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The Modern Forms of Witchcraft in Zambia: An Analysis of Local Witchcraft Narratives in Urban Settings of Lusaka

Kateřina Mildnerová

Witchcraft in Africa has always aroused the curiosity of Western observers depending on whether they were missionaries, travellers, colonizers or anthropologists. The phenomenon of African witchcraft was for the first time comprehensively elaborated by the British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard.[1] It continued to be studied in the second half of the twentieth century amongst researchers of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute,[2] who focused primarily on the relationship between witchcraft, kinship organization, and local political power. Among the most prominent researchers of African witchcraft were Max Marwick,[3] John Middleton and Edward Winter,[4] Charles White,[5] James Clyde Mitchell,[6] and Victor Turner,[7] who interpreted the processes of witchcraft accusation as an indicator of the

1 Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1937.

2 The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute affiliated to Manchester University was founded in 1938 in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The institute was the first local anthropological research facility to be set up in an African colony. It developed research projects involving anthropological fieldwork in both urban and rural localities of British Central Africa that were carried out mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. At the base of this research, several new methodological and theoretical approaches were elaborated. Studies of the Manchester school represented a polemic within the dominant paradigm of English structural functionalism and its static vision of culture. Drawing on processual and situational perspectives, prominent anthropologists such as Max Gluckman, Max Marwick, John Middleton, James Clyde Mitchell, Victor Turner and Elizabeth Colson focused on themes encompassing issues of conflict and reconciliation within social structures.

3 Max Marwick, *Sorcery in Its Social Setting: A Study of the Northern Rhodesian Chewa*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1965.

4 John Middleton – Edward H. Winter (eds.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, London: Routledge – Kegan Paul 1963.

5 Charles M. N. White, *Elements in Luvale Beliefs and Rituals*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1961.

6 James Clyde Mitchell, "The Tribes in the Towns", in: William Brelsford (ed.), *The Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, Lusaka: Government Printer 1956, 109-120; id., "The Meaning of Misfortune for Urban Africans", in: Meyer Fortes – Germaine Dieterlen (eds.), *African System of Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1965, 192-203.

7 Victor Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1957; id., "Witchcraft and Sorcery:

degree of social tension and conflict in a given society, as well as an effective tool for the regulation of social conflict in order to maintain social order. By emphasizing the significance of political and economic processes, the authors, however, neglected the symbolic dimensions of witchcraft, as well as the context of power relations issuing from colonial history.

The phenomenon of witchcraft continued to be studied in the 1960s and 1970s by symbolical anthropologists such as Mary Douglas[8] and Alfred Adler and Andras Zempleni,[9] who focused on the inner logic of its symbolic representations. In the 1980s, when the neo-Marxist paradigm prevailed, the authors analysed witchcraft within the broader context of political-economic development. Scholars such as Wim Van Binsbergen[10] and Michael Rowlands and Jean-Pierre Warnier[11] put an emphasis on the instrumentality of witchcraft within political-economic struggles. Attention was also paid to flourishing witchcraft eradication movements interpreted as a form of social resistance and protest.[12]

In contrast to previous studies that tackled the phenomenon of witchcraft exclusively in the rural context, since the 1990s anthropologists have turned their attention to the "new forms of witchcraft" in the urban setting. These are interpreted in the context of socio-economic changes resulting from the penetration of international capitalism into African societies and their consequent globalization. As a result, witchcraft is studied in connection with the accumulation of wealth, power, and modes of consumption, production, and trade.

The topic of healing and witchcraft in Lusaka has not yet been systematically elaborated. As for Zambia, we can only find brief selective studies of traditional medicine from the 1970s and 1980s made by Ronald

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Taxonomy versus Dynamics", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 34/4, 1964, 314-325.

8 Mary Douglas, "Witch Beliefs in Central Africa", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 37/1, 1967, 72-80; ead., "Introduction. Thirty years after Witchcraft, Oracle and Magic", in: ead. (ed.), *Witchcraft, confession and accusation*, London: Tavistock 1970, 8-30; ead., "Witchcraft and Leprosy: Two Strategies of Exclusion", *Man New Series* 26/4, 1991, 723-736.

9 Alfred Adler – Andras Zempléni, *Le bâton de l'aveugle: Divination, maladie et pouvoir chez les Moundang du Tchad*, Paris: Herman 1972.

10 Wim van Binsbergen, *Religious Change in Zambia: Exploratory Studies*, London: Kegan Paul 1981.

11 Michael Rowlands – Jean Pierre Warnier, "Sorcery, Power and Modern State in Cameroon", *Man* (n. s.) 23/1, 1988, 118-132.

12 See Roy G. Willis, "Kamchape: An Anti-sorcery Movement in South-West Tanzania", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 38/1, 1968, 1-15; Lorne E. Larson, *Witchcraft Eradication Sequences Among the People of the Ulanga District, Tanzania*, Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam, History Research Center 1973.

Frankenberg,[13] Gordon Chavunduka,[14] and Patrick Twumasi,[15] who paid attention to the distribution of medical services in Lusaka, the professionalization of traditional medicine, and the potentiality of the traditional herbal *materia medica* for biomedical use. From the most recent research into Zambian traditional medicine, the study by Kaori Sugishita[16] is worthy of note.

More valuable sources of information about spiritual healing and witchcraft in Zambia come from authors such as Clive Dillon-Malone[17] and Bennetta Jules Rosette,[18] who focused mainly on the healing praxis of the newly arising African Independent Churches in Lusaka. Older, but no less useful are the anthropological studies of witchcraft from the above mentioned Manchester school concerning primarily the social aspects of witchcraft belief in a fast changing urban Copperbelt during the colonial era. Although, since the 1990s, several thematically different monographs and essays about the religious situation in Zambia have appeared,[19] comments about healing and witchcraft in contemporary Zambia have remained scant and very fragmentary until today. The partial exceptions are the recent studies by Jan-Bart Gewald[20] analysing witchcraft imagery during the

13 Ronald Frankenberg, "Man, Society and Health: Towards the Definition of the Role of Sociology in the Development of Zambian Medicine", *African Social Research* 8, 1969, 573-587; Ronald Frankenberg – Joyce Leeson, "Disease and Sickness: Social Aspects of the Choice of Healers in Lusaka Suburbs", in: Jean Buist Loudon (ed.), *Social Anthropology and Medicine*, New York: Academic Press 1976, 573-587.

14 Murray Last – Gordon Chavunduka, *The Professionalization of African Medicine*, Manchester: Manchester University Press – International African Institute 1986.

15 Patrick Twumasi, *The Professionalization of Traditional Medicine in Zambia*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press 1984.

16 Kaori Sugishita, "Traditional Medicine, Biomedicine and Christianity in Modern Zambia", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 79/3, 2009, 435-454.

17 Clive Dillon-Malone, "Mutumwa Nchimi Healers and Wizardry Beliefs in Zambia", *Social Science and Medicine* 26/11, 1988, 1159-1172.

18 Bennetta Jules-Rossette, *Symbols of Change: Urban Transition in Urban Community*, London: Ablex 1981.

19 See Wim van Binsbergen, "Religious Change in Zambia", in: Brian Morris (ed.), *Religion and Anthropology: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, 164-177; Cor Jonker, "The Politics of Therapeutic Ngoma: The Zionist Churches in Urban Zambia", in: Rijk van Dijk – Ria Reis – Maria Spierenburg (eds.), *The Quest for Fruition through Ngoma: Political Aspects of Healing in Southern Africa*, Oxford: James Currey 2000, 117-131; George Sembereka, "The Place of Gule Wamkulu in Dreams Attributed to Spirits, Nominal Reincarnation and Spirit Possession: The Nankumba Experience", *The Society of Malawi Journal* 49/1, 1996, 1-32; Roy G. Willis, *Some Spirits Heal, Others Only Dance: A Journey into Human Selfhood in an African Village*, Oxford: Berg 1999.

20 Jan-Bart Gewald, "Fears and Fantasies in Northern Rhodesia, 1950-1960", in: Jan-Bart Gewald – Marja Hinfelaar – Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late Colonial Zambia*, Leiden: Brill 2011, 207-228; id., *From*

British colonial rule, George Clement Bond[21] studying witchcraft beliefs in northern Zambia, and Kate Crehan[22] dealing with witchcraft in impoverished rural areas of the North-Western Province of Zambia. This article thus endeavours to fill the vacuum in academic literature.

In order to support some of the theoretical assumptions of recent anthropological discourse on "modern forms" of witchcraft in urban settings, I draw on multi-episodic medical cases[23] recorded in Lusaka. I analyse not only local individual narratives but also collective narratives circulating among Lusaka's dwellers in the form of an urban myth. The witchcraft is not tackled only in a narrow sense as individual illness aetiology, but at a more general level as a special form of worldview and local discourse reflecting the occurrence of evil, misfortune, and inequalities in the world. After contextualising the topic in its cultural and socio-economic background and outlining the major theories of witchcraft in recent anthropological studies, I proceed to an analysis of the symbolic representations of witchcraft in local narratives. The main aim of the article is to answer the question of what kind of socio-economic problems the current symbolic imagery of urban witchcraft reflects, and how the local witchcraft discourse is socially and culturally constructed in specific situations and events.

