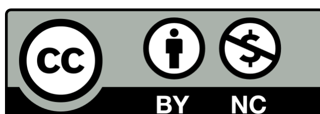
Murder at Kafaba: Debating Witchcraft and “Witch Camps” in Ghana

Saibu Mutaru
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Cape Coast, Ghana
saibu.mutaru@ucc.edu.gh

Naa Adjeley Suta Alakija Sekyi
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Cape Coast, Ghana
naa.alakija@ucc.edu.gh

DOI: 10.53228/njas.v32i1.781



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Abstract

In Ghana, the collision between the local reality of witchcraft and human rights sensibilities is manifested in local discourses and debates concerning the so-called “witch camps”. The recent killing of an elderly woman, Akua Denteh, accused of witchcraft and killed in communal rage, has reinvigorated these debates. This ethnographic study examines these debates and makes an important contribution to the theoretical and ethnographic understanding of witchcraft. This article offers a nuanced analysis of narratives that emerged from interlocutors in and around the settlements for accused women, also known as “witch camps”. The settlements are represented by civil society and foreign NGOs as prisons that violate the accused women’s human rights; however, this view does not account for the risks involved in the closure of the camps and the reintegration of these women. The women, meanwhile, prioritized their own safety. We highlight the complexity of belief through the lens of “multiple modernity”. Our findings show that belief can be neither underrated nor overrated: belief in witchcraft neither needs the confirmation nor the rejection of the (dis)believing agent to assert its contextual salience. We suggest that the representation of these women’s settlements as prisons and as violating human rights in an argument for closure and reintegration demonstrates little appreciation of the complexity of “belief”. It also clashes with the postmodern concept of multiple modernities, pointing out the plurality of epistemologies of modernity, which include “beliefs” in witchcraft.

Keywords: Witchcraft, witch camps, Ghana, human rights, belief, accused women’s settlement

About the authors

Saibu Mutaru is a lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Ghana and a MSc. in Africa and International Development from Edinburgh University. He received a PhD in Social Anthropology from Stellenbosch University in 2019. His teaching and research interests include ethnography, medical anthropology, and the anthropology of religion and human rights.

Naa Adjeley Suta Alakija Sekyi teaches Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. She holds a B.A. in Sociology and Economics, an MPhil in Sociology, and an MA in Human Resource Development. She has a Doctorate in Sociology with a specialization in gender and family studies. She has expertise in gender and sexualities, women and development, gender and education, ethnicity and ethnic relations, and human resource development. Alakija Sekyi is a gender specialist and consultant.

Author contribution statement

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: SM; data collection: SM with the support of NAS; data analysis and interpretation: SM and NAS; draft manuscript preparation: SM and NAS. Both authors contributed to the critical revision of the article and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Introduction

On July 23, 2020, a 90-year-old woman, Mariama Akua Denteh, was accused of witchcraft and subjected to physical torture in the village of Kafaba in northern Ghana. An ungodly video showing the public torture of Akua Denteh went viral after her death. Media accounts indicated that when rain had failed to fall in the village, causing trouble and uncertainty among the people of Kafaba, a witch-finder had been invited to help them establish the identity of the person who was responsible for these misfortunes. Akua Denteh's murder caused widespread protests and condemnation from women's groups, NGOs, the government, churches, and human rights activists, who all demanded justice for the poor old woman's killing. Following this, a number of people were arrested and put on trial.

This incident resparked old, evolutionary debates about the connection between witchcraft and development in Ghana. In the past, scholars predicted that witchcraft accusations would decline with increased education and improvement in medical systems or in the scientific approach to healthcare delivery (Onyinah 2002, 108). However, recent developments regarding the occult in Ghana and other African countries have challenged this view (Niehaus 2001, 2010; Moore and Sanders 2001; Favret-Saada 2012; Mutaru 2018, 2022). The ugly spectacle at Kafaba is a strong refutation of this witchcraft development thesis. Akua Denteh was unlucky to have been killed before she could seek refuge in the accused women's settlement. In the past, many like her, who were accused of witchcraft or threatened with harm, fled to these settlements designed for their protection.

