. But more than that the question is not only why and which metaphors are employed to describe witchcraft but also in how far witchcraft itself may become a metaphor to describe other things.

Types of Metaphors According to Lakoff and Johnson

To organize the study of metaphor, I shall borrow five concepts from Lakoff and Johnson (2003). Lakoff and Johnson suggest that structural metaphors are “cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another,” e.g. ARGUMENT IS WAR. Orientational metaphors, on the other hand, suggest a conceptualization in terms of spatial orientation (e.g. GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN, etc.). (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:21) Ontological metaphors are based on human experience of “physical objects and substances” and thus “provides a further basis for understanding.” This goes beyond spatial orientation and allows the cognizing subject to “identify [...] experiences as entities or substances” and thus “refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them”, e.g. INFLATION IS AN ENTITY. (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:29) “Perhaps the most obvious” example of “ontological metaphors”, Lakoff and Johnson claim (35), is personification, where the “physical object is further specified as being a person.” Examples can be found

anywhere where agency is given to the subject, for instance, when people say “His theory explained to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories” or “This fact argues against the standard theories.” (35) The final type Lakoff and Johnson distinguish is metonymy which is similar to metaphor but needs to be distinguished. In metaphor, one might conceive of “theories, disease, inflation” in the form of human entities which act (again, like the above statement): “His theory explained to me [something].” The agent which acts in this case is an unspecific one. This is different from metonymy, where in examples like “The ham sandwich is waiting for his check”, the referent is an actual person. (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:37) Such cases are different from personification in that the comparison is not between a human quality and what the target may be (e.g. INFLATION AS THIEF). “Instead, we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it.” (37) Additionally and conceptually related to metonymy is the concept synecdoche, a part-for-the-whole relation, which like in Lakoff and Johnson 2003 is included into metonymy.

4.3.1 Metaphors for Witchcraft

Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani⁹²⁷ in a contribution to a collection of articles edited by Gerrie ter Haar (Danfulani 2007) suggests to view certain types of anger as metaphors for witchcraft. I shall begin with this example to draw the attention towards the curious connection of witchcraft and metaphor. Danfulani builds his discussion on three case studies among the Mupun of Nigeria. The author concludes that both a certain type of anger called “dor” and witchcraft (referred to as “sot”), as conceptualized in Mupun belief system, are able to “cause similar pains to their victims [...]” (Danfulani 2007:143) While “Sot” witchcraft is perceived as an “agent that is capable of frustrating or constituting [a] threat to health and well-being” (Danfulani 2007:146f.), “dor” anger in a similar way is capable of harming people. The noteworthy difference between “sot” witchcraft and “dor” anger is that the first is understood to bring negative things “deliberately and on a wider scale [...]” (Danfulani 2007:143) According to Mupun belief, certain types of anger, namely the form of “dor”, “are more dangerous and permanently destructive than others.” This type of anger “is believed to begotten by deep love”, and it may “translate into hatred and may breed deep anger and destruction”, as it “unwittingly [may] stimulate and invoke the release of unseen forces which can profoundly and negatively affect the lives and destinies of others if they are not reversed.” (Danfulani 2007:157) In this way, “dor” anger can destroy “in the same way as sot witchcraft.” (ibid.) For the Mupun the word “dor” is the same as for “scorpion”, which is based on the analogy of the “pain, sorrow and sadness” that can be caused by both a sting of a scorpion and the deep anger in the form of “dor”. To the Mupun the “scorpion is a reptile that is always angry because it walks around with its tail held high up, ready to sting at the slightest opportunity, even without any provocation.” (Danfulani 2007:156) In this sense, Danfulani suggests that “dor anger could be regarded as a metaphor of witchcraft”—an ontological metaphor, I shall suggest. The human experience of the “pain, sorrow and sadness” that emerges from this

⁹²⁷ Danfulani is Professor of History of Religions at the University of Jos.

anger, is put into analogy to the burning pain of a scorpion's sting. This delivers the conceptual background, the source domain, by which the complex concept of witchcraft, the target domain, is described: ANGER IS WITCHCRAFT.

Picking up on the skeptical view as expressed by commentators in the previous part, one can see that in the larger Ghanaian online discourse there are also a number of metaphors related to witchcraft, witch belief and magical beliefs in general. The main observation in this regard is that the metaphors used in this context are for the most part *orientational* and *ontological* metaphors. WITCHCRAFT IS BEHIND is repeatedly expressed in the sample⁹²⁸. The journey away from witchcraft as a belief system is perceived as a “long long road” and a “very slow march”⁹²⁹, comparisons are made to the “stone age” as well as “medieval”, and to the “ancient” times⁹³⁰, which associate witchcraft with the past. Contrasting with the ‘backwardness’ of witchcraft are expression like *moving forward*, of *progress* and comparisons to a *catching up with advanced countries*⁹³¹, while repeatedly authors admonish we lived in the *21st-century* or *modern age*⁹³². In this case, witchcraft is placed into the past. It is noteworthy in this respect that *backwardness*, however, at least by one author, is perceived as quantifiable, “Too much backwardness in the society”⁹³³; a force which causes people to accept witchcraft belief over rationality, and therefore makes the notion almost seem like an agent. This, in turn, would change it from an *orientational* to an *ontological* metaphor. Other authors also make use of the nominalization of the adjective ‘backward’ into ‘backwardness’⁹³⁴, but in lack of further examples this cannot be conclusively solved, and therefore I shall argue that for the larger part the *backward or backwardness of witchcraft* is perceived in terms of orientation.

From another source domain comes the association WITCHCRAFT IS DARKNESS as an ontological metaphor. It is expressed in the “dark holes”⁹³⁵ where the believer in witchcraft reside or the claim that acts of witchcraft “dim the nation’s [Ghana] human rights record”⁹³⁶, or the question whether Ghana is “in the dark age?”⁹³⁷ These examples, however, are rather small in number.

⁹²⁸ e.g. Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2; Author *SA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *THE EMPEROR*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *JUSTICE*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17; Author *The Mask*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27; Author *SARPONG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, June 13; Author *DRG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁹²⁹ e.g. Author *Krakye Kwakye*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b.

⁹³⁰ e.g. Author *SARPONG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, June 13; Author *Prince J.*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, November 20; Author *kwesi mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9.

⁹³¹ e.g. Author *MANSON UK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *Mattie*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, August 27; Author *MARTIAN*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b

⁹³² e.g. Author *KIKI MUSAMPA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *kwesi mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *COUPLE, USA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c; Author *dadzeban*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, April 17; Author *WISE-TALK, UK*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, June 9; Author *Ada Boy*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2012, September 4b.

⁹³³ Author *SA*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

⁹³⁴ As for instance, author *THE EMPEROR* (comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c) further qualifies it “barbaric [sic] backwardness”.

⁹³⁵ Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁹³⁶ Head of Public Relations of the CHRAJ, Gh.Web. 2010, November 26a.

⁹³⁷ Author *freeman*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2010, November 26c.