The data used in this article were collected during fieldwork in Lusaka[24] by means of different qualitative research methods such as semi-structured and biographical interviews conducted with different traditional healers[25] both in English and the chiNyanja language,[26] complemented by the participant observation of traditional divination séances, therapeutic consultations, and special medico-religious rituals. To support the main arguments

Kaliloze to Karavina: The Historical and Current Use and Context of "Kaliloze Witch Guns" in Western Zambia, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographie 2010.

21 George Clement Bond, "Ancestors and Witches: Explanation and the Ideology of Individual Power in Northern Zambia", in: George Clement Bond – Diane Ciekawy (eds.), *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2001, 131-157.

22 Kate Crehan, *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1997.

23 In total, eight individual medical cases were thoroughly examined; other five cases were not completed.

24 The stationary fieldwork in Lusaka was carried out in 2008/2009 (in total 11 months).

25 The group of key informants consisted of witch-finders (5 informants: all men), their patients (8 informants: 1 man and 7 women) and the patient's relatives (20 informants: 14 women and 6 men).

26 Although the official language of the country is English, only 7 percent of Zambians speak English fluently. The majority of Lusaka dwellers speak chiNyanja, which serves as a *lingua franca*. ChiNyanja is a Bantu language based largely on Chewa (spoken in Malawi) and Nsenga containing loan words from Bemba and English.

concerning witchcraft, the method of instrumental case study was employed. The medical case studies focused on the detailed history of affliction in the background of a patient's life history and social relations, on the nature of the interconnections between the available therapeutic options, and on the shifting nature of a patient's decision-making process. In spite of this ambition, some of the case studies were not completed and remained fragmented.

Lusaka – the socio-economic context

Zambia is one of the most urbanised countries in Africa oriented towards the copper mining industry. Its capital, Lusaka, experienced unprecedented demographic growth after independence (1964), its population doubling twice, first between 1963 and 1968 and then between 1969 and 1980.[27] Whereas before 1980 migration in Zambia was primarily between rural and urban areas, since the 1980s up to 85 percent of migration has been between urban centres while only 15 percent has been between villages and towns.[28]

Today, Lusaka is a town with one of the fastest growing populations in Africa with approximately 1.5 million inhabitants.[29] In 2008, at the time of my research, approximately 80 percent of Lusaka's residents lived in townships known as "compounds",[30] low-income housing, and squatter settlements, and 40 percent of them were officially unemployed.[31]

27 This was due to the huge rural-urban labour migration of the chiNyanja-speaking people from the Eastern province in the 1960s and 1970s followed by migration from the Northern and Southern Province. As these migrants were predominantly young people, Lusaka also recorded a considerable natural population increase. During the 1980s, about 40 percent of the total population lived in urban centres. Since the 1980s the economic crisis in the country due to the fall in the price of copper on the world market has led to the collective redundancies of mine workers in the Copperbelt. See Shula Mulenga – Bjorn van Campenhout, "Decomposing Poverty Change in Zambia: Growth, Inequality and Population Dynamics", *African Development Review* 20/2, 2003, 284-303.

28 Government of the Republic of Zambia, *The Social Dimensions of Adjustment Priority Survey* I, Lusaka: Central Statistical Office 1994.

29 Estimates from 2010. The total number of Lusaka inhabitants in 2000 was 1,084,703.

30 Compound, a term common throughout the southern African region, first came into use for the housing institution adopted on gold and diamond mines in South Africa in the late 1980s. In postcolonial Zambia, the semantic field of the term has come to encompass all low-income areas. See Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Getting Stuck in the Compound: Some Odds against Social Adulthood in Lusaka, Zambia", *Africa Today* 51/4, 2005, 3-16.

31 Chilenge Leonard Mulenga, "Urban Slums Report: The Case of Zambia, Lusaka" [online], <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Lusaka.pdf>, [5 March 2016].

According to the United Nation's *Human Development Report* from 2007, 64.2 percent of the Zambian population lived at that time in multidimensional poverty,[32] thus below the international poverty line, which was 1.25 dollars per day, while an additional 17.2 percent were vulnerable to multiple deprivations.[33] Among the major causes of actual poverty, the counterproductive policies of Kenneth Kaunda's regime (1964-1991), the high population growth, an imbalanced economy, and the negative impact of the IMF/World Bank initiated Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1990s are often cited.

Since the late 1980s, Zambians have experienced what James Ferguson calls a failure of modernity. The proclaimed development that Zambians desired failed to deliver the much promised economic progress. Modernisation and development became a myth – in some respects, a trap and a tragedy – for those whose hopes and expectations were shattered.[34] The end of modernity, most visible in the urbanised Copperbelt province, manifested itself in Zambia's disconnection from the world community. It became excluded from the mainstream global economy, a situation which was accompanied by feelings of disillusion, abjection and betrayal. Zambians again became "second class citizens". The development myth brought new forms of economic and social inequality, an increase in unemployment, more difficult access to education and health care, and the deterioration of urban infrastructure. The privatisation of the Zambian economy also pushed many adults into the informal economy.[35]

Since the 1980s, with the rate of unemployment in Lusaka growing significantly, increasing numbers of "self-employed" people have emerged. This new socio-economic class composed of young men and women is characterised by an aptitude for economic improvisation and social negotiation; they employ diverse strategies to survive and safeguard their livelihoods. This class has come to symbolise new ways of conceptualising urban life that, according to Ferguson, "value multiplicity, variation, im-

32 *Human Development Report 2010* introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which identifies multiple deprivations in the same households in education, health and standard of living.

33 *Human Development Report 2010*, New York: United Nations Development Programme 2010.

34 James Ferguson, "Global Disconnect: Abjection and the Aftermath of Modernism", in: Hana Horáková (ed.), *Antropologie moderní Afriky: Studijní texty*, Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice 2011, 38-46: 43.

35 Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The Informalisation of Lusaka's Economy: Regime Change, Ultra Modern Markets and Street Vending, 1972-2004", in: Jan-Bart Gewald – Maria Hinfelaar – Giacomo Macola (eds.), *One Zambia, Many Histories*, Leiden: Brill 2008, 213-243.

provisation, and opportunism and distrust fixed, unitary modes of practice”.[36]

Poverty, the most burning problem of modern Zambia, increased from 49 percent in 1991 to 53 percent in 2006,[37] with the largest incidence of poverty recorded in the period 1991-1998.[38] In 2008 and 2009, at the time of my research, Zambia occupied a very low position in the Countries Human Development Index, namely 164th out of 187 countries. In comparison with its position today (141st out of 187 countries in 2013), we can conclude that overall economic conditions in Zambia, and therefore the living conditions of Zambians, have significantly improved. Within the last five years, the development of the once imbalanced economy, formerly dependent on copper exports, has been enhanced by close trading partnerships with China, Brazil and India.

All of my informants came from different Lusaka compounds. The basic structural unit of the compound is the household. An average household consists of five to six persons living in only one or two rented rooms.[39] The most common pattern is a male-headed household composed of a nuclear family.[40] The general assumption that men are in charge of family households and have the status of providers pressures young men (20-30 year old) to search for a job and ensure a livelihood. Unlike young women, who depend on their parents until they get married, young men become independent earlier and occasionally get piecework or try their luck as small-scale traders. The poor economic situation in the compounds due to the general economical crisis in the country does not enable them to find the kind of waged occupation in the town enjoyed by their “parents’ generation”. The majority of men therefore become involved in informal

36 J. Ferguson, “Global Disconnect...”, 44.

37 The national poverty line was 46.2 Zambian Kwacha (USD 24.89) per month in 1998 prices. Government of the Republic of Zambia, *Living Conditions: Poverty in Zambia 1991-2006*, Lusaka: Central Statistical Office 2009.

38 *Ibid*.

39 Government of the Republic of Zambia, *Census of Population and Housing 2001*, Lusaka: Central Statistical Office 2001. In the 1950s, the average size of family-type household was 3.38 persons. For comparison, see David George Bettison, *Numerical Data on African Dwellers in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia*, Livingstone: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute 1959.

40 However, we can also find unconventional household arrangements due to the socio-economic changes underway in the city; for example, domestic groups of young unmarried men, mostly cousins or brothers, who came to town as work migrants, or students sharing a flat, or a household composed of single, divorced or widowed women living together with their children and sometimes even with the children of their dead sister. Due to the huge mortality rate (HIV/AIDS) resulting in a large number of orphans, grandmothers take on the role of care-givers and live together with their grandchildren.

economic skilled and semi-skilled activities to earn their livelihoods in fields such as small scale trading,[41] quarrying stones for building, carpentry and the fabrication of building materials. These activities change with the seasons, economic conditions, and individual circumstances, and therefore do not provide a reliable source of income throughout the whole year. Those semi-skilled individuals who succeed in getting a waged occupation work most often as security guards, bus or taxi drivers, gardeners, or bricklayers.