In 2012, the international NGO ActionAid[1] compiled a report which framed the women living in these settlements as the most victimized and suppressed group in Ghana. The report stressed the need for concerted efforts to reintegrate the accused women, demanding justice for them, whilst advocating the closure of their settlements. The report noted passionately that “the witch camps are effectively women's prisons where inmates have been given no trial, have no right of appeal but have received a life sentence” (ActionAid 2012, 5). The NGOs and other civil society organizations' conceptualization of these settlements as “witch camps”[2] seems problematic, as it casts them in a negative light. This profoundly shapes the engagement of NGOs and other rights-minded stakeholders with the accused women's settlements. In northern Ghana, the increased portrayal of these settlements as “witch camps” in the media and by development NGOs goes against local discourses portraying them as places of protection. In this article, we prefer to use the phrase “accused women's settlements” to designate such places, as this term gives a more accurate reflection of local reality.

This article is based on an ethnographic study demonstrating the salience of witchcraft beliefs among the Dagbamba, especially as they apply to the accused women's

[1] ActionAid is an international organization which seeks, among other things, to promote the rights and freedom of marginalized people (especially women). On its website, it describes itself as “a global federation working for a world free from poverty and injustice.” ActionAid has been operating in Ghana since 1990. It supports the basic needs of poor and marginalized people, while working with community groups, government entities, and other partner stakeholders to enhance people's quality of life and to change practices that negatively affect them. With its heavily women-biased operations, ActionAid's work largely focuses on women's rights issues: women's empowerment, women in leadership, and violence against girls and women.

[2] Some of the accused women's settlements, known to NGOs and the development community as “witch camps”, have existed for more than a hundred years, although they began to attract more public attention in the 1990s. A “witch camp” is a special village or section of a village which has been established close to a local anti-witchcraft shrine under the custody of a *tindana*, who provides protection and safety for fleeing and/or banished people accused of witchcraft (see Mutaru 2019).

settlements. We suggest that the concept of "belief" is a complex, enigmatic, and fundamentally positional one, which is key to understanding the diverging discourse surrounding the settlements between proponents of human rights and local stakeholders. This article favours an ethnographic engagement with local witchcraft beliefs in a multiple modernities framework, based on the idea that modernities are experienced differently from different perspectives.

Data for this study were collected over a period of eight months between 2016 and 2017 in all of the six known accused women's settlements in northern Ghana (see Figure 1). Before the start of the fieldwork, ActionAid, in collaboration with government and other stakeholders, had initiated efforts to reintegrate the accused women into their original communities and disband what they described as "witch camps". Both the Ghanaian government and development NGOs were interested in portraying Ghana as a modern nation-state by discouraging the recognition of witchcraft and "witch camps". However, in the host communities, the settlement's guardian *tindana*[3] (pl. *tindaamba*), the accused women themselves, and the locals were unhappy about the state intervention and the NGOs' reintegration activities. The accused women were uncomfortable with the idea of being sent home, where they might be harmed. While the NGOs claimed that the *tindaamba* and other locals opposed the reintegration project because they benefitted from the labour of the accused women, the *tindaamba* claimed that the accused women did not want to go back home themselves. One *tindana* at Gnani-Tindang cited the case of the Bonyase accused women's settlement as an example. This settlement was closed down in December 2014, as a result of a joint operation between ActionAid, the local NGO Songtaba[4], and the Ghanaian Government, after previous unsuccessful attempts. The *tindana* of Gnani settlement claimed that when Bonyase closed, some women voluntarily moved to his settlement for protection.

The state-led prosecution of Akua Denteh's alleged murderers and the debates surrounding the closure of the Bonyase settlement highlight one central problem: the role of "belief" in witchcraft. The disbandment and reintegration approach adopted by ActionAid and the government on the one hand, and the discomfort caused to the accused women and their custodians on the other, were based on different epistemologies. While ActionAid's interventions were based on principles of rationality, human rights, and empowerment narratives, local reactionary attitudes were informed by people's belief in witchcraft and ontological security concerns.