The idea of witchcraft as something backward should not be hastily conflated with *humanist, religious critical* or even *atheist* discourses as one might find them in the West. As stated before in relation to Berner (2012:141), the European self-conception of Enlightenment has been tightly connected to the end of the witch-crazes; however, Africa has never had a similar discourse. Therefore, the motivation of people to overcome witch belief does not necessarily have to become a moving away from religion or spirituality in general. In a similar way, as can be deduced in regards to the work of Reginald Scot (Berner 2012:167f.), it is possible to argue both rational, skeptical and, at the same time, have a Christian or Muslim background⁹³⁸. Many authors dismiss witchcraft from a progressive perspective that is often enough rooted in Christian beliefs. I suggest, instead of understanding these voices to be dismissive of religion as such, they rather should be conceived of similarly to what is discussed by Birgit Meyer's work on Ewe Christians (cf. section *The Devil as Common Tongue?*⁹³⁹). The Devil, and in this case more importantly, the belief in witchcraft, is perceived as *backwardness*, a symbol of the past, while God is perceived as the *forward*, a symbol for the future. As author *To the deaf*⁹⁴⁰ explains regarding the case of the football player Adebayor⁹⁴¹, who accused his mother of witchcraft: "I do not believe in JUJU and do not think JUJU can over power the influence the Christ in me." The author continues to state that only "maroons" believe in Juju. These "dirty old fashion mentality of some black magic" was based on "primitive assumptions." The author concludes by expressing belief in "CHIST THE KING", and remarking that the belief in Juju stands in conflict with common sense: "don't tell me 1+1 = 3 because your analysis lack basic common sense. Juju does not exist period." Not only is Juju *weaker* than the power of Christ but it belongs in the *past* and only *imbeciles* believe in it as it is based on *primitive* assumptions. The motive of past and future, rationality as well as Christian faith are clearly visible here. In this way, the orientational metaphors of WITCHCRAFT IS BACKWARD becomes part of a Ghanaian understanding of rationality and modernity.

4.3.2 Witchcraft as Metaphor

This Subchapter begins with the astonishing observation that about 30% of the material has revealed the notion of *witch-hunting*. The notion of the *witch-hunt* as a noun or *witch-hunting* as verb, as discussed in Subchapter 3.1.1, clearly refers to a metaphor. There is, at no point, talk of actual agents called witches that are being hunted, but instead the concept describes a person who has claimed to be unjustly persecuted by law in the context of perceived political vendetta. *Witch-hunting* has become such a central metaphor in the Ghanaian political landscape that *GhanaWeb* columnist *Frank Agyemang* has made it point four out of 10 "Political Talks" in his satirical article criticizing typical excuses by Ghanaian politicians. I want to underscore at this point that searching for discussions on *witchcraft* in the Ghanaian online setting brings to

⁹³⁸ cf. *Africabi's* article *There Are No Witches In The Bible* (Gh.Web. 2010. November 27).

⁹³⁹ cf. Subchapter 2.2.1 *The Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft and its Activities Among the Ewe Society in the 19th- and early 20th-Centuries*.

⁹⁴⁰ Comment in PeaceFM. 2014, November 20.

⁹⁴¹ cf. Subchapter 3.4.3 *Case – Emmanuel Adebayor*.

light, first and foremost, metaphorical speech, and not, as Adinkrah (2015:112f.) suggests, the entertainment of Ghanaians through rumors on witches.

The example of witch-hunting, however, has not been the only display of metaphor in the material. Repeatedly commentators make claims that a certain utterance of witchcraft was meant metaphorical, as we can see in the cases of Anita De-Soso and Rose Mensah, where several commentators repeatedly underlined that their magical claims⁹⁴² were meant as metaphors. This idea is expressed in statements by authors like *ekow*⁹⁴³ who explains that by reference to witchcraft Akua Donkor wanted to “employ her political prowess”, and the author further makes reference to another case where a football player, Opoku Afriyie, was awarded the name “beyie” (witch) “for his goal scoring prowess.”⁹⁴⁴ Some authors agree that such a display of witchcraft is metaphorical, or a “metaphor joke”, which is put into relation with the “AB [Crentsil]” song, where it is described how one should use their witchcraft, hence “intelligence”, as argued by one of the commentators in the sample⁹⁴⁵. Author *Joe Biden* with emphasis concludes that “ANY ONE NOT UNDERSTANDING THIS IS A FOOL”⁹⁴⁶, referring to the metaphorical nature of the statement. Also worth highlighting in this respect are statements that in a similarly humorous way question the authenticity of Donkor’s message, and ask: is it “witchcraft or is it wishcraft”?⁹⁴⁷

The same imagery of explaining an excellent achievement or ability through witchcraft metaphors can be found in the case of Rose Mensah, where authors like *Bra Mensa*⁹⁴⁸ put forward the idea that by the expression Mensah meant to illustrate her talents. In this respect also see author *Earl Jones*⁹⁴⁹. Witchcraft becomes an *ontological metaphor* for “prowess” or more generally WITCHCRAFT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY. In regards to the case of Anita De-Soso authors explicitly speak of metaphors. In this way, author *HAZOR*⁹⁵⁰ speaks of a “riddle, metaphor or figure of speech” which helps “the average person to understand” the workings of the “dubious ways” of the government’s tax policy. Similarly, author *Prince Amoako*⁹⁵¹ sees the magical notions that were employed by Anita De-Soso as metaphors for the deceit in Ghanaian financial politics. Hence: DWARFS IS FRAUD.

⁹⁴² As I argue above, Anita De-Soso (3.1.4) blamed dwarfs to be responsible for causing economic problems, and Rose Mensah (3.4.1) called herself a *witch* to explain the high quality of her acting upon which she was bestowed with an award in 2011.

⁹⁴³ Comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 25.

⁹⁴⁴ Concerning the understanding of Donkor’s statement in a metaphorical way also see author *Joe Biden*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁹⁴⁵ Author *peeeeeee*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁹⁴⁶ Author *Joe Biden*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁹⁴⁷ Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2.

⁹⁴⁸ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁹⁴⁹ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

⁹⁵⁰ Comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, February 12.

⁹⁵¹ Comment in article PeaceFM. 2014, February 12.

4.3.3 Summary and Comment

This Subchapter followed the idea that witchcraft or witchcraft related terminology used in the Ghanaian online setting can in some instances be regarded as metaphorical. By suggesting this I do not seek to overcome any ontological or epistemological boundaries which one might see in the seeming gap between Western and African thinking regarding witchcraft⁹⁵². Nor do I want to demonstrate by this that people are generally becoming more inclined to not believe in witchcraft anymore. Stewart and Strathern (2004:75f.) have criticized that one cannot conclusively translate notions of witchcraft simply into metaphors. They argue (also in response to Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, introduction):

Indeed, we should not regard contemporary witchcraft notions as simply metaphors or ways of referring to social processes. Since they are grounded in the body and the emotions, they directly recognize that it is people's bodily energies and their mental faculties that are used up or 'consumed' in the stresses of life. (2004:76)

In relation to Scheper-Hughes (1996) and her work on the topic of "organ-stealing rumors", Stewart and Strathern (2004:89) go on to cite the author's "major perspective" which is "applicable across the board", namely that "witchcraft ideas and urban legends are not simply metaphors that express ideas of exploitation and trickery; rather, they grow out of people's bodily experiences in daily life—and in their regular encounters with death."

I do not want to follow this line of reasoning and reduce any talk of witchcraft to metaphors only. Rather I want to inquire what could be the point of using witchcraft as a metaphor and metaphors for witchcraft, and how they are useful linguistic means in the Ghanaian online context.

So what could be the meaning and function of metaphors for witchcraft and witchcraft as metaphor? Looking at what metaphors are used to describe witchcraft, I have established that witchcraft is framed in terms of an orientational metaphor, *WITCHCRAFT IS BEHIND*, criticizing witchcraft belief as a remnant of the past. This is, in my view, not to be understood as rational and religious critical thinking as in European history, but rather should be placed into the symbolic system as Birgit Meyer proposes. In that system the Devil (as well as witchcraft) remain as symbols of the past (a past that one has to break away from) while the Christian God serves as a symbol of the future (one that is valuable to achieve).