As the role of the majority of Lusaka's women is still connected with the domestic domain, marriage represents a principal means of economic support. This leads to women's economic dependence on men and legitimizes an unequal relationship between the two genders within the domestic domain, and it continues to curtail women's active labour force participation.[42] Although they depend mainly on their low-income husbands for economic support, the majority of women in Lusaka engage in small-scale trade activities to earn some money on the side. However, this offers only a small level of security as the income fluctuates. Petty trading consists of selling foodstuffs, such as fresh vegetables, dry fish (*capenta*) or caterpillars, oil, or prepared food (*nsima*, grilled maize, or boiled peanuts), or selling second-hand clothes or charcoal. However, there are also few lucky women who have regular waged work, most commonly as house-maids or house-cleaners. Lusaka's women spend most of their time in the street market selling or shopping for food, or at home taking care of children and doing housework. Whereas many men often meet in bars or during football matches, women meet in particular at the hairdressers' and in Christian churches. Women represent the most common group of traditional healer's clients.

Widowed and divorced women with children or those married whose husbands do not support them financially remain dependent on petty market trading, which leaves them especially vulnerable economically. It is no wonder therefore that some of them see no other possibility than to resort to prostitution as a means of obtaining the household support they need as mothers. The vulnerability of economically disadvantaged women and children, in particular orphans whose number increases every year due to the AIDS pandemic, is most visible within the context of expanding hu-

41 According to Hansen's research of the gender and age composition of the urban informal economy in the mid-1990s, the majority (90 percent) of street vendors in Lusaka city centre and Kamwala market were men aged 20-30, and only a minority of them were married. See K. Tranberg Hansen, "The Informalisation of Lusaka's Economy…", 213-239.

42 Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Negotiating Sex and Gender in Urban Zambia", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10/2, 1984, 219-238: 220.

man traffic. According to *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*, Zambia represents a "hub" for human traffickers operating in southern Africa, the big urban centres such as Lusaka being the most afflicted in this respect. Lusaka is the transit point for the regional trafficking of women and children for the purposes of forced labour and sexual exploitation.[43]

The African Independent Churches (AICs) represent an extremely important structural component of Zambian society today, especially in urban centres, where they occur in large numbers. As the majority of Zambians are strong believers, belonging to a church community is a fundamental part of their social and political life. Christian churches located in every Lusaka compound represent a space where strong feelings of *being* (locality and identity), *belonging* (kin, reciprocity, the others) and *believing* (morality, agency) are constructed.[44] Zambia has a particular make-up that gives the church a special importance from the socio-political point of view. As many Zambians living in the compounds lack sufficient education and their social and economic capital is rather limited, the majority of them are also excluded from participating in politics or civil service. In this situation, the religious milieu, in particular the AICs, or traditional medicine remains the only "socio-political field" where ordinary Zambians can gain social prestige and authority.

The role of the AICs is also important in the transmission of beliefs in witchcraft.[45] Such churches are particular syncretic "prophet-healing churches" ("spirit type churches") and "African Independent Pentecostal churches"[46] that share but simplify the miscellaneous indigenous spiritual world by embracing a number of different spirits under the united category of demon, which is put in contrast to the Holy Spirit considered to be

43 U. S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report 2008: Country Narratives - Countries S through Z" [online], <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105389.htm>, 4 June 2006 [5 March 2016].

44 See Patrick Chabal, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu – Natal Press 2009.

45 See also Mary Douglas, "Sorcery Accusations Unleashed: The Lele Revisited", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 69/2, 1999, 177-193; Martinus L. Daneel, *Zionism and Faith Healing in Rhodesia: Aspects of African Independent Churches*, The Hague: Mouton 1970; C. Dillon-Malone, "Mutumwa Nchimi Healers…"; Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1999; Mathieu Schoffeleers, "Christ in African Folk Theology: The Nganga Paradigm", in: Thomas D. Blakely – Rijk van Dijk – David Thomson (eds.), *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, London: James Currey 1994, 73-88; Rijk van Dijk, "Fundamentalism and its Moral Geography in Malawi: The Representation of the Diasporic and the Diabolical", *Critique of Anthropology* 15/2, 1995, 171-191.

46 For AICs typology see Martinus L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*, Gweru: Mambo 1987, 185-190.

the only source of truth and healing. These AICs provide healing through the Holy Spirit combining both the Christian and indigenous methods of healing. Their increasing popularity lies in their ability to respond flexibly to the burning problems that the low-income urban population encounter such as unemployment, poverty, alcohol abuse, promiscuity, marital and family problems, and physiological and psychological disorders. The priests and prophets of these new churches put stress on the "rejection of traditions" represented by indigenous medicine, the belief in traditional spirits (ancestors, *mashabe* spirits), and witchcraft, which in their opinion hinder progress and modernity. At the core of their doctrine stands the idea that the origin of human suffering lies in the world of invisible powers such as demons and witches. A devotee is thus incited to "be strong in belief and prayers" to overcome devilish wiles. The omnipresent obsessive pursuit of witchcraft eradication is reflected in the arrangement of the so-called deliverance services, during which priests practise exorcism. The activities of the AICs in Lusaka thus significantly contribute to the spread of the belief in witchcraft.[47]

Anthropological studies on the "modernity" of witchcraft

The assumptions of initiators of development projects in Africa that "traditional magical superstitions" – ideas about witchcraft, the power of talismans and sorcerers – would disappear as a result of further political-economic development and the growth of education were soon rebutted after decolonization. Indeed, the unprecedented proliferation of witchcraft which anthropologists identified throughout Africa from the 1980s proved the opposite. The proliferation of witchcraft has been interpreted as a result of the failure of efforts towards modernization and as a response to the crisis of modernity and development, which has been accompanied by deepening social and economic differences between the inhabitants of villages and towns resulting from unequal access to material resources, education and power.

Recently, anthropologists have turned their attention to the "modernity" of witchcraft, i.e. new forms of witchcraft flourishing in the urban setting. These are interpreted in the context of socio-economic changes resulting from the penetration of international capitalism into African societies and their consequent globalization. As a result, witchcraft is studied in connection with the accumulation of wealth, power, and modes of consumption, production and trade. At the same time, the anthropologists invite the

47 See Kateřina Mildnerová, *From Where Does the Bad Wind Blow? Spiritual Healing and Witchcraft in Zambia, Lusaka*, Berlin: LIT Verlag 2015.

abandonment of moralizing concepts. The emphasis is placed on the ambivalence of the term witchcraft, and the necessity of anchoring its discourse in everyday life, where it is possible to uncover its real meaning and relevance.

The phenomenon of "modern" witchcraft is conceptualized from different points of view according to individual anthropologists. Whereas for some, such as John and Jean Comaroff,[48] modernity and globalization as "non-local" provide a way to conceptualize "the local", others link the boom of witchcraft belief to the emergence of capitalist relations of production and new market opportunities.[49] The "modern forms of witchcraft" are also interpreted in relation to the political development of modern states in Africa. In particular, the process of democratization and the political role of the newly emerging independent Christian denominations are taken into account.[50]

The new witchcraft paradigm does not rely on "the theory of a return to traditions", i.e. the idea of revitalizing magic-religious traditions as an effective weapon against advancing modernization. On the contrary, the adherents of this paradigm claim that the traditional concepts of witchcraft are no longer applicable in the changing socio-economic conditions. Rather than about revitalisation, they speak about the process of the "re-traditionalisation" of African societies that Patrick Chabal defines not as a return to "traditions" but as their adaptation to modern society.[51]

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48 Jean Comaroff – John Comaroff, "Introduction", in: iid. (eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in the Postcolonial Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993, 1-25.

49 See Peter Geschiere – Michael Rowlands, "The Domestication of Modernity: Different Trajectories", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 66/4, 1996, 552-554; Michael Rowlands – Jean-Pierre Warnier, "Witchcraft, Modernity and the Person: The Morality of Accumulation in Central Malawi", *Critique of Anthropology* 16, 1996, 257-279; Wim van Binsbergen – Rijk van Dijk – Jan-Bart Gewald, "An Introduction", in: iid. (eds.), *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture*, Leiden: Brill 2003, 3-56; G. Bond, "Ancestors and Witches..."; Jane Parish, "From the Body to the Wallet: Conceptualizing Akan Witchcraft at Home and Abroad", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6/3, 2000, 487-500; Diane Ciekawy, "Utsai as Ethical Discourse: A Critique of Power from Mijikenda in Coastal Kenya", in: George Bond – Diane Ciekawy (eds.), *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges*, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies 2001, 158-189.

50 Cyprian F. Fisiy, "Containing Occult Practices: Witchcraft Trials in Cameroon", *African Studies Review* 41/3, 1988, 143-163; Diane Ciekawy – Peter Geschiere, "Containing Witchcraft: Conflicting Scenarios in Postcolonial Africa", *African Studies Review* 41/3, 1998, 1-14; Isaac Niehaus, "Witch-Hunting and Political Legitimacy: Continuity and Change in Green Valley, Lebowa 1930-91", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63/4, 1993, 498-529.

51 According to Patrick Chabal, it is not only the boom in witchcraft and African independent churches (especially Pentecostalism) in contemporary African cities, but also the

Speaking about "tradition" and "modernity" as two opposite concepts entails the danger of falling into the ideological trap of classical modernisation theory, which established these categories as radically separated times from which the former was less advanced than the latter and assumed that Africans' modern identification with the West is self-evidently distinct from African tradition.[52] In this sense, the local discourse surrounding witchcraft integrates both "traditional" and "modern" elements and turns out to be exceptionally flexible and adjustable. It reflects not only the fascination with modernity, but also the deprivation of ordinary African people resulting from economic marginalization.