In a recent internet blog post dated December 25, 2022, Alice Blunden, an author and regular commentator on issues of anthropological interest, writes: "Reports of media organizations and NGOs often depict the conditions in witch camps as degrading to those who live there. Acting in good faith, NGOs draw public attention to the camps by curating a prison-like image of hostility and dangerousness". Our article problematizes the current NGO-led framing of ideas of witchcraft and "witch camps" in Ghana. We suggest that such representations of these settlements and the concept of witchcraft are made with little appreciation for the complexity of "belief" and that they clash with the postmodern

[3] *Tindana* refers to the local earth priest under whose protection the accused women lived.

[4] Songtaba is a local, Ghanaian-based non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of women's economic, social, political, sexual, and educational rights. The vision of the organization, as posted on its website, "is to see a society free from inequality and injustice in which women and other vulnerable groups enjoy their fundamental human rights." At the time of the fieldwork, Songtaba was a major partner of ActionAid in the fight against witchcraft accusations and victimizations. The two maintained a strong partnership in their efforts to reintegrate the accused women and disband their settlements.

concept of multiple modernities, pointing out the plurality of epistemologies of modernity, including rather than excluding "beliefs" in witchcraft. This shows that the current policies of disbandment and reintegration contradict the accused women's concerns about their insecurity in their villages. Such approaches are fundamentally problematic, because they potentially lead to more violence, and are unlikely to be sustainable in the long-run.

The next two sections of the article talk about methodology and positionality, and the historical context and contestations of witchcraft in Ghana. These are followed by a discussion of a prototypical "witch camp" – *Poagnyaankura fongu*. The penultimate section focuses on current debates on witchcraft and the so-called "witch camps" in northern Ghana. In the last section, we conclude the article.

"Yes, witchcraft is real": On methodology, positionality, and belief

This ethnographic research was conducted among accused witches in northern Ghana, drawn mainly from the Dagbamba ethnic group. The Dagbamba are a large cultural group consisting mostly of farmers. They comprise three smaller ethnic groups, namely the Mamprusi, the Dagomba, and the Nanumba, who inhabit the regions of Mamprugu, Dagbon, and Nanung respectively; the accused witches' settlements were also located in these regions. These settlements, six in number during the time of our fieldwork, were found in specific villages: Gambaga, Kpatinga, Gushegu, Gnani, Nabuli, Kukuo.

Saibu initiated the research, but we met coincidentally as researchers in northern Ghana during the fieldwork period. As a gender specialist, Naa was then doing some work on gender issues in the area. She showed great interest in collaborating on the witchcraft project. Naa took part in pre-interview scheduling, meetings, and other related field activities. However, Saibu conducted all the interviews because he was more proficient in the local language spoken in the research area. Over a period of eight months, data for this study were collected with the support of research assistants, who were recruited in the communities where all of the six known accused women's settlements were situated. Saibu held interviews with three categories of informants, namely the accused women, local elders, and officials from various civil society organizations and state agencies. Finally, Saibu engaged in ethnographic participant observation of daily life.

Fieldwork for this study took the approach of "citizen" or "backyard" anthropology (Cheater 1987; Johnston 2010). Citizen anthropology denotes the idea of doing fieldwork as an "insider". It reflects the positionality of anthropologists "who reside in, and share a long-term commitment to, the same society as the 'subjects' of their research" (Becker et al. 2005, 123). In undertaking this research, we found ourselves being confronted with the obvious "native question"[5] of writing about our own people. In doing fieldwork "at home", citizen anthropologists are likely to take for granted the familiar terrain to which they are exposed (Strathern 1987; Qamar 2020). This can affect interpretation, and thus, as Lichterman (2017, 35) argues, ethnographers need to "perform reflexivity by discussing how their research may reflect interests or biases that accompany their positions in hierarchies of domination". Doing anthropology at home confers on the ethnographer both advantages and disadvantages. The danger is that citizen anthropologists, in their own view, do not discover anything new; everything appears as ordinary and familiar