In terms of witchcraft as a metaphor, I highlight the observation that in about 30% of the material documented here, journalists and commentators make use of the notion of the *witch-hunt* which assumes a prominent position in Ghanaian political discourse. Furthermore, notions of witchcraft and magic, when used in political or economic discourse, are also employed to express imbalances. In this context, I would like to

⁹⁵² Indeed, there might be a connection between metaphoricalization, on the one hand, and secularization on the other. Taking into account that some readers, as presented above, defuse other commentator's supernatural claims by stating that witchcraft in certain contexts is merely meant metaphorically, is an observation that should not be overlooked. Drawing from this material it is not possible to determine whether witchcraft metaphors are indeed growing in popularity and if that coincides, in a way, with the emergence of disbelief in witchcraft. But I would like to encourage other researchers on witchcraft to follow this possibility. The question would be: can one understand the emergence of more metaphorical interpretations of witchcraft or notions of magic in general as an indicator for disbelief? The relationship of metaphoricalizations of spiritual, or religious notions and critical thinking, in general, remains an interesting topic.

forward the interpretation that narratives and statements that refer such political and economic imbalances to witchcraft or magic⁹⁵³ are fundamentally based on a comparison between witchcraft and illness. When claims are made that the Ghanaian state, through its politics or economy, is ‘attacked’ by witchcraft, the underlying conception is to perceive of a normally *healthy* state that is made *ill* through witchcraft. In other words, one could say: WITCHCRAFT IS AN ILLNESS of the state. It infects political personnel, departments, business men and women, for whose corruption (‘infection’) the common counter measure (or ‘antidote’) is to ‘witch-hunt’ them. Journalists, columnists, and commentators do not discuss these examples of witchcraft in a supernatural way; the critical voices ridicule people like Anita De-Soso, Akua Donkor, and Jerry John Rawlings. People, indeed, agree with the critical message behind the supernatural elaborations, and support the assertion, that corruption, an unmonitored spending of state money, as well as an embezzlement of state properties, is a fact of daily life in Ghana. In this way, the image of witchcraft is not used in discussions on the supernatural. Following the discourse logic of illness shows that the notion is used rationally as people do not engage in the supernatural abilities of witches, but rather discuss the *symptoms* of a non-functioning state.

The connection of witchcraft and illness is documented in Subchapter 3.2 in regards to the work of health personnel that try to inform people about the natural, i.e. medical and sometimes hygiene related causes of illnesses such as HIV and AIDS, cholera, malaria, cancer and mental conditions such as dementia, schizophrenia, depression, autism and so forth. It is their aim to make people understand that such things cannot be blamed on witchcraft. In parts of Ghana these diseases are regularly attributed to witchcraft. The connection of illness and witchcraft is further underlined by the dramatic events of the 1997 cerebrospinal meningitis epidemic in the North of Ghana, upon which lynchings have occurred, as Adinkrah (2004:327) has reported.

⁹⁵³ As is, for instance, visible in the Anita De-Soso case (Subchapter 3.1.4).

5 Conclusion

It was the aim of this thesis to, *firstly*, deliver an understanding of what is meant by the term witch (and its derivations) when they are used in the Ghanaian online discourse. The notion of witchcraft is understood as a the center of a *semantic field* out of which new witchcraft related terms emerge with new meanings and purposes. This field was illuminated and its content was analyzed. *Secondly*, it was the aim to assume a perspective sensitive to entangled histories and identify core themes in European views on African witchcraft, and vice versa. The *third* step was to bring together and compare both research horizons, to discuss the historical findings together with the contemporary findings from the online inquiry. Specifically keeping in mind three contexts worked as guidelines: how does the synopsis, the bringing together of the both research horizons respond to *a) the modernity of witchcraft, b) the 'otherness' of Africa, and c) witchcraft as a scandal.*

I shall proceed by recapturing the most important aspects of these three tasks and present them so that I can finally respond to the central questions of this thesis.

When I embarked on my project I expected to find lots of displays of witch belief in the online setting. So when I came across an article entitled “A tale of extraordinary witch-hunting”⁹⁵⁴ I saw my expectations confirmed, and assumed the online context is not different from what I had learned from ethnographical studies: the continent of Africa overflows with ideas on witch belief. However, in approaching the subject I soon became aware that this article, as well as hundreds of others of this kind, do not refer to witchcraft in the literal sense, but make use of a very popular *metaphor* used specifically in political and economic debates⁹⁵⁵. This is not say, of course, that in conclusion the topic of witchcraft is predominantly treated metaphorically in the online setting. As a major observation, however, I would like to submit that witchcraft is not only an ambiguous notion socially⁹⁵⁶, but also conceptually, as it may be used either metaphorically or literally, and in both cases has its own meanings and purposes.

5.1 Witchcraft in the Online Setting

First of all, there is the media perspective on witchcraft in the Ghanaian online setting. As argued by Adinkrah and Asamoah-Gyadu⁹⁵⁷, witchcraft plays a role in the form of a literal meaning where reports aim at entertaining people with narratives on the evil machinations of witches. Examples like these range from the revelation of popular and famous people as witches and their occult activities, to the complaints of football players who accuse their family members of bewitching them, the testimonies of famous people

⁹⁵⁴ Mod.Gh. 2010, June 21.

⁹⁵⁵ See sub-chapters 3.1.1 *The Witch-Hunt Metaphor*, and 4.3 *Witchcraft and Metaphor*.

⁹⁵⁶ cf. Peter Geschiere's interpretation of the *leveling* and *accumulating* side of witchcraft, Subchapter 1.2.4 “*The Modernity of Witchcraft in Africa*”.

⁹⁵⁷ See Mensah Adinkrah (2015, e.g. 112) and Kwabena J. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015).

having been saved from witchcraft, and reports on the supernatural or evil deeds of regular people who give birth to animals, shape shift into animals or perform other miraculous things. Newspapers circulate these stories with the aim of drawing the attention of the Ghanaian public with the scandalous and fantastic nature of such occurrences.

There is, however, also a more serious discourse when it comes to media reporting on witchcraft. One which consists in reports of actual attacks on supposed witches, which very often entails murder, and severe physical or psychological harm. Journalists under such circumstances report in a much more sober way, and hardly make use of the dramatizations and embellishments that can be found in the entertaining section of the newspapers. Here journalists show concern for witchcraft accusation as a social issue in contemporary Ghana, and often conclude their reports with the warning voices of Police or other people responsible in such contexts. Police repeatedly voice their admonishment in the newspapers and remind the Ghanaian public that the country of Ghana will prosecute people who brand, persecute or even harm others because of the accusation of witchcraft. In a curious comparison, one could summarize a somewhat contradictory picture: witchcraft discourses in Ghanaian online media entertain with reports on the harmful or miraculous activities of witches, while, at the same time, they inform about the negative repercussions that sometimes result from belief in the same.

As I discuss above, the view on online media is incomplete without considering the participatory nature of such websites, and demands the inclusion of the position of readers and commentators. Those equally contribute to the discourse, and their collected commentary amounts to a noteworthy collection of a wide spectrum of voices: some support the general picture of a deeply rooted belief in witchcraft in Africa, as presented in ethnographic studies. Others make up a set of alternative voices that are strongly dismissive of witchcraft belief. I submit, it is both of these perspectives that constitute the modernity of witchcraft in the Ghanaian online setting.