Modernity's ambivalence encompassing both attraction and discontentment has been critically studied by many anthropologists in Africa.[53] The authors go beyond the hopeful model of unilinear modernization theory, which proclaims progress from tradition to modernity as symbolised by economic progress, technological achievement, and the transformation of the African political system according to a Western model. They also emphasize that "multiple modernities" should be studied as a dynamic historical phenomenon that develops in dialogue with the Other (Europe and the rest of the world). "This relational study of modernity in Africa takes into account the forms of globalisation, extraversion, and appropriation by (temporary or permanent) inhabitants of the African continent and its 'others' and the creative recombination of elements of the modern package with its local or global alternatives."[54]

The debate about the paradoxes of the processes of modernisation is interlinked to the process of globalization viewed as the specific global momentum generally associated with the development of a capitalist world market, western imperialism, and modernity. From the point of view of a culture in which witchcraft is embedded, it is necessary to explore the impact of globalisation at the everyday level. The local cultural specifics mix and recombine with globalised, modern cultural patterns, which gives

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resurgence of ethnicity and its attendant "tribal politics" and violence that are involved in this process. See Patrick Chabal – Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, London: James Currey Publishers 1999.

52 Cf. Hana Horáková, *Antropologie moderní Afriky: Studijní texty*, Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice 2011, 29-35.

53 J. Comaroff – J. Comaroff, "Introduction..."; Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2005; B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil…*; James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1999; Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia 1997.

54 H. Horáková, *Antropologie moderní Afriky...*, 35 (my translation).

rise to various forms of cultural syncretism, or "cultural hybridity", that encompass the experience of "mixed times" (the coexistence and interspersion of pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity) and the process of diffusion and migration, in which the cultural patterns of home culture and imported culture are mixed.[55]

As Adjurn Appadurai showed, the cultural aspects of globalisation are closely related to mass media communication, which stimulates the work of the imagination to be a key component in reshaping the cultural (rather than a culture *per se*) through dissolving time and space. The imagination then becomes the sort of metaphysical space in which dreams of equality, leisure, and freedom can be realized. It is in this space that society and its individuals have the imaginative agency to resist the homogenizing effects of globalization.[56] The influence of the mass media is particularly noticeable in contemporary local witchcraft discourse in Lusaka, where the flow of information is greater than in villages. As a result, the ideas of witchcraft as presented on the radio, in the press, and on television spread more quickly and impact on a large amount of people. For instance, the Zambian media regularly inform audiences about "shocking" witchcraft cases, which leads people to vividly discuss the topic and thus to be vigilant of the dangers of witchcraft. It is not only the media, but also information technologies such as the internet or the mobile telephone that have become an indispensable part of everyday communication and a means of obtaining information in Africa.[57] Being in touch and being informed enables effective social control and stimulates the production of gossip, which plays a central role in witchcraft accusations.

The ongoing process of global commodification (the transformation of goods, services, people and ideas into a commodity) has been inscribed not only in witchcraft discourse but also in the appearance of African medicine. In Lusaka, medicinal herbs, magical charms, as well as healers' services have become commodified and commercialised. The sale of love potions, diverse aphrodisiacs, and "medicine for winning a court case", "getting back a run-away husband", or "getting back lost money" are advertised and sold on every corner. The increasing commercialisation of traditional medicine is represented by the healers' praxis of establishing a set dosage of herbal medicine for every disease, when pulverised herbs are

55 Jan Naderveen Pieterse, "Globalisation as Hybridisation", in: Mike Featherstone – Scott Lash – Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London: Sage 1988, 45-69: 51.

56 Adjurn Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimension of Globalisation*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press 1996.

57 See Mirjam de Bruijn – Francis Nyamnjohin, *Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa*, Leiden: Brill 2009.

labelled and packed in small bottles and offered to clients as a ready product. Such medicines, similarly to pharmaceuticals, are able to compete on a national and global market. Similarly to "material" traditional medicine, witchcraft has also become an "invisible commodity" designed for purchase. As will be shown later in the text, ideas about spiritual agents causing afflictions inherent in local witchcraft narratives reflect primarily the ongoing process of the commodification of human life and people's anxieties over the social and economic contradictions introduced by capitalism.

The prominent representative of the "new witchcraft paradigm" Peter Geschiere, in his famous book *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*,[58] considers witchcraft as an effective political instrument, a mode of political action both at local and national level. According to Geschiere, the variability of the political scene – its non-transparency and the fast upswing and fall of political partakers typical of today's African states – represents a constellation which is inevitably associated with witchcraft. Inside the modern political arena, where rivalry and the struggle for political posts mixed with various intrigues and machinations (hidden from the public) predominates, witchcraft represents a very effective means of conducting internal political fights against fellow representatives of key power positions, who, despite their Western education, voluntarily admit their belief in witchcraft. Protective magic, powerful amulets, private marabou, and regular consultations with oracles, which politicians seek and from which they want to gain support in their political decisions, can be found all over sub-Saharan Africa.

On the other hand, ordinary citizens use witchcraft as a tool to interpret political actions by means of spreading gossip and slander. The discourse of witchcraft entering the field of politics thus represents, according to Geschiere, "a two-edged weapon" justifying power on the one hand and powerlessness on the other. In the former case, witchcraft represents a means of grasping power within the struggle amongst the highest elites for access to power and wealth. In the latter case, witchcraft is used as a weapon by "ordinary" people against national projects and the elites of the powerful. In this sense, Geschiere talks about dialectics of equality and ambition (or accumulation). This approach is undoubtedly supported by a significant weight of evidence, but as the data from my fieldwork did not conspicuously disclose the political power connotations of the issue in hand, I had no reason to tackle the problem from this perspective. However, as I will show later, witchcraft narratives reflect issues of power inequality grounded in both colonial and post-colonial domination.

58 P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft…*

Local witchcraft narratives

The symbolic meanings in individual as well as collective witchcraft narratives refer on the one hand to the local conceptualisation of the individual body (at the level of health/illness) and to the conceptualisation of the social and politic body on the other.[59] This is moulded by public opinion issuing from people's individual experience, the influence of the media, and the strengthening "pentecostal voice" demonizing traditional healers and "traditional" beliefs in general.

The local witchcraft discourse is undoubtedly culturally biased and socially constructed by diverse social actors. These are primarily traditional healers, in particular witch-finders (*mchape*),[60] who figure significantly in the process of witchcraft accusation. The search for, location of, and redress from the culprit are, however, a matter of social consensus. A patient influenced by the opinion of other family members as well as by public opinion in the form of gossip may have a certain suspicion about a witch in her/his surroundings. This assumption can be, however, affirmed or invalidated by the healer in the process of diagnosis when he/she designates the cause of a patient's illness. The main task of a witch-finder is thus to arrange and interconnect the patient's separate experiences such as nightmares, social problems, actual health complications, fears and worries into a "comprehensible whole". The participant observation of divina-

59 The concept of the social body, inspired by the famous symbolical anthropologist Mary Douglas, lies in the assumption that the body is conceived as an integrated system, a natural symbol with which we think about nature, society and culture. The *individual* and *social* bodies intermingle and influence each other. In Africa, bodily disorders are seen as directly caused by social tensions and conflicts in which the cultural idiom of witchcraft is deeply rooted. As a result, healing is not only directed at the individual suffering body but also acts on the social body, the community. The *politic body* refers to the ways in which the individual and social body is linked to power and social control. The interconnection between individual, social and political bodies is most visible on examples of the witchcraft-eradication movement, ethnic violence, and hunts for political enemies. See Margaret Lock – Nancy Sheper-Hughes, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology", in: Julian Whitaker (ed.), *Health and Healing in Comparative Perspective*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall 1987, 296-315.

60 The profession of witch-finder (*mchape*) is not officially recognized by the Constitution of Traditional Health Practitioners Association of Zambia since the *Witchcraft Act* (1995) forbids witch-finding activities and sets the "penalty for naming, accusing or imputing witchcraft". In spite of this prohibition, there are many witch-finders all around the country hiding themselves as herbalists, diviners, or spiritual healers. Although *mchape* often criticize the *Witchcraft Act*, which in their opinion has led to the proliferation of witchcraft today, they respect it in the sense that they do not openly denounce an alleged witch by name. The majority of them also do not publicly advertise their services and stay hidden in the compounds.

tion séances disclosed that whereas a patient's main interest is in discovering the *efficient cause*, i.e. to know "who or what caused his illness", for the healer (*ng'anga*), the interpretation of the *instrumental cause*, i.e. the "magical technique used by a witch", is much more important.[61] The specification of the cause necessitates drawing on the rich symbolism of witchcraft, which provides the healer with the necessary source of rhetorical metaphors and a flexible interpretative framework necessary for the construction of the patient's diagnosis. By identifying with "the healer's story", the patient finally comes to understand the causes of her/his illness, which brings her/him relief from the preceding anxiety. The more a patient identifies with this story, i.e. diagnosis, the more there is a chance of effective treatment.[62]

The majority of Lusaka's inhabitants believe that witchcraft exists and represents a serious threat to everyday life – the danger of physical disease and social and economic afflictions. For this reason, the topic is vividly discussed in different public places such as bus stops, waiting rooms, churches, markets, and on public transport. People share their medico-religious experience with other members of the community at work and at school, and at the same time acquire new practical knowledge from the media. Public opinion thus forms and reshapes their explanatory model to a considerable extent and plays an important role in both witchcraft accusations and the production of collective narratives – "witchcraft stories".