[5] Navigating around the methodological dilemma of being an "insider" during fieldwork simultaneously requires the ethnographer to keep some distance and maintain neutrality.

as for other native participants in the culture (Strathern 1987). In our case, being natives came with one notable constraint; it led our informants to shift the burden of knowledge production onto ourselves. In many instances, when Saibu asked the accused women for information, they expected him to know the answer because he was a community member. But while we considered ourselves as insiders, the accused women might also have seen us as outsiders in another sense – we were "Doctors". We are not sure to what extent this power asymmetry influenced our interactions with the accused women, but it certainly accorded us much respect and also raised our interlocutors' financial expectations.

Contrary to our initial concerns that we would face serious challenges in engaging with persons who had suffered accusations and psychological trauma, the accused women remained cooperative throughout the period of our fieldwork. Both locals and the accused women were happy because they saw us as part of their community. This had a significant impact on rapport building and led to a situation where the accused women felt comfortable and were more open in their discussions of issues than they presumably would have been if we had been outsiders.

"Yes, witchcraft is real." This was often our short answer to people who wanted to know our genuine position on witchcraft. For reasons unknown to us, many of our questioners could not hide the amazement on their faces. But for the accused women and local elders in our research area, who all believed in the reality of witchcraft, our responses confirmed our commonalities and led our cooperation in a more rewarding direction.

In Ghana, in governance and policy circles, the controversy surrounding the notion of belief in witchcraft is a historically-rooted one, linked to the late nineteenth century – a period characterized by constant struggles and confrontations between colonial administrators and their Gold Coast subjects. While the locals believed in witchcraft, the colonists condemned this belief and relegated it to the realm of primitiveness. The enigma surrounding the notion of belief is a longstanding one. A long time ago, Evans-Pritchard (1937) argued that, in believing in witchcraft, the Azande were no less rational than their European counterparts. As an anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard did not condemn or view the practice of witchcraft as primitive, as his contemporary colonial administrators usually did. He learnt to understand the Azande very well and came to see their witchcraft beliefs as "explanations" and not "superstitions" (White 2000).

This differentiation still remains an important point of division between anthropologists and civil society organizations in northern Ghana today. While the former tend to follow Evans-Pritchard's view, the latter often repeat the colonial bias and regard witchcraft beliefs as primitive and as mere superstitions that ought to be discarded in a modern, rational world. Recent studies in Africa and elsewhere have, however, suggested that witchcraft is not limited to "traditional" societies, nor is it primitive (see Geschiere 1997; Niehaus 2010; Adinkrah 2015). Scholarly ruminations on witchcraft in recent decades suggest that we stand to lose both the ethnographic and philosophical essence of witchcraft if we continue to see it through the lens of single modernity. Paul Rocoeur, quoted in Anthony Giddens (1990, x), once wrote that "When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery." Until a few decades back, academic discussion of witchcraft subjected it to Western rationality.

While the notion of single modernity or rationality trumpeted by the West continues to dominate global discussions of human rights and human dignity, there are many people, especially anthropologists, who have long

since questioned this paradigm, asserting that there are multiple modernities or civilizations (see Moore and Sanders 2001, 12). However, the multiple modernity thesis is yet to permeate the world of development aid and human rights activism. There could be more genuine dialogue if governments and NGOs involved in development projects were to take the concept of multiple modernities to heart. Revisiting the Western hegemonic approach to modernity and civilization and admitting diversity could lead to a better acknowledgment and appreciation of the phenomenon of belief in witchcraft, not as a hindrance to development that should be extinguished, but as a given that needs to be taken into account.