There are a number of arguments which are repeated:

a) witchcraft is an offense to (the Christian) God: here people admonish that witches need to make amends and seek the forgiveness of God. In this category, one can clearly attest belief in the harmful supernatural powers of witches. Commentators that fall into this category could be compared to the regular attendants of those Pentecostal Churches that engage in spiritual warfare against witches.

b) problematizing witchcraft belief is a collection of arguments where readers as well as columnists engage in criticizing the belief in witchcraft or fear of magic, expressing in general a skeptical view of such beliefs, and see it as a threat to the Ghanaian nation—socially, politically, in regards to the health sector, etc. This brand of *online witchcraft skepticism* displays a way of fault finding that has three trajectories: 1. detrimental religious and cultural notions and practices, 2. Christian Churches, and 3. media sensationalism.

1. the idea puts forward that there are so-called detrimental religious and cultural notions and practices which deliver the basis for the continuing belief in witchcraft and the violent causes of it. Commentators who raise such arguments discuss topics like *witchcraft*, *Trokosi*, *female genital mutilation*, *ritual murders*, and

early marriage, which in their view all belong to an outdated, destructive, irrational, and belief system which inhibits the development of the country.

Connected to this point, other commentators put the emphasis more on explaining who, in their view, has to take the blame.

2. the opinion is expressed, that it is (fake) Christian Churches where pastors put forward superstitious beliefs and thereby manipulate weak minds which often results in the barbaric acts of violating alleged witches. Terms like *fake pastors* and *one man Churches*, which are frequently used in this context, show that commentators are not criticizing Christian Churches in general but hold responsible pastors of whom they think they operate without formal theological training and without adherence to a more conservative Church. Those pastors, as it claimed, fashion their own brand of Pentecostalism, which rests too strongly on ‘outdated’, ‘irrational’, and ‘superstitious’ beliefs. In their view, these pastors and their Churches perpetuate the belief in witches and the accusation of innocent, mostly elderly, women.

3. people criticize Ghanaian media sensationalism by trying to entertain the public with stories that are perceived as *dishonest, unnecessary, ridiculous, and mischievous*. Commentators fear that Ghana is represented as a superstitious country, and that its outside image suffers from this.

In summary, one can say that the topic of witchcraft in the online setting is mostly met with concern, discontent and criticism. Witchcraft belief, by such individuals, is not accepted as a ‘proud’ part of tradition. On the contrary, if one considers the numerous references to the ‘backwardness’, ‘irrationality’, and ‘barbarism’ that critics connect to witchcraft belief, one must rather conclude that people reject witchcraft as an aspect of Ghanaian culture. I would like to underline again that this rejection does not necessarily entail religious critical or even atheist positions, as it might be the case in European contexts. Rather, I shall highlight that witchcraft belief critical voices can be formulated from both a religious critical as well as Christian perspective. Being a Christian, or more specific, being a Pentecostal in Ghana, obviously does not automatically entail the belief in witchcraft. Very often, commentators base their rejections upon Christian Theology to get across the point that witchcraft accusation activities are not reconcilable with Christianity. Their theological reasoning in some instances strongly resembles that of the alternative voices during the European witch-crazes⁹⁵⁸. As a further observation to corroborate the growing dissociation with witch belief by a number of participants, stands the fact that it has become an insult to call somebody a believer in witches. It is a recurring maneuver in discussions, especially between Ewe and Akan, to put the blame of pursuing an ‘outdated belief system’ onto another ‘tribe’.

It would exceed the scope of this thesis, but at least should be briefly mentioned, that one might ask in how far the idea of witchcraft regards grand topics like the Ghanaian national identity⁹⁵⁹. The continuing

⁹⁵⁸ See Subchapter 4.2.3 *Summary and Comment* where I compare one of the key figures of the intellectual resistance to witch belief during early modern Europe times to a contemporary Ghanaian online commentator.

⁹⁵⁹ Religion indeed regards national identity, as can be seen, for instance, in the discussion of famous and powerful Nigerian religious figures, such as T.B. Joshua. Here one can witness that many Ghanaian commentators feel the need to negotiate the national boundaries between Ghana and Nigeria.

denial of belief in witchcraft but the blaming of others as well as concerns about the outside image of Ghana⁹⁶⁰ make it seem questionable whether every member of Ghanaian society is equally enthusiastic about witchcraft belief being something genuinely African. As Asamoah-Gyadu (2015⁹⁶¹) stated, there is a need for African Churches to respond to “the supernatural evil implied by the word ‘witchcraft’”, a need that could not be satisfied by the Western Churches in Africa. However, there are only very few commentators who find witchcraft a suitable and necessary part of Christian ministry in the first place. Instead a larger number condemns it to be something that is done by *fake pastors in one man Churches*.

Before I move on to discuss this criticism in view of contemporary studies on witchcraft in the African setting, I would like to present the implications of the historical Chapter.

5.2 Mission and Commerce: a European View on West Africa in History

The Bremen missionary position only rarely seems to consider cases of witchcraft as a threat by themselves. It does not seem that missionaries believed in witchcraft, and only when it posed a threat to their missionary endeavors they reacted on it. While there is only one voice in the entire material which could be interpreted to show a general fear of the evil forces of magic (Lisbeth Meier), the other missionaries rather seemed to consider witchcraft as a form of violation of norms like *committing adultery, stealing money, indulging in alcohol* and the like. In this way, magical offenses (like the consultation of a sorcerer) were not deemed dangerous (supernatural acts) in themselves, but were fought nevertheless because they were considered rival forms of spirituality. Another view that emerged from the study of the Bremen material, and that is also referred to by Birgit Meyer (1996, 1999) and Chukwudi Njoku (2005), is expressed in the missionaries’ belief in scientific positivism. They regarded their own world view to be superior to the African view, and found especially witchcraft to be an example of that. But people who believed in witchcraft were not only considered inferior but also deemed mentally unfit. This has been documented in a report by Andreas Pfisterer, who claims that a man, who has been taught by the mission school for a long time, and who still believes in witchcraft, should be tied to the chain⁹⁶².

In the Bremen, as well as Portuguese perspective, one can find an observation that deserves a bit more elaboration. African phenomena in history have not only been mystified and exoticized but also delivered a *projection surface* for European interpretations that often give away their own underlying interest. In other words: the ‘otherness’ of Africa allowed to be filled meaning which is only significant to the observing and interpreting party. The Portuguese were more interested in commerce and trade, and therefore placed their interpretation of African magic into a framework of economy and the valuing of objects, thus arriving at a

⁹⁶⁰ The former mayor of Accra, Nat Amarteifio, expressed concern that Ghana through its cinema is presented as a nation of believers of ghosts and witches.

⁹⁶¹ Cited from the online version of the article.