By means of gossip, people in compounds, especially women, control other people's behaviour. As Max Gluckman[63] pertinently showed, gossip is one of the most important social and cultural phenomena, which has the function of unifying and affirming community values, controlling aspiring individuals and cliques within the society, selecting leaders, and maintaining group exclusiveness.[64] By means of gossip, people strengthen their personal view and negative emotions of hate, envy, and jealousy with respect to someone from the close environment. In Lusaka, when talking about someone who is suspected of being a witch, people do not explicitly

61 Alice Nicole Sindzingre – András Zempléni, "Modèles et pragmatique, activation et répétition: Réflexions sur la causalité de la maladie chez les Sénoufo de Côte d'Ivoire", *Social Science Medicine* 15, 1981, 279-293.

62 *Ng'anga* ensures that an accused person is convicted in the majority of cases. Once proven to be a witch, the accused rarely has any other option than to accept this status. The optimal solution is, however, to make the witch undergo traditional treatment and thereby secure his/her rehabilitation. At other times, the culprit is generally designated (as for example the mother-in-law, maternal uncle etc.) during the private consultation, but not publicly named as the *Witchcraft Act* forbids healers to denounce witches.

63 Max Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal", *Current Anthropology* 4/3, 1963, 307-316.

64 Judith Oakley, *The Ann Oakley Reader: Gender, Women and Social Science*, Bristol: Policy Press 2005, 197.

use the term *mfiti* but rather have recourse to a number of euphemisms such as "being clever" (*kuchengela*) or "having something hidden in their pocket" (*kuziza mutumba*).[65]

The symbolism of witch familiars

The following discussion will focus on the symbolism of three witch familiars, the magical snake *ilomba*, the magical orc *tuyobera*, and enslaved dead people *zombies*, who occur in local urban witchcraft narratives. My aim is to elucidate the meaning of these multivocal symbols in relation to current socio-economical processes, the individual accumulation of wealth, and socio-economic inequalities.

In Zambia, witches are believed to employ various familiars, in particular nocturnal animals such as snakes, hyenas, owls, bats and turtles, or monsters such as *tuyobera* and *ilomba*. These witch familiars have become dominant symbols of witchcraft narratives in the period after 1960.[66] The same familiars have also been documented in towns in South Africa, where they are known under the names *malambo* (magical snake) and *tokoloshi* (magical orc).

It is believed that these familiars are trapped, tamed, and fed by a witch. Some of them are trained to carry out the witch's evil wishes such as stealing crops and money, or killing human victims. Some of the familiars possess human attributes such as the ability to communicate, which is a necessary precondition for understanding the witch's instructions. According to my informants, the familiars are capable of ingesting as well as reproducing themselves. "Whereas a man eats *nshima* [maize porridge] and drinks water, witch familiars feed on human flesh and drink blood." *Ilomba* and *tuyobera* do not merely succumb to desires like an ordinary man, but are rather symbols of insatiability. According to Isaac Niehaus, witch's familiars are "totally dominated by their cravings for food, sex, money, and revenge".[67] *Ilomba* and *tuyobera* are highly ambivalent creatures. They share both the characteristics of animals and humans and belong to the category of weird monsters. As Victor Turner showed with the example of the Ndembu, monsters feature as multivocal symbols in male

65 The expression "he has something hidden in the pocket" means that "he is a witch" because of having some dangerous medicine on him.

66 See Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968; id., *Schism and Continuity*…; C. Dillon-Malone, "Mutumwa Nchimi Healers..."; Elisabeth Colson, "The Father as a Witch", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 70/3, 2000, 333-358.

67 Isaac Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld*, Cape Town: David Philip – London: Sterling 2001, 49.

initiation rituals. “The exaggeration of a single feature is not irrational but thought-provoking ... The grotesqueness and monstrosity of liminal sacra may be seen to be aimed not so much at terrorizing or bemusing neophytes into submission or out of their wits as to making them vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the ‘factors’ of their culture.”[68]

The magic snake *ilomba*, the symbol of dangerous sexuality

In both individual and collective narratives, *ilomba* is depicted as a big invisible water snake-like creature which has the face of its owner – a witch with whom it is essentially interconnected. It is generally believed that if the *ilomba* is killed by a witch-finder, the witch dies too. The mystical interdependence of their lives is set by the fact that they share the same blood through the *ndembo* (tattoos) made on the body of the *ilomba*. Once created and summoned, the *ilomba* begins to grow and ask for human blood and meat. If an owner does not supply it with victims, then he might become a victim himself (i.e. be eaten by the snake).[69]

By analysing local narratives[70] in Lusaka, I found that the symbolism of the *ilomba* is intrinsically linked to sexuality, violence, and “blocked fertility”. According to my informants, witches are believed to set off at night as an invisible *ilomba* in order to rape married women. They possess an exceptional sexual prowess and a special medicine to lull their sexual victim and her husband into a deep sleep. Some informants claimed that the *ilomba* can transform itself into a woman’s husband so that during the night she may think she is having sexual intercourse with him while it is in fact the witch’s familiar. I did not encounter any mention of female *ilomba* who raped men. It is always described as male.

As follows from the medical cases I collected, the *ilomba* as a symbol of uninhibited sexuality is principally regarded as the cause of female sterility. Female patients who complained of being repeatedly raped by the *ilomba* when sleeping claimed to suffer from various reproductive disorders such as sterility, miscarriages, or emmeniopathy. It is generally believed that a witch can afflict the reproductive system directly by “tying a woman’s womb” in order to prevent conception, or by inseminating the

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68 Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1970, 106.

69 Even Turner mentioned this “human-faced snake-familiar which is believed gradually to swallow its victim, beginning with the legs, and proceeding upwards” (V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*..., 41).

70 From a total of fifteen collected individual witchcraft narratives, five contained a mention of *ilomba*.

woman with contaminated sperm, or by stealing a baby from the womb to cause a miscarriage.

Whereas some informants linked their vivid dreams about *ilomba* to the problem of irregular menstruation that prevented them from conceiving a child, others assumed that the intervention of the *ilomba* was responsible for repeated miscarriages. One of my informants, a 40-year-old woman named Irene, described her dream about the *ilomba* in the following way: "After having three babies now I only miscarry. I started to have a weird experience when I was pregnant that some person comes into my house, starts following me and having copulation with me. When I look into his face I can see only a monster, it's like half a man and the second part of his body looks like a snake, or something. Then, when I woke up I realised that I had miscarried."[71]

Isaac Niehaus and Graeme Hammond-Tooke, who draw on ethnographic data from South Africa, attribute similar characteristics to *tokoloshi*, described as a hairy creature similar to a baboon with horrible teeth and an enormous penis. Hammond-Tooke[72] interprets the sexual symbolism of the *tokoloshi* in terms of the deprivation of Ngoni women. This explanation recalls Ioan Lewis, who in his study *Ecstatic Religion*[73] elucidated the occurrence of *Bori* spirit possession among Hausa women as a result of their deprivation due to their exclusion from the public and religious sphere, to which only men – as Muslims – have access. In a similar way, Hammond-Tooke proposed that the belief in *tokoloshi* is linked to the fact that "the men view the crux of women's deprivation as sexual because it is here that manhood finds its most convenient expression".[74] As a result, Ngoni women are imagined to succumb to demon lovers to fulfil their sexual needs and to wreak vengeance on men. This provides an *ex post facto* rationalization for discrimination.[75]

Isaac Niehaus comes with another interpretation of *tokoloshi* symbolism which seems to be less controversial. In his opinion, it was the system of labour migration which had a profound effect on the conceptualisation of marital infidelity and thus produced the belief in the *tokoloshi*. Niehaus argues that young migrants were obliged to leave their wives in their home village, and as a consequence engaged in long-term extramarital affairs with their lovers. This made the migrants project their feelings of guilt

71 Interview February 2008, Lusaka.
72 Graeme Hammond-Tooke, "The Cape Nguni Witch-familiar as a Mediatory Construct", *Man* (n. s.) 9/1, 1974, 25-39.
73 Ioan Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, London: Routledge 1971.
74 G. Hammond-Tooke, "The Cape Nguni Witch-familiar...", 212.
75 I. Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics...*, 52-53.

onto their spouses, and jealous anger towards the elders or unemployed men who stayed in the village. As a result, this tension culminated in accusations of witchcraft against the remaining male inhabitants of the village.