Following the work of Eric Schwitzgebel, Connors and Halligan (2015, 1) see belief "as the mental acceptance or conviction in the truth or actuality of some idea". Whether true or false, right or wrong, beliefs hold sway over the beholder and "thus typically describe *enduring, unquestioned ontological representations of the world and comprise primary convictions about events, causes, agency, and objects that subjects use and accept as veridical*" (Connors and Halligan 2015, 2, our emphasis). For Connors and Halligan, beliefs "are held by us to be true and provide a basis for us to understand the world and act within it" (2). McNeill (1986, 3) expressed this view succinctly when he wrote that "What a particular group of persons understands, believes, and acts upon, even if quite absurd to outsiders, may nonetheless cement social relations and allow the members of the group to act together and accomplish feats otherwise impossible". Civil society, human rights activists, and development NGOs often approach witchcraft with an "eliminativist view" (i.e. something the existence or reality of which must be denied). They assert that "the 'folk' understanding of beliefs is mistaken, predicts that our 'folk' understanding of belief will be replaced by a better specified neuropsychological theory" (Connors and Halligan 2015, 2).

Belief is at the core of witchcraft and intersects with, or rather contradicts, Western binaries of (ir)rationality (Ashforth 2015, 6). Civil society organizations see witchcraft as belonging to the domain of irrationality. For the many Africans who worry about witchcraft and are concerned with the activities of witches, the issue of witchcraft goes beyond the mere notion of belief. Victims of witchcraft and their families see "perpetrators of witchcraft (…) [as] dangerous and powerful figures, not members of vulnerable groups" (Ashforth 2015, 7), which is how development NGOs and human rights groups portray them. For those who inhabit a world permeated with witchcraft, witches are society's prototypical malcontents (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). From this perspective, witches are "in essence, perpetrators of criminal violence, albeit of a particular kind", and the dangers they pose are experienced as "real and present" (Ashforth 2015, 7).

Civil society organizations that do not believe in witchcraft look for demonstrable evidence in the form prescribed by "science". For them, the inability to provide any scientific proof qualifies witchcraft as bogus and irrational (Ashforth 2015, 7). It is this Western-centred human rights and rationality framework, which opposes local beliefs, that drives the never-ending debates about witchcraft and the so-called "witch camps".

Bruno Latour argues that the moderns have never been modern, as they also engage in "believing". With a certain level of sarcasm, Latour (2011, 44) unpacks this dialectical reversal in the following words, referring to the first missionaries, who looked upon nonmoderns as "worshippers of meaningless objects":

> We see one group of people covered with amulets scoffing at another group of people covered with amulets. We do not have iconophiles on one side and iconoclasts on the

> other, but iconodules on both sides (one side being made of selective iconoclasts).

Latour (2011, 43) suggests that the ultimate fetishes of the moderns are, however, scientific facts. These "facts" are essentially about social relationships and portraying others as fundamentally different. In this regard, the moderns attribute to the "Other" a savage mentality: a kind of thinking bereft of any rationality. Following Latour, we pursue a discourse that recognizes the complexity of belief and problematizes the tendency to portray modernity as a single project that needs to be carried out by everyone else in the same way. In this article we look upon diverging discourses related to accused women's settlements in Ghana and use the ethnographic study of Dagbamba views of these settlements, related to witchcraft beliefs, in a broader context wherein civil society and governmental authority vie for closure and reintegration.

Historical context and contestations of witchcraft in Ghana

The majority of the accused women's settlements in northern Ghana are more than a century old, and some of them predate colonialism (Drucker-Brown 1993; see Figure 1 for settlements with precolonial versus post-colonial foundations). The historical connection between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft shrines, on the one hand, and colonialism on the other, is a controversial one.

Before colonial rule, Ghana – then known as the Gold Coast – had witnessed two main practices relating to witchcraft: the odum poison ordeal and corpse carrying (see Gray 2001). The poison ordeal involved administering local noxious substances extracted from the bark of the odum tree to persons who were suspected of being witches or who were accused of having used their witchcraft powers to harm others. Accused persons who vomited out the substance after ingestion were deemed innocent. However, dying of the ingested substance was proof of guilt (Gray 2001). Corpse-carrying has been explained as "a form of divination in which men would carry a shrouded body, and, if witchcraft or magic caused the death, the spirit of the deceased would subtly guide the carriers to the responsible party" (Gray 2001, 15).