⁹⁶² A treatment of madness which is still popular today (especially in prayer camps) as can be seen in some of the cases, e.g. Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b; Gh.Web. 2010, June 9; Gh.Web. 2013, August 27.

theory of fetishism. The Portuguese saw no reason to investigate on the particularities of African magic. Instead, a reductive understanding of African magic (and the entailed interpretations of *idolatry* or *witchcraft*) sufficed to support the *theory of fetishism*⁹⁶³. Witchcraft was hardly an obstacle to their endeavors, and it was therefore neither a scandal nor feared⁹⁶⁴, and it seemed of little worth to thoroughly document it. This is different to the Bremen missionaries who tried to contain witchcraft. Their endeavor was motivated in the form of Christian mission, and thus showed more interest in the intricacies of magical notions, and they collected such magical concepts in abundance, filling them with ethnographic detail⁹⁶⁵. Witchcraft, in this way, can be seen as a bright beacon which displays the ‘otherness’ of Africans. It enforced a belief of superiority and reminded the missionaries of their duty: to bring Christ, and end *idolatry* and *magical trickery*⁹⁶⁶, to bring back home these people lost to the Devil (cf. Meyer 1996:210), with their “religious and linguistic degeneration” (Greene 2002:19). Both for Bremen missionaries and Portuguese explorers, African magic served as a core element in their endeavors which could be drawn from demonstrating the ‘otherness’ of Africans.

The (mis-)using of African phenomena, such as witchcraft, as a projection surface for European ideas, however, should not lead to conclude that such encounters between Europeans and Africans only changed the African societies. Looking at the history of cultural encounters between Africans and Europeans, one can find several instances where Europeans⁹⁶⁷ reported about a curious involvement of Western economy and African witchcraft. Shaw (1997) demonstrates a continuity of witch beliefs as a conceptual remnant from the times of the slave trade. Birgit Meyer⁹⁶⁸, moreover, has investigated the changes in Ewe society and religion brought about by the BRM in modern times. It clearly shows that witchcraft has been part and parcel of African societies at that time. Investigating the changes that were brought about through the contact situation between African and European societies, reveals that it is more fruitful not to view those changes in terms of a one-sided European interference. Instead one can assume a view which asks how both, the African and the European side, changed through mutual influences. There are multiple examples of this kind of influences, illustrated, for instance, by the work of Brigit Meyer among the Ewe, in history and contemporary times regarding a vivid anti-witchcraft ministry. Europeans, like Luís de Nazaret even changed their own view on what before was summarized under the negative sounding word witchcraft, and allowed African calundeiros to help where he could not. Considering the contact situation in Brazil as a whole, one can easily pick numerous examples where African cosmology was welcomed in European religious discourses⁹⁶⁹. Also, one

⁹⁶³ See section *Fetish Theory* in Subchapter 2.1.4 *Contrasting Views on Witchcraft in History—African and Portuguese*.

⁹⁶⁴ This is documented in the case of Carmelite priest Luís de Nazaret. African calundeiros were allowed to make use of witchcraft. See Subchapter 2.1.3 *African Witchcraft during the Slave Trade*.

⁹⁶⁵ Concepts like *Zaubersachen* (magical items), *Zaubermedizin* (magic medicine), *Fetischwesen* (Fetishism), *Zauberdoktor* (Witch doctor), *Zauberwesen* (Sorcery as a system of beliefs), *Fetischmacher* (Fetish maker), *Flintenzauber* (Gun magic), etc.

⁹⁶⁶ cf. Schieck, Gottlob Benjamin. Report entitled “An das Komitee”, undated Keta 1873. StAB 7,1025-14/10.

⁹⁶⁷ As for instance, Portuguese explorers and priests who visited Africa (see Chapter 2).

⁹⁶⁸ See chapters 1.2.6 *Witchcraft and Popular Culture in Ghana*, and 1.2.6 *Witchcraft and Popular Culture in Ghana*.

⁹⁶⁹ e.g. the case of Barbara Morais whose husband suffered from witchcraft, and who consulted João Pereira, an ‘Angolan’ to perform counter magic (Sweet 2003:125f.).

has to point at the “creole world” of the 16th- and 17th-centuries, where religions were “heavily coloured by African as well as European ideas”. (Newitt 2010:3)

On the other hand, recently, one can witness a reimport of such anti-witchcraft discourses in African Churches into the Western world. As for instance visible in the activities of Kenyan preacher and Bishop, Thomas Muthee, the “founding bishop” of the World of Faith Church⁹⁷⁰, who regularly preaches at the “local Pentecostal church in Wasilla, Alaska”. There he met Sarah Palin, former vice-presidential running mate in 2008 presidential elections in the United States of America. During a sermon in 2005 Muthee held her hand to “keep her safe from ‘every form of witchcraft.’”⁹⁷¹

Finally, one must ask, what is the specific difference between the African and European discourses. If modernity indeed “has its own magicalities, its own enchantments” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xv) in Africa as well as in the West, then what is it that differs the African setting from the West where witch panics belong into the past? Economic and social imbalances are part of European societies in history as well as in contemporary times similarly to those in Africa, but witchcraft and the negative sides of modernity have never led to such a dense and mutually affecting connection like in Africa. While the European Enlightenment has connected its self-conception to the end of the witch-crazes (Berner 2012:141), there has not been such a development in Africa. It would seem a much stronger point therefore, if one could speak of a European modernity of witchcraft, which exists in a way⁹⁷², but differs from the African form.

5.3 Witchcraft as a “Gauge” for Capitalist Injustice

I find it one of the most important discoveries of the last decades of studies on witchcraft to understand how easily witchcraft adapts to modern circumstances, and especially has developed a curious connection to politics (cf. Geschiere 2000:10) and economy (see especially Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1999). I can corroborate from my study of the online setting that witchcraft does, indeed, play a role in political and economic discourses. When Stroeken (2012:20) writes that “It has done the study of witchcraft no good to limit itself since the 1990s to the public arena of discourse and politics, far away from the obscurity of the healer’s compound and the victim’s home where the witch actually comes into being”, I cannot fully agree in view of my own material. The 1990s focus on politics and economy has indeed opened a new and productive way of researching witchcraft, and it has increased the knowledge about the subject to the point where one can say that at least in regards to politics and witchcraft it becomes hard researching one without the other. Reading Stroeken’s criticism further, however, I find I must generally concur with the author’s argument that

⁹⁷⁰ <http://www.wofchurchke.org/leadership.html>, accessed May 3rd 2016.

⁹⁷¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/sarah-palin/3077964/Sarah-Palin-in-witchcraft-prayer-on-video-clip.html>, accessed May 3rd 2016.

⁹⁷² Which exists, as I discuss in the introduction, in the form of Wicca and other related forms of contemporary witchcraft. Witches in Europe arouse more positive associations than witches in Africa. Considering only the popularity of witches and wizards in fiction like the British book series and film adaptations of Harry Potter or the German children’s audio drama *Bibi Blocksberg – Die kleine Hexe*. The last tells the story of a young witch that makes positive use of magical powers, which she inherited from her mother.

the “resilience of witchcraft beliefs” cannot easily be explained as mere reactions to modern political and economic inequalities, and, more importantly, modernity itself is not the “instigator of witchcraft” (cf. Stroeken 2012:20). Indeed, the tight connection of witchcraft and politics (or other achievements of modernity), which is unarguably present too in the online setting, should not be misunderstood in terms of a causal relation. However, reading the Comaroffs⁹⁷³ and their notion of witches as “modernity’s prototypical malcontents” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxix) leaves the reader wondering if not these political and economic inequalities are, in fact, the “instigator” of witchcraft (Stroeken 2012:20). In my view, such an assessment would ignore, that witchcraft has existed in Africa before the involvement of Europeans⁹⁷⁴, and the curious connection of economy and witchcraft has existed long before ‘millennial capitalism’ and ‘neoliberalism’⁹⁷⁵. Both works (Shaw and Meyer) demonstrate the value of the historical perspective in that they illustrate how witchcraft has mattered long before millennial capitalist social structures. In other words, African societies have never been in need of European cultural achievements when it comes to witchcraft.