However, neither of these explanations fits with the situation of contemporary Lusaka as it is rather different from that of South Africa. Since the 1980s, up to 85 percent of immigration has been between urban centres. Married men who moved to another town to search for a job migrate with the whole of their family. As a result, they have no reason to suspect other men of seducing their wives. My interpretation of the frequent occurrence of *ilomba* symbolism in local witchcraft narratives draws on the fact that reproductive problems prevalent amongst Lusaka women are considered to be a serious threat to their marriage.[76] The infertile woman is not only socially stigmatised but also devalued by her husband and his family, who are willing to abandon her without any trace of remorse or mercy. As marriage represents the only financial and existential security she has, the projection of her problems onto accusations of an affine male relative may provide her with a form of psychological relief.

Another possible interpretation following from the collected cases suggests that the high frequency of occurrence of this symbol may reflect the danger of sexual relations between men and women in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. *Ilomba* symbolism may, in my opinion, refer to the fear of women becoming HIV positive. As observed, men in Lusaka demonstrate a greater tendency to be promiscuous than women. This supposition is based on the fact that men in Lusaka have a tendency towards engaging in risky behaviour connected to excessive alcohol consumption. They tend to maintain the cultural ideal and memory of polygyny despite their inability to financially support more than one spouse. This in turn leads men to adopt a free-from-guilt attitude toward their wives. The promiscuity of men is often discussed and condemned by women in the Lusaka compounds. The changing of sexual partners is generally considered to be highly risky, as the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Lusaka is very high (in 2008, almost one in five inhabitants were estimated to be infected). Zambian men who are promiscuous represent in the eyes of Zambian women the potential disseminator of this deadly disease. As a result, the *ilomba*, the magical snake, as an archetypal symbol of male sexuality might thus be inherently linked to the danger of HIV/AIDS. Moreover,

76 As marriage remains the key to women's economic survival, their dependence on their husbands makes them feel that they have little control over the relationship. Many women in Lusaka face neglect and infidelity from their husbands. The promiscuity of men represents a serious problem as it threatens not only the marital relationship and the health of the couple, but also in particular women's socio-economic position.

AIDS appears to increase the risk of having menstrual disorders. These can include the cessation of bleeding for longer than three months (amenorrhea), excessive and irregular bleeding, or early menopause.

The magic orc *tuyobera*, the symbol of excessive materialist desire

Another symbol often appearing in local witchcraft is *tuyobera* – a witch familiar that seems to have been incorporated into the local belief system via South African migrant labourers, in whom a similar belief in *tokoloshi* has been documented for a long time. Whereas the *tokoloshi* in South Africa is mostly connected to sexual symbolism, *tuyobera* in Lusaka, although similar in appearance, has different attributes. The majority of my informants described it as an invisible small hairy being which has the deceptive appearance of an innocent and peaceful child, because, in reality, *tuyoberas* are very wicked and violent. According to one of my informants, "it is a funny little being with backward-facing feet, a big abdomen, several eyes and blond hair [the hair of a white man]."[77] It is believed that the *tuyobera* uses a poisonous weed to chase away its enemies, in particular witch-finders. As I was told, these "little villains" do evil deeds on behalf of a particular owner (usually a witch) who had to either create them or purchase them in order to gain wealth.

As follows from the individual narratives, *tuyoberas* attack mostly children and adolescents because of their need for fresh blood and human flesh, which is its staple food on the one hand and the necessary "fuel for growing the business of witches" on the other. Similarly to *ilomba*, this dwarf is considered to be greedy, possessive and insatiable. "*Tuyobera* asks the owner to bring him more and more victims, otherwise it will destroy him. In order to get food [enough victims], the witch can even proceed to kill all the family, cause a big bus or train accident," explained a witch-finder.[78]

Although *tuyoberas* are supposed to bring good luck to their owners in financial and business matters, there is a high risk that they will become uncontrollable and dangerous to them. As they reproduce themselves very quickly, they can rapidly and easily dominate, enslave and destroy their owners. According to the same witch-finder, "*tuyobera* can finish [kill] almost all your family. They will eat you if you produce no more victims".[79] In exchange for success in business for its owner, *tuyobera* asks him for more of his children's blood. It is believed that if a witch

77 Interview December 2008, Lusaka.
78 Interview October 2009, Lusaka.
79 Interview October 2009, Lusaka.

(owner) fails to meet this demand, the *tuyobera* will kill all his close relatives.

According to Lusaka's witch-finders, a witch driven by an insatiable desire to gain enormous wealth can manufacture their own *tuyobera* in the form of a *chilubi* (voodoo doll) made from the root of a tree to which the hair of a white man (*tsisi ya muzungu*) is added. By using special magical incantations and the "shadow" of its victim, the *chilubi* is given life and becomes a *tuyobera*, which is, however, invisible to others. The witch-finders claimed that whereas the fabrication of *tuyobera* is simple, its destruction is a very difficult task.

At the most general level of interpretation, we can assume that the *tuyobera* is associated with the danger of the accumulation of wealth. The image of the *tuyobera* reflects a moral judgement on the greed and egoism of those who amass excessive wealth and hence do not respect the widely shared norm of egalitarian reciprocity. According to Niehaus, "*tuyobera* portrays the selfish lust for wealth as evil leading to death".[80] Its ambiguity, embedded in the contrast between its pleasing and peaceful appearance and its personal qualities, refers explicitly to the symbol of a white man (the *tuyobera* looks like European). *Muzungu* – a white man – is generally considered to be both a symbol of wealth and power as well as a symbol of selfishness and greed due to his obsession with money.

Another possible interpretation that draws on individual medical cases recorded in Lusaka issues from the fact that, in all of the cases, the imagery of the *tuyobera* refers to the ambiguous relations between parents (in particular the mothers) and their offspring. The collective narratives about *tuyobera* also refer to the sphere of children's home education. I noticed that this small magical villain bears a striking resemblance to the Czech folk witch fairies *Polednice*[81] or *Klekanice*,[82] with whom mothers use to frighten their children into coming back home before sun-set (*Klekanice*) or not bothering them during the day (*Polednice*). The children in Lusaka are told not to play too loudly or move too far away from the house other-

80 I. Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics...*, 62.

81 Polednice is a female demonic ghost that appears on the stroke of noon. The poem *Polednice* written by the leading Czech romantic poet Karel Jaromír Erben is a story of a mother and her child. The mother cooks lunch while her child cries and is naughty. The mother becomes increasingly angry and shouts at the child. It does not become quiet, so in order to scare the child, the mother pretends she is calling the Noon Witch to take it away. However, the Polednice actually appears. In horrifying images, the poem describes how the Polednice arrives at the stroke of noon and approaches the child. Hypnotised, the mother grabs her child and faints. The father finds his wife unconscious with the dead child in her arms. See Karel Jaromír Erben, *Kytice z pověstí národních*, V Praze: Tisk a náklad Jaroslava Pospíšila 1853.

82 See Zdeněk Váňa, *Svět slovanských bohů a démonů*, Praha: Panorama 1990.

wise the *tuyobera* will come and steal them away. From the semantic point of view, *tuyobera* is thus an ambiguous symbol of "the loving mother" fearing for the safety of her child and a mother who unwillingly kills her child. Unlike in the Czech folk narratives, the symbol of *tuyobera* encompasses both model situations.

Within this register, two possible levels of interpretation can be suggested. The first one assumes that the *tuyobera* refers to the mother's psychological projection of her love and anxiety over the safety of her children expressed in her worries about omnipresent human traffickers. The other possible interpretation assumes that the *tuyobera*, as a greedy monster devouring family members, may refer to the mother-witch who magically exploits her children in order to become rich. The symbol of the *tuyobera* thus refers to the sphere of morality, i.e. it points to the danger of the most socially condemned mode of behaviour, that of filicide.

Let us have a look at the first hypothesis, which draws on a well-known fact that Zambia is a transit point for the regional trafficking of women and children for the purposes of forced labour and sexual exploitation. We know that human trafficking occurs primarily where migration flows are largest, and access to social networks relatively easy. Moreover, there is evidence that many women and children who are trafficked in Lusaka are recruited through personal relationships in which, in particular, male relatives serve as intermediaries. Human trafficking is not a new problem in Zambia, but the government has only recently been willing to tackle the issue head on. The International Organization of Immigration (IOM) describes Zambia as a major battleground in the fight to disrupt the illegal movement of people, usually from countries like Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are abducted to South Africa and beyond. Traffickers most often operate through *ad hoc*, flexible networks of relatives, truck drivers, business people, cross-border traders, and religious leaders. Zambian children who are victims of human trafficking usually end up working in agriculture, domestic service, or the sex trade.

In those medical cases concerning *tuyobera* in which a male relative was designated as a wizard and the victims were small children, the witch-finders tended to interpret the situation as the wizard's magical exploitation of the children's vital energy (blood) in order to gain wealth or increase his business. In Lusaka, human traffickers are conceptualised in a similar way. The only difference is that they do not exploit children magically, but physically by selling them abroad within the illegal labour market. Human traffickers in Lusaka recruit their victims mostly on the basis of kinship; they are often relatives that participate in the illegal international labour market through relationships with distant relatives living

abroad. In the eyes of Lusaka dwellers, they exploit children in order to become wealthy. Their image thus corresponds to the image of a witch.