When British colonial administrators took over control of the Gold Coast as a colony in 1874, they banned these two local practices. Locals who accused others of witchcraft were fined, while the state also mounted prosecution against those who killed witches, turning a system that was supposed to protect society from witches upside down. Parker (2004) argues that the colonial eradication of witchcraft ordeals did not undermine local beliefs in witchcraft. As a response to colonial measures, anti-witchcraft shrines (shrines associated with the power to detect witches or to provide protection against witchcraft) proliferated in Gold Coast. While the colonial government strongly opposed anti-witchcraft shrines, locals held strong convictions about the efficacy of these shrines in annihilating witchcraft threats. The people of the Gold Coast saw witchcraft as "a threat that had to be combated while the British saw it as a dangerous superstition" (Gray 2001, 363) that needed to be eliminated. On the orders of the colonial government, several anti-witchcraft movements and oracles were banned. These developments only increased locals' intransigence toward British control.

As a compromise, in 1927, the colonial government enacted the Native Ordinance Act (NAO). This Act apparently empowered the Gold Coast Native Tribunals to try witchcraft cases brought to their attention. In the spirit of the law, the NAO effectively prohibited the "possession of noxious medicine" (see Gray 2001, 363). However, the Native Tribunals constantly abused the power granted them

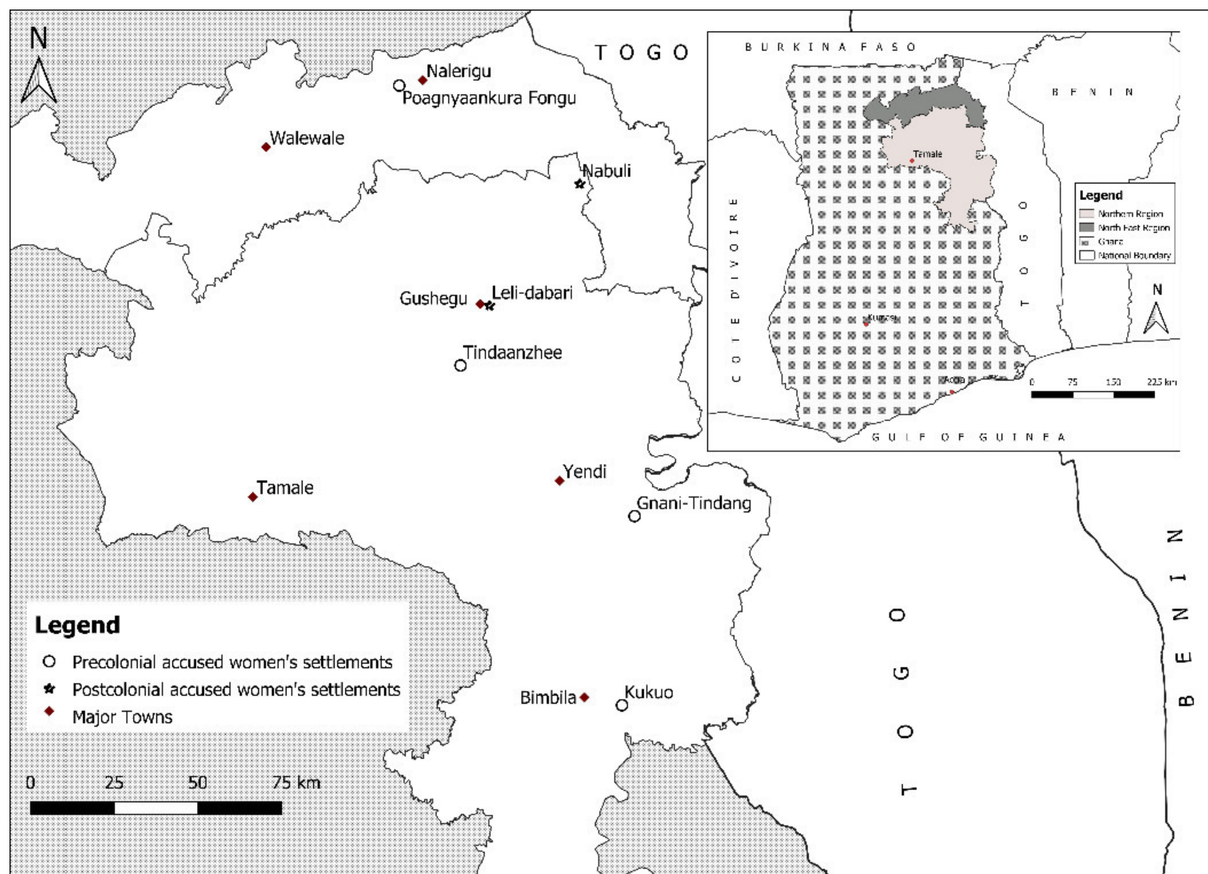


Figure 1: A map of the accused women's settlements in northern Ghana (produced by Saibu Mutaru)

and acted *ultra vires*. The abuses meted out to the accused came in various forms: forcing accused people to appear before anti-witchcraft shrines to be tested, subjecting shrine attendees to severe beatings and stripping them naked, coercing accused people to ingest poisonous substances. All these were intended to force the accused to confess their alleged occult "crimes".

By 1930, things had got out of control, and "the anti-witchcraft shrines were mired in controversy as local practices and understandings stood opposed to the local government's assumptions about orderly rule and rational justice" (Mutaru 2019, 12, citing Gray 2005). The British colonial government responded by repealing the NAO. A new law, the Native Custom Order, was promulgated in 1930 (McCaskie 1981; Gray 2001). This law criminalized the use of poison oracles and other occult witch-finding practices, but the locals protested against this outright ban. They petitioned the British colonial administrators to plead for an amendment to allow for voluntary confessions. The petition was eventually granted, thus making allowance for voluntary consultations of oracles. This state of affairs continued into the 1940s, after which the controversy relating to the anti-witchcraft movements steadily declined "as the healing and protective powers of African gods began to be replaced by those offered by the burgeoning numbers of prophetic Christian churches" (Parker 2004, 394).