Such historical entanglement is strong and must not be overlooked. In view of my material, I shall argue that participants in the online discourse make a strong difference between what is historical (or *traditional*) and what is contemporary (or *modern*). This, of course, returns to the idea that “antinomy between tradition and modernity” is only a “long-standing European myth [...]”. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xii) Comaroffs continue to state that witches therefore cannot count as “advocates of tradition”, instead witches “embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself [...]” (ibid.:xxviii) This, however, stands in stark contrast to one of the main findings in the empirical Chapter, where it has become clear that, for the most part, commentators, but also columnists, and journalists, indeed, place witches into the realm of tradition, e.g.

- “witchcraft is an old-long tradition which does not exist in reality hence the need to bring to an end the practice from the modern society”⁹⁷⁶
- *Pentecostal Churches provide a Theology which accords* “with aspects of traditional thinking, including the dynamics of WITCHCRAFT”⁹⁷⁷
- *Speaking about a “fetish priest” who tricked a woman into compliance to finally rape her over the threat of having been made sterile by a witch:* “We need to do something about our backward stone age traditional system if we really want to catch up with the advance countries”⁹⁷⁸
- *Regarding the case of Rose Mensah who called herself a witch:* “in traditional Akan society [...] when someone has talent they refer to the person as a witch”⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷³ As well as other proponents of the modernity of witchcraft.

⁹⁷⁴ cf. Subchapter 2.1.2 *Early Portuguese Encounters with African Witchcraft*.

⁹⁷⁵ As is illustrated by the work of Shaw (1997), trade, economy, and witchcraft form an interesting context, see beginning of Chapter 2.

⁹⁷⁶ Gh.Web. 2010, May 19.

⁹⁷⁷ Author *Bechemniiba* (Paris), comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, August 1.

⁹⁷⁸ Author *SARPONG*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, June 13.

⁹⁷⁹ Author *Bra Mensa*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2011, January 10.

In view of such accounts it seems that, in contrast to the view of the Comaroffs, witches are indeed perceived as traditional. In fact, the notion of modernity vs tradition is rather strong, and witches make up the typical example of this dichotomy. It is quite striking, moreover, that, as presented in Chapter 3, those witch belief critical voices not only maintain this dichotomy, but also repeatedly name modernity and its artifacts and social achievements as solutions to the ‘problem’ of witch belief. Those Ghanaian commentators do not seem to phrase much criticism towards capitalism. Instead, they name modern achievements as a way to escape the ‘brutal’ consequences of witchcraft belief. Repeatedly, commentators point at the connection of religious freedom⁹⁸⁰ and the functioning of economy, social care, and politics in general, in order to overcome these beliefs and their sometimes violent results.

I would like to return to the assessment that throughout the history of European (proto-)ethnographic endeavors in Africa witchcraft has played a pivotal role. It served as a projection surface, an explanatory device which—because of its seemingly ambiguous and hard to grasp nature—could, and still can, easily be highlighted to vindicate one’s own observations. This stance reflects in the Portuguese theory of fetishism by which it could be accounted for why Africans behaved so ‘strangely’ in commerce. Also, it reflects in the Bremen mission’s ways of exerting theological control to advance their own goals. Finally, it still reflects in contemporary Anthropology where witchcraft becomes a symptom and a gauge for the imbalances caused by capitalism. As mentioned in the introduction, Kapferer has criticized this assertion as it makes sorcery and witchcraft merely seem not much more than “pathological indicators of social breakdown.” (Kapferer 2003:18) In this way, witchcraft, once more, is placed into the sector of the irrational, the defective, the sick and ill, and only emerges to speak of misfortune. Witchcraft, however, can be so much more than just an indicator of social and monetary imbalances.

It is not insignificant that Stroeken’s 2012 book bears the subtitle *The Magic of Witchcraft*—as if claims about what witches do could be anything else but magical. These discussions, however, have shown that the insisting that there is indeed a magical aspect of witchcraft is not unfounded. Observing the topic from a Religious Studies perspective, I would like to underscore that the otherworldly, extraordinary, magical, or supernatural aspects of witchcraft matter very much. In relation to what Lucy P. Mair claims in her 1960s article, I would like to repeat and underscore that witchcraft is a suitable subject for Religious Studies specifically because of its supernatural aspects. These aspects, however, are denied in a study that merely focuses on modern and economic conflicts, and presents witchcraft as a cause of such imbalances. Taking the view from a Religious Studies perspective, therefore, requires one, to place religious aspects into the center of the observation. One can, for instance, compare the African campaigners of the anti-witch-belief movement within a framework of religious criticism, and treat them just like their European counterparts; fighting against the ‘superstitious’ beliefs in their time.

⁹⁸⁰ For some this also means *freedom from religion*.

5.4 The Metaphorical and Literal Meaning of Witchcraft

I would like to return to the idea that the discursive function of the concept of witchcraft, as demonstrated here in regards to the online setting, may at times be rather metaphorical than literal. In contemporary Anthropology, utterances of magical concepts in African discourses are very often too quickly taken as evidence for the belief in the reality of witchcraft, and are interpreted as an African way of coping with modernity. Witchcraft related discourses in Ghanaian newspapers, however, seem very often to be of a *metaphorical* nature. Considering that about 30% of cases where the term *witch* is mentioned refer to articles which feature the *witch-hunt metaphor*, while other commentators repeatedly insist that the notion of ‘witch’ also has a metaphorical level. To an overwhelming part the topic of witchcraft in the Ghanaian online setting is approached not in terms of faith statements, metaphysical discussions, problematizations of witch attacks, and similar direct and indirect affirmations of the belief, but rather in terms of criticism and metaphorical speech.

But what is the function of that discourse? I would like to suggest that the figure of the witch in public perception oscillates between both fact and fiction, modernity and tradition. This is, I submit, one of the key features of the concept, which makes it so powerful in discourse. One could say, the witch, or more precisely the trope ‘witch’, is shifted back and forth in discussions, as one reader may reject the meaning and contemporaneity of witchcraft, whereas another might underline it. Metaphorically speaking, ‘witches’ are never allowed to land and settle, they are supposed to stay airborne and only in this way, they can develop their powerful meaning in discussions. Thus witches can be used to bridge those breaks and crises of modernity to which Comaroff and Comaroff point when they speak of witchcraft as a “finely calibrated gauge” (1993:xxviii). By making use of, for instance, the witch-hunt metaphor, participants in the online discussions employ a familiar notion which helps to describe a more complex and less accessible notion like the accusation of embezzlement of state money. This point deserves a deeper look:

The term witch-hunt, as I suggest in Subchapter 3.1.1 *The Witch-Hunt Metaphor*, is based on the notion of the literal hunting of witches—a known reality in Ghana to this day. The concept that expresses the persecution of people upon the accusation of witchcraft. The word is composed of two nouns, i.e. *witch*: A PERSON BELIEVED TO BE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING POSSIBLY MALIGN FORMS MAGIC TO ITS OWN BENEFIT, and *hunt*: THE PURSUING AND KILLING OF ANIMALS. In this way, the metaphor of *witch-hunt* or *witch-hunting* is a metaphor outside of its application in the political and economic sectors already. The hunting of witches thus draws the picture of women accused of performing magical deeds being chased and brought to death like animals. The metaphor in the Ghanaian political setting in conceptual terms, I suggest, can be linked to the historical European phenomenon during the witch crazes, or to the contemporary hunts in Africa. Both topics are represented in the material; in fact, there are direct references to the times of the European witch-crazes⁹⁸¹. It

⁹⁸¹ e.g. Author *Kojo!*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2013, December 2; author *Duty & right to revoke*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2009, August 14b (the author makes a reference to the *Malleus Maleficarum*); author *PROF*, comment in article Gh.Web. 2014, June 11 (the author directly compares the situation in contemporary Ghana to medieval Europe).

is therefore conceivable to suggest that some commentators in the Ghanaian online discourse on witchcraft approach the topic, at least to some degree, by reference to the European history of the witch-hunts. It should be mentioned, however, that the references to Europe in this regard are rather few, so it may well be the case that it is the African example of witch-hunting that delivers the conceptual basis for the metaphor.