The second hypothesis links the interpretation of the symbol of the *tuy-bera* with the sphere of morality, in particular with the taboo of filicide. The *tuyobera* is depicted as a greedy monster devouring family members, which refers to the image of a mother-witch driven by selfish needs, who, in order to become rich, magically exploits her children by offering their lives to her companions. These findings contrast with the situation in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, where children are considered to be witches causing harm to their parents.[83] As the sample of patients showed, in four of a total of eight cases the victims were children or adolescents up to 18 years of age; another two cases concerned young people between 25 and 35 years old. In two cases the child was bewitched by the mother; in the remaining cases the male affinal relatives were designated as witches. In the majority of cases, parents have a tendency to accuse their affinal relatives of bewitching their offspring.

The *zombie*, the symbol of traumatic human exploitation

In this section, I attempt to elucidate how the symbol of the *zombie* as a "dead worker" or "bewitched enslaved soul" refers to the phenomenon of labour migration, capitalist economic exploitation, and the processes of commodification of the human body.

The symbolism of *chawe ya muzungu*, "the white man's world", should be taken into account when dealing with the symbolism of the *zombie* – exploited victims of magical forced labour. The stereotypical attributes that Africans ascribe to the figure of a *muzungu* (a white man) are abundantly expressed in the "moral geography of witchcraft"[84] all over Africa. As many anthropologists[85] have shown, the experience of colonial white dominance accompanied by the loss of property, labour exploitation, and

83 See Aguilar Molina, *The Invention of Child Witches in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Social Cleansing, Religious Commerce and the Difficulties of Being a Parent in an Urban Culture*, London: Save the Children 2006.

84 Mark Auslander, "'Open the Wombs!' The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witchfinding", in: Jean Comaroff – John Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993, 167-192.

85 *Ibid.*; I. Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics*...; Jean Comaroff – John Comaroff, "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism", *Codesria Bulletin* 3/4, 1999, 17-28; Jean Comaroff – John Comaroff, „Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Post-Colony", *American Ethnologist* 26/2, 279-303.

humiliation is inherently reflected in witchcraft symbolism, which is particularly connected to the image of *zombies*, the exploited dead victims.

As follows from the local witchcraft discourse in Lusaka, the image of whites as "powerful outsiders" corresponds to the image of a witch in many aspects. Witches exploit and dehumanize their victims in the same manner as white colonialists exploited Africans. It is believed that witches, after capturing their victims and making them invisible, "use" them as slave labour at an invisible plantation in order to become rich. However, this image is today linked rather to the image of "powerful insiders" – the African *nouveaux riches*, wealthy businessmen (in building, mining, the food-processing industry, or agriculture) and agents of divers development projects (UNAID, UNICEF, WHO) or those working in the security sector (the army and the police). It is these "powerful insiders" who are now viewed by the impoverished majority of Lusaka dwellers as possessing wealth and power due to their involvement in witchcraft.

As follows from the narratives, a witch can either kill its victim and use him as a "full time worker" (*zombie*) or just bewitch him at night by capturing his "shadow" and use him for "part-time night shifts". As a result, the victim, when he wakes up, feels tired and overlaboured. The victim is usually envisaged as a mere object or slave, who loses his will and feelings. He either sits motionlessly or uncritically serves his master. The victims of witchcraft are also often portrayed as insane, mute, or blind, as the witch cuts out their tongues or pokes out their eyes to prevent them from criticizing him/her or communicating with other people while remaining useful for the witch.

Two of my informants, the parents of an 18-year-old young woman who was bewitched and became a *zombie*, depicted the changes in her behaviour in the following statement: "[Her] problem started six years ago, she started seeing dead people and talking to them. She was laughing and dancing all the time. At night she was sleeping like a tree without moving or even bending her joints. During the day she was running in the street undressed and stealing bananas, she was also aggressive and wanted to kill us, she was completely insane..."[86] A healer treating her gave us the following explanation during one divination séance: "[T]he witches wanted to kill her to turn her body into a *zombie* which would work for them on an invisible plantation. For the moment they just abused her shadow by taking her footprints to enslave her as a part-time worker. They make her mute and insane so that she cannot denunciate them."[87]

86 Interview January 2009, Lusaka.
87 Observation of the divination séance held in Lusaka in January 2009.

Zombies are also depicted as pure "things" or as "commodities", as the following statement by an informant whose grand-daughter unexpectedly disappeared exemplifies: "We thought that she had been kidnapped or killed, but then when [a witch-finder] came to our house and sprinkled his medicine in all corners, we could see that she was sitting naked and bound in the corner of the house. We all started screaming and running away from the house. [The witch-finder] explained to us that [she] was magically abused by her father, who used her blood to make a *chizimba* [a magical object]. He dug this *chizimba* in the pound, so that his cows produced more milk and young ones. We were told that he [her father] abused her shadow to make her work for him on plantations he owned together with other witches from the village."[88]

As follows from witchcraft narratives, an alleged witch or a group of witches preferably chooses a victim who is intelligent so that he/she can siphon his/her intellectual capacity and use it to "kick-start the business". The idea of seizing the "life essence" in the form of blood, intellect, sight, or sexual organs and converting it into money plays a crucial role in the imagination of the so-called occult economy. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff define it as the "deployment of magical means for material ends or, more expansively, the conjuring of wealth by resort to inherently mysterious techniques, whose principles of operation are neither transparent nor explicable in conventional terms".[89]

The logic of witchcraft based on the principle of the "occult economy" corresponds to the logic of limited good,[90] which assumes that one cannot succeed in any other way than "at the expense" of others. This means that the occurrence of loss (illness, demotion at work, the loss of a husband, the death of a close relative) on the one hand inherently implies the occurrence of gain (job promotion, wealth, love) on the other. The idea that the growing material prosperity of a relative on the one hand, and the emergence of an illness in their offspring on the other is closely interconnected figured in 80 percent of the medical cases gathered during the fieldwork.

The principle of the "occult economy" is also closely linked to the conceptualisation of blood. Human blood as well as sperm, which comes under the same category, is believed to contain a vital force *moyo* (etym. "life" in chiNyanja). "These bodily fluids generate, sustain, and invigorate life, while their diminishment leads to infertility and death."[91] Consequently,

88 Interview March 2009, Lusaka.

89 J. Comaroff – J. Comaroff, "Occult Economies...", 297.

90 George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good", *American Anthropologist* (n. s.) 67/2, 1965, 293-315.

91 Deborah Kaspin, "A Chewa Cosmology of the Body", *American Ethnologist* 23/3, 1996, 561-578: 569.

a lack of sperm or amenorrhea is often linked to infertility. As I found out, the *moyo* changes throughout the course of life. Children and young people are considered the most vital, as their blood is "quick, fresh, powerful and abundant". As a person ages, blood becomes slow, weak and dries out, which leads to death. Witches are supposed to prefer their victims to be children or adolescents, as their quick and powerful blood can figuratively kick-start the business of generating money.

The logic of witchcraft embodied in the symbol of the *zombie* (but also the *tuyobera*) refers, according to John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, to the phenomenon of labour migration and the economic exploitation of African people during both the colonial and post-colonial era. In their opinion the symbol of the *zombie* (dead worker) corresponds to the image of a migrant, a labourer deprived of their human attributes and alienated from fellowship with his kin. "He is in the state of eclipse affected by the essential selfhood of a living person, leaving behind a sentient shell as a mute witness to the erasure of the social being it once housed."[92] The idea of a *zombie* thus refers to socio-economic inequality and to people's endeavour to adopt and appropriate symbolic capital in the form of the technology of power, the acquisition of wealth, or participation in the global market. Socio-economic inequality is the most visible in urban settings, where only a narrow range of inhabitants (the African *nouveaux riches*) can enjoy this benefit, whereas the majority of Lusaka dwellers are economically marginalized and stand at the edge of the global system.

The symbolism of the *zombie* as well as the *tuyobera* also refers to the process of the commodification of human beings, whose bodies serve as a commodities to be sold, exchanged or exploited. Modern capitalism may thus be seen in a Foucauldian sense as "bio-power", which focuses on the "body as a machine" that can be easily disciplined, manipulated, and thus incorporated into effective economic systems of production.[93]`

Another interesting finding issuing from the collected cases is that people suspected of witchcraft are rarely considered to act independently; rather they are thought to act on behalf of an organised group of witches who cooperate. According to my informants, witches are hierarchically organized according to their occult power and credit, led by the most experienced and powerful witch called the "boss", who coordinates their activities. It is believed that the "boss" owns a special power to dominate the others by having acquired an unknown powerful medicine from abroad. The hierarchical organisation of the witches' "coven", the legiti-

92 J. Comaroff – J. Comaroff, "Alien-Nation…", 24.

93 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009.

mization of the authority of the boss, and his compulsory measures remind us strikingly of the organisation of English colonial power, which used the tactics of bluffing and menacing those who refused to cooperate and rewarding those who did. According to collective narratives, the insatiate hunt for new victims under the dictate of the *zombie* and *tuyobera* leads to a vicious circle in which those who refuse to cooperate become automatically the victims of their companions. Witches in covens are believed to share their victims in the sense of a food supply and labour force and help each other with procuring new dead.

From this point of view, the imagery of witches does not strictly imply the idea of selfishness and individualism, as proclaimed by many anthropologists, but rather refers to the values of collective cooperation, reciprocity and interdependence, as acknowledged in common interpersonal relationships.