In Ghana, the participation of churches and NGOs in the development process and in anti-witchcraft discourses has a long history. Gary (1996) traces the evolution of the

NGO sector to the colonial Gold Coast, when churches were the main active civil society institutions that attempted to carry out welfare activities and charity work. The number of NGOs active in the country grew after independence, with massive increase in their numbers during the 1980s and 1990s (Gary 1996; Mohan 2002). The decision of the Ghanaian government to accept the Structural Adjustment Programme from Western donors in the early 1980s led to demands for both economic and political reforms, including adherence to universal human rights and good governance (Gary 1996). From this moment, the West then presumably became the "best" model, and Ghana had to follow what were perceived as best practices in achieving development (e.g. promotion of the free market, privatization, human rights) if it wanted to recover from the ills of the previous decades (Mohan 2002).

While there has been a massive proliferation of NGOs in Ghana since the 1990s, their geographical distribution is not even. There is a great disparity in the level of development between southern and northern Ghana. The high level of poverty in the north, which is partly attributable to both colonial and postcolonial policies leading to marginalization, has been acknowledged (MacGaffey 2013; Adinkrah 2015). This has led to a situation where the majority of NGOs operating in Ghana are concentrated in the north, all focusing on typical ideal development themes: empowerment, freedom, poverty reduction, protection of human rights. It was within this rights and empowerment framework that ActionAid Ghana, an annexe of ActionAid International (a global human rights and justice federation) collaborated with the Government of Ghana and other local stakeholders to launch the 2012 project to reintegrate accused witches and disband accused women's settlements branded as "witch camps". ActionAid's intervention was driven by two main motivations: first, its commitment to the protection of the rights of the vulnerable poor people in society, especially women, and secondly, the media and other human rights groups' occasional negative reportage on the accused witches' settlements, branding them as "witch camps". Although ActionAid started working as a development organization in Ghana in the 1990s, its decision to vigorously embark on a campaign for the reintegration and closure of the "camps" was induced by an open declaration by the Government of Ghana in 2011 to close down all "witch camps" by 2012, a declaration that failed to materialize.

From time to time, the media carried news about the poor living conditions and alleged abuses of women's rights in the settlements. In November 2011, ActionAid Ghana collaborated with the government to organize a regional conference in Tamale on the plight of the women in these settlements. A significant outcome of this conference was ActionAid's decision to form what it called a Regional Reintegration Committee (RRC). The RRC was responsible for drawing and implementing a sensitization roadmap that sought to reintegrate all accused women into their original communities. By funding the reintegration project, ActionAid officials hoped that education or public sensitization would help decrease the number of "ignorant" beliefs and practices around witchcraft. However, while ActionAid's intervention was motivated by the need to promote human rights and "free" the accused women, the accused women prioritized their own security over any other considerations. But even before ActionAid's RRC was formed in 2013 to target all accused witches' settlements, the Presbyterian Church had unilaterally initiated reintegration efforts in one of the settlements (Poagnyaankura fongu) in Gambaga, dubbed the "Gambaga Outcast Home Project" (known as Go Home for short). The focus of this project was on the reintegration of the accused women into their original communities, and not on the closure of the settlements. Before the formation

of the RRC, ActionAid had not embarked on any joint venture with the local Presbyterian Church, but both had independently provided some kind of support to the accused witches on humanitarian grounds. During a conversation, Reverend Duru, the presiding pastor of the Gambaga Presbyterian Church, hinted that the current commitment of the Church to providing livelihood and reintegration support was based on funding support the Church had continuously received from the Helping Africa Foundation (HAF), an American-based charity dedicated to improving the health, social welfare, and education of people in sub-Saharan Africa.[6] In this case, the question is whether the local zeal for partnering up with an international NGO and implementing the reintegration project may be driven by the incentive of "aid-capturing", wherein local leaders, NGOs, and charities try to attract foreign money to continue to fund their organizations and personnel, aligning with the funders' priorities.[7]

Poagnyaankura fongu: A prototypical "witch camp"

Generally, the accused women settlements were similar in certain respects: they were all set in poor farming communities and characterized by squalid structures and poor living conditions; they had ritual custodians (except Leli-dabari); and all of them were supported by NGOs and churches. However, despite these similarities, the settlements also differed from each other somewhat. They enjoyed different levels of acknowledgment and support from the public and development actors – with Poagnyaankura fongu receiving the greatest fame and support because of its widespread exposure and popularity. This is because it was the oldest accused women's settlement and the one best known to the international community. Poagnyaankura fongu also had a longstanding connection with colonialism and appeared more often in human rights reports than any other settlement.

Poagnyaankura fongu's origin is described in local myths. The settlement is located in Gambaga, an ancient town in the Mamprugu kingdom that once served as the headquarters of the British colonial administrators when they first arrived in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. According to locals in Gambaga, the settlement's origins are associated with an apical ancestor who lived in the past, and who established performative rituals which protected society against evil, including witchcraft. Locals' beliefs in and collective associations with the origin stories provided a sense of spiritual belonging and purpose. At the time of fieldwork, Poagnyaankura fongu was one of the settlements which constantly appeared in human rights and development literature as the "Gambaga witch camp" (see ActionAid 2012).

The origin stories recounted here are based on interviews held with Mba Yidana, a respected elder in Gambaga.[8] According to him, in the olden days, the Nayiri (the chief of the Mamprugu kingdom) in Nalerigu had a special unit for executions called *gbandari*. In Mamprugu, people who were found guilty of witchcraft were handed over to the *gbandari* unit to be executed. With the advent of colonialism, this approach changed because the colonial administrators opposed such summary executions. Instead, a sanctuary was

[6] Reverend Duru, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, December 14, 2016. Duru and