In the article *Ten Political Talks We Are Always Assured Of*⁹⁸² the author, *Frank Agyemang*, makes clear that witch-hunting and corruption are closely connected, however, the practice of witch-hunting is rather not appreciated by the Ghanaian public. This is expressed in the article when the author distinguishes typical comments of politicians when in opposition and when in power. Politicians in opposition refer to witch-hunting, and express that they will not engage in any such act, as they criticize the ruling power: “Instead of concentrating on the economy, Government is embarking on ‘witch hunting’”, stressing that it is a waste of time. When in power, on the other hand, the notion of witch-hunting is denied and the ‘true’ meaning of the activity is revealed: “There is nothing like witch hunting, it’s a matter of dealing with corrupt officials”.

Moving on to the examples given⁹⁸³, one can see that the notion is quite flexible and can be applied to single people, groups of people, or to abstract things⁹⁸⁴. In some instances, the metaphor of witch-hunting is further embellished by another metaphor: “poisoning of the Ghanaian business environment”. Here political witch-hunting is seen as A SUBSTANCE CAUSING ILLNESS OR EVEN DEATH TO GHANAIAN BUSINESS (Gh.Web. 2010, March 24.). The conceptual connection of witchcraft and poison⁹⁸⁵, would further corroborate the idea that on a lower conceptual level witchcraft and health, or illness are conceptually related, to explain an unhealthy state⁹⁸⁶.

The above is one side of two sides of interpreting the metaphor. As *Frank Agyemang* explains, politicians might use the notion differently when they are in opposition, and when they are in power. The metaphor of witch-hunting people in the first sense, e.g. politicians who have been accused of corruption, expresses the UNJUST PERSECUTION of people which are, according to the metaphor, BROUGHT TO DEATH. Such a use of a metaphor, which entails a picture of witches as the innocent and unfairly hunted, is a noteworthy observation in a country where it is assumed that people in general believe in witches as evil-doers, and are, therefore, deserving of punishment. European history needed witchcraft critics such as Reginald Scot, and others, to doubt the guilt of witches. In the Ghanaian online context, on the other hand (taking into consideration the witch belief critical positions⁹⁸⁷), it seems to be the case that witches are more and more

⁹⁸² Gh.Web. 2009, October 8.

⁹⁸³ See Subchapter 3.1.1 *The Witch-Hunt Metaphor*.

⁹⁸⁴ People and groups that are witch-hunted can be *homosexual people in Ghana* (e.g. Chronicle. 2011, July 21; GH.Web. 2011, December 8; Gh.Web. 2012, January 31; Gh.MMA. 2013, February 11); *Chinese Mine Workers* (PeaceFM. 2012, September 26); *popular politicians* such as Tsatsu Tsikata (Gh.Web. 2010, March 7) or former president John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor (Gh.Web. 2009, October 18); moreover, it can abstract things like entire *economic sectors* or *companies*: Ghana Oil witchhunting (Gh.Web. 2010, January 10); “pure political witch hunting of companies” (Gh.Web. 2010, March 24.).

⁹⁸⁵ Witches can kill with poison, e.g. in the African context see Ashforth 2005:144; in the European context see Bever 2008:8ff. In this case, however, the roles are reversed: the witch-hunters, i.e. those politicians unjustly persecuting companies and individuals in business are those who administer the poison to the state.

⁹⁸⁶ See Subchapter 4.3.3 *Summary and Comment*.

⁹⁸⁷ See Subchapter 4.2.2 *“Secular Magic in a Rational Age”*.

viewed as innocent or at least undeserving of punishment. A noteworthy exception to this is expressed in one instant, where it is claimed that “If there is witches, they must be hunted”.⁹⁸⁸ This, from another angle, completes the metaphor because it compares the supposed CORRUPT PEOPLE with witches (who amongst other things ‘eat the state’) which must be hunted, i.e. IDENTIFIED AND BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. Indeed, the notion of witches as man-eaters, or cannibals, is known from African history and contemporary times⁹⁸⁹, as well as contemporary studies. Among the Maka of Cameroon, for instance, the witch eats “the substance of others” to harm them and, at the same time to personally profit from it. (MacGaffey in Geschiere 2000:ix⁹⁹⁰) Moreover, in their understanding the connection of *eating* and *witchcraft* is even part of the myth how djambe (witchcraft) came into the world⁹⁹¹. In “West and West-Central Africa” metaphors of the cannibal and the witch as dangers to society survive until today (Green 2012:237), while the word to eat is “frequently” used in contemporary Gambia and Senegal “to describe the destructive corruption of [their] ruling elites [...]” (Green 2012:237)⁹⁹² The act of ‘eating’ kin is a symbol of selfishness, inversion of norms (cf. Geschiere 2000:40), and it is perceived as very dangerous to the ‘house’—to use an expression of Geschiere (especially 2013). I would like to suggest that the second interpretation of the notion of witch-hunting, follows the idea of ‘eating the state’. In this way, one can interpret the metaphor as follows: the witch who is ‘eating the state’ is a CORRUPT POLITICIAN⁹⁹³, who *selfishly* damages the state, i.e. THE HOUSE OF the nation. This would pick up an observation of Geschiere: he underlines that witchcraft is a “globalizing” phenomenon, which, at the same time, has its roots in the “close environment”. (Geschiere 2013:xvi) Thus the metaphor expands the idea of witches typically harming the close environment of ‘the house’ to the entire state of Ghana, where witches ‘eat’ the money of the state in the form of *corrupt* and *selfish* individuals.

Considering the wide majority of applications of this, however, the notion of witch-hunting could be seen as the *epitomic slogan* of a new view upon witches in Ghana, as the metaphorical usage has an influence, in turn, on the concept. These changes in perspective, the criticism, and, in some cases, the comparing of Ghanaian incidents of the persecution and killing of witches with European history, alludes to a process of dissociation. This thesis provides ample support of the idea that, indeed, there is a formation of a witch belief critical discourse emerging from the Ghanaian online setting—the metaphorization of witchcraft shall be considered one further piece of evidence.

I shall close this point in terms of perspectives for future research, and underscore that a more in-depth research on the relation of *witchcraft and metaphor* should be a most fruitful task—especially in review of online material. As I describe in the following Subchapter, working with online material has a number of

⁹⁸⁸ Mod.Gh. 2009, January 14.

⁹⁸⁹ See Subchapter 2.1.3 *African Witchcraft during the Slave Trade*.

⁹⁹⁰ Geschiere (2000:40) also refers to cannibalism as an “utterly shocking [...] inversion of [...] order.”