Witchcraft invisible technologies

Another group of symbols which appear in the witchcraft discourse in Lusaka refers to the symbolic appropriation of modern technology such as trains, airplanes, and guns. In Lusaka, there is a widespread idea of magic trains (*tchima gamalele*) transporting victims to remote areas to work on a witch's invisible plantation. The trains visible only to other witches or witch-finders are depicted as huge with many coaches in which people are crowded. It is believed that magic trains pass at night and ferry the *zombies* to their place of work.[94] According to my informants, trains are made of human bones and stop only early in the morning. Stories about magic trains vary according to individual informants who claim to have seen them. One Lusaka witch-finder, for instance, claims that he can recognize these trains at night by a jingling noise and by people's shouting, which wakes him up. Others claim to have seen magic trains illuminating their way from a distance, or to be able to spot them just for a second as they pass very quickly. For this reason, it is also difficult for a witch-finder to catch and destroy them.

The explanation for this kind of symbolism might be found in the long-term experience of labour migration in Zambia. Lusaka as well as other Zambian towns is located along the rail line which was extended in 1906 from South Africa through Livingstone to the Broken Hill mines. Trains thus brought foreign labour migrants to the region as well as escorted local workers to South Africa and the Southern Rhodesian mines. Therefore,

94 Some witch-finders mentioned Mazabuka sugar plantations, others did not specify the workplace.

magic trains might reflect the collective memory of labour migration in the past.

At the same time magical trains may refer to a fascination with increasing geographical mobility, as experienced today. Elizabeth Colson suggests that magical technical conveniences reflect the awareness of modern technology among Zambians. According to her, the most feared witches are usually said to use aeroplanes, guns and trains associated with technologies brought by Europeans to an African elite which, since 1964, has controlled the political power and has monopolized much of Zambia's economic resources.[95] In a similar way as the modern technologies connote political power, the invisible technologies are believed to be linked with magical power – both aimed at material enrichment of its owners.

During my fieldwork, I noted that informants speak about magical guns (*kalilole*)[96] used by witches.[97] *Kalilole* are believed to be lethal weapons whose manufacture is governed by a secret magical knowledge. Whereas the body of these weapons is said to be made of children's bones, needles from porcupine spines are used instead of bullets in order to suck the blood from a victim. I was told that a witch uses *kalilole* at night and shoots its victim three times so that when he/she wakes up in the morning, he/she starts suffering from chest pains, a strong cough, a headache, and begins to bleed from the nose, eyes, ears and mouth. This is visible even after the victim's death, when the blood still flows out of his body. It is believed that as the needles pierce the victim's heart directly, he dies instantly, or in a few hours after being attacked or shot. If a special medicine from *ng'anga* is taken in time, the victim starts vomiting "black blood". Through this treatment the enchanted blood does not reach his heart and the victim is saved. The belief in *kalilole* refers on the one hand to the danger of violence inflicted by guns, and on the other hand to (the fear of) the symptoms of Ebola, which are very similar to those resulting from magical shooting by *kalilole*.

The magical aeroplane (*kalupe*) is another magical technology used by "progressive" witches to reach remote areas during their night travels. It is believed that they can construct it, or buy it at a specialized market. *Kalupe* is said to be made of a cow horn stuffed with special *chizimba* containing human blood and meat, or from human bones, basketry, a python, and beads. It is believed that fresh human blood serves as fuel. The local narratives depict a witch as flying, sitting on the top of the *kalupe*, shining, and making a noise. A newspaper article from the *Times of Zambia* de-

95 E. Colson, "The Father as a Witch...", 341.
96 Other names are *katotola* or *kaliroze*.
97 See also J.-B. Gewald, *From Kaliloze to Karavina*...

scribes a magical plane confiscated by a certain witch-finder as "very small, but having the capacity to carry as many as fifty passengers".[98]

A prominent witch-finder from Lusaka explained that "magical planes land on a rubbish dump and they fly very quickly. From here to the Czech Republic, it can take a few seconds! When a witch flies over a house which is well protected with medicine, he simply falls down from the plane and gets exposed all naked in front of that house so that everybody can see him. People start railing and stick a banana in his ass".

Isaac Niehaus assumes that "magical trains, planes and other witchcraft technologies do not only connote the power of mobility, but also convey the profound danger of speed and the unregulated movement of persons and objects".[99]At the same time, they are objects of fascination and symbolise the desired mobility and freedom of movement. As mentioned above, the majority of informants are convinced that these witchcraft technologies, if they were visible, would be highly marketable and would even outperform European technical conveniences.

Conclusion

Witchcraft in Lusaka represents a creative and dynamic explanatory model of the presence of evil in the world around and in people's lives, a model intrinsically grounded in the local culture, in society, and in its symbolic order. In this sense, witchcraft can be conceived of as a sort of logic, a specific way of conceptualising a precarious reality. As I have shown in the examples from local narratives, witchcraft as a theory does not refer solely to the aetiologic level of human afflictions but, in a broader sense, refers to current social, medical and economic problems such as HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, poverty, and the capitalist mode of production and consumption that are creatively interpreted through a prism of "traditional" cosmology and collective historical memory.

The analysis of narratives disclosed that witchcraft as a culturally determined aetiology refers to the deepest existential uncertainties of the local population, which can be expressed in two main registers: biological (death, disease, infertility) and socio-economic (poverty, economic marginalization, envy, socio-economic inequality). Amongst the most common afflictions linked to witchcraft are women's reproductive problems. The problems of sterility, miscarriage, amenorrhea and other gynaecologi-

98 "Copperbelt Museum, Cultural Services Confiscate Magical Plane", *Times of Zambia*, 1 June 2007, 3.
99 I. Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics...*, 76.

cal problems are symbolically linked to the intervention of a magical agent in the form of the snake *ilomba* (a wizard's familiar).[100]

I argued that women's sterility, symbolically associated with the intervention of the magical snake *ilomba*, reflects the women's fears concerning the infidelity of their men, which threatens not only their marital and economic security, but also their health as it involves a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Another sort of affliction linked to witchcraft concerns economic destitution and social deprivation. Economic anxieties concerning unemployment, the unexpected loss of work, poverty, failure in business, economic marginalization and the omnipresent danger of human trafficking were reflected in the narratives of *zombies* and *tuyoberas*.

As followed from the narratives, the local witchcraft discourse is socially constructed by healers, patients, their relatives, and the media and is shown to be exceptionally flexible and adjustable. It integrates a variety of symbols of modernity and mixes them with "traditional" specifics. Witchcraft symbolism as it appears in the narratives from Lusaka does not only reflect a fear of, and fascination with the processes of commodification, technologization, mobility, and the accumulation of wealth; it also primarily responds to the economic marginalization of ordinary people who "participate in the globalized world community not so much as consumers of manufactured material goods but as consumers and producers of mere images and ideas concerning the global world to which they seem to belong only marginally".[101]

The symbols appearing in the narratives proved to be highly ambiguous. They refer on the one hand to people's fascination and *desire* for what is inaccessible and endowed with power (such as Western technologies, biomedical science, and material wealth) and on the other hand to the *fear* of what is present, and threatens life (such as human trafficking, promiscuity leading to AIDS, sterility, or poverty). In this sense, witchcraft represents a specific way in which people conceptualise the local precariousness of their everyday life (here and now) in relation to the far-away, blurred and unattainable global world (there, in the future or past).

The local discourse on witchcraft expresses the endeavour to appropriate, assume and recast the symbols of power and powerlessness as matters of desire and fear embedded in the everyday reality of Lusaka people and thus incorporate them into a comprehensible framework. As the symbols are multivocal, several levels of historical and current experience inter-

100 A witch may block fertility by magical techniques known as *mukunko* – a magical disease over a prolonged period.

101 W. van Binsbergen – R. van Dijk – J.-B. Gewald, "An Introduction…", 35.

mingle at the same time. The conceptualisation of contemporary socio-economic problems in terms of witchcraft resonates with the injustice and trauma embedded in the historical memory of colonialism.

SUMMARY

The Modern Forms of Witchcraft in Zambia: An Analysis of Local Witchcraft Narratives in Urban Settings of Lusaka

This article, based on data gathered during long-term ethnographic fieldwork, deals with modern forms of witchcraft in Lusaka, Zambia. The interpretation of witchcraft narratives grounded in analyses of multi-episodic medical cases builds on the theoretical assumptions of scholars studying contemporary forms of witchcraft in connection with the crises of modernity, ongoing globalisation, capitalism, and the process of the socio-political and economic transformations of modern African societies. This article does not tackle witchcraft in Lusaka only in the narrow sense as the aetiology of an individual illness, but on a more general level as a specific kind of worldview, a local discourse explaining the presence of evil, misfortune, and inequalities in the world. The article attempts to answer the question of what kind of socio-economic problems the imagery of current urban witchcraft in Lusaka reflects, and how the local witchcraft discourse is socially and culturally constructed in specific situations and events.

Keywords: witchcraft; Zambia; Lusaka; modernity; globalization; socio-economic inequalities; symbolism; witchcraft narratives; witch-finders.

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