⁹⁹¹ A woman brought djambe, which had promised her powers, from the wilderness into the village. The djambe, living in the belly of the woman, in return for its service, “demanded meat to eat.” And upon having eaten all the woman’s meat which was brought by her husband, it led the woman to kill “all the animals in the compound”. Finally, when even that was not enough, the djambe forced the woman to give it “her own children, one by one.” (Geschiere 2000:39)

⁹⁹² Also see Geschiere 2000:18.

⁹⁹³ Or another person of social or financial power and fame.

advantages, especially regarding the accessibility of data. One could easily expand the scope of a study of the metaphors of witchcraft (and vice versa) to larger parts of West African online discourses, comparing countries.

5.5 Doing Research on Religion in the Online Setting

Before I close, I would like to draw the attention to a technical issue, which is to share my experience of working with online material in the context of researching religion. I have come to embrace it as a fruitful endeavor as it gives easy access to a rich source of material, and needs to be involved more than it has been up until now. Online communication has become an indispensable asset for almost every sector of modern human interaction. Whether it concerns the entertainment industries like music, film and video game, or if one regards product placement, e-commerce, or, very generally, social networking services (photo, video and microblogging included) like Facebook⁹⁹⁴, Flickr⁹⁹⁵, Instagram⁹⁹⁶, LinkedIn⁹⁹⁷, Tumblr⁹⁹⁸, Twitter⁹⁹⁹, Youtube¹⁰⁰⁰, and Xing¹⁰⁰¹. Considering the fact that the online setting, moreover, has become an indispensable resource for the political sector during the last couple of years¹⁰⁰², should further underscore that this kind of research is quickly growing in relevance.

Religion can, of course, not be excluded from this as it plays a role in nearly all of these platforms and contexts. Taking into account only those instances of people like *Kwaku Bonsam*, and Churches like the *Synagogue Church of All Nations*, the internet has offered a platform that is eagerly and extensively used. Staying on the two examples for a moment, allows one to see that *Kwaku Bonsam*¹⁰⁰³, uses a *Youtube* channel¹⁰⁰⁴, has a site on *Wikipedia*¹⁰⁰⁵, and there are numerous articles in online newspapers and other forms of publication on him. The Synagogue Church of All Nations also has its own *Youtube* channel¹⁰⁰⁶, an official website¹⁰⁰⁷, an official website for *Emmanuel TV*¹⁰⁰⁸, a *Wikipedia* page¹⁰⁰⁹, and T. B. Joshua has an account on

⁹⁹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

⁹⁹⁵ <https://www.flickr.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

⁹⁹⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

⁹⁹⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

⁹⁹⁸ <https://www.tumblr.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

⁹⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

¹⁰⁰¹ <https://www.xing.com/>, accessed October 20th 2016.

¹⁰⁰² To give a few examples, one might refer to countless online newspapers worldwide that provide readers with political information, and allow them to engage in discourses through comment sections. Another example could be the exchange of political opinions by users of interested groups on YouTube (which has a category for 'News and Politics'). A third example could be the activities of politicians on numerous other social networking services.

¹⁰⁰³ Apart from his own website, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Google Plus* accounts.

¹⁰⁰⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/user/bonsam100/about>, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nana_Kwaku_Bonsam, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/user/scoanvideos/about>, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁷ <http://www.scoan.org/>, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁸ <http://emmanuel.tv/>, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰⁰⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_TV, accessed October 6th 2016.

*Facebook*¹⁰¹⁰, a *Wikipedia* page¹⁰¹¹, and, like in the case of Kwaku Bonsam, there are numerous online articles published on him. In both cases¹⁰¹², the richness of the discourses is very much based on the fact that one can not only investigate the opinions of religious experts or institutions, but there is also the possibility of different opinions by the participants in the discourses. *Twitter*, *Facebook* and any other social network, as well as the commentary section of online newspapers, are contexts which exist only through the participation of users who are not obliged to represent a certain opinion¹⁰¹³. Taking my example of this thesis, I can verify that people make extensive use of these channels to extend the spectrum of ideas and opinions beyond the point of a singular official view. Such data covers a wide variety of text genres (reports, narratives, commentaries, discussions, etc.), and is easily and quickly accessible in great quantities that are comfortably storable on electronic devices.

I shall add, that conducting research in this way, is suitable especially for a controversial topic such as witchcraft. This study has revealed how critically some people speak about the subject, a topic which in other studies often seems to be presented as a typical and almost necessary aspect of African cosmology. This censorship free space of anonymity, however, obviously invites voices that contrast and contradict the usual picture, which is otherwise studied in the field with immediately concerned parties, or in the context of Churches or other authorities.

5.6 Closing Remarks

As much as historical research often neglects to mention those alternative and critical voices during the witch-crazes in European history (and often holds to the opinion that every European of that time believed in witchcraft), so much does contemporary ethnographic research neglect to mention Africa's critical voices. There are, indeed, *skeptical positions regarding witch belief* which, as is demonstrated in this thesis, make up the stronger part of this section of the Ghanaian online discourse. I suggest that while the 'optimistic' statement of Peter Geschiere's assistant, "where there is light, witchcraft will disappear" (Geschiere 2000:2), has certainly not proven itself to be correct, one might say instead, that where there is internet witchcraft narratives seem much less credible. Journalists seem to more and more fail to entertain readers with such supernatural and scandalous reports, instead people begin to inquire, criticize and even dismiss such assertions in a self-critical attitude as Ghanaian commentators feel themselves misrepresented in front of the world with a 'motherland of superstition'. The appetite for supernatural and scandalous stories seems to

¹⁰¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/tbjministries/>, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._B._Joshua, accessed October 6th 2016.

¹⁰¹² This, of course, also applies to numerous other high profile religious individuals, Churches, and other organizations.

¹⁰¹³ Some websites make use of forms of censorship in cases of hate speech or threats of violence. See Subchapter 1.3.1 *Approaching the Online Setting from a Religious Studies Perspective* for information on censorship on the Ghanaian websites used here.

dwindle, and people rather ask for “constructive news”, those that have an “impact” on society and politics.¹⁰¹⁴

It seems, the academic or social scientific study of witchcraft in Africa is in need of a more differentiated look into the impact of the internet. Reading contemporary studies on witchcraft in Africa, easily makes one conclude that Africa is much more drawn towards witch belief than other parts of the world. My study, however, has shown that this is not the case. Instead it seems that Ghanaians in the online discourse themselves more and more perceive witchcraft belief as much concerning as European observers of today.

With such conclusions in mind, I can move forward to scholars like Danfulani (2007:181) who also detects a connection between the stability and development (social, educational, and in regards to health, economy, etc.) and witchcraft:

When such African nations are able to develop fairly stable civil societies with highly developed social, educational, health, economic and social amenities, people’s picture of the cosmos will change drastically. This will consequently reduce the practice of witchcraft, sorcery and other cultic practices that seem rather to be on the increase in many African societies today.

As I have demonstrated there is a wide spectrum of ideas on how to deal with witchcraft in social scientific discourse. I mostly agree with Geschiere who makes clear that witchcraft must be studied “without [...] falling back in a discourse about the Other as radically different”, to reveal itself not as African exoticism but instead to show that witchcraft is based on “a struggle with problems common to all human societies”. (Geschiere 2000:223).

Regardless of what one declares to be their academic home and from where one looks to describe witchcraft in Africa, one must not remain disinterested to those voices, which tightly connect their hopes of alleviating the brutal realities of witch belief, with its accusations, its banishments, its panics and its killings, into specifically that: *modernity*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Author *Vandal kitw3*, comment in article PeaceFM. 2013, December 25.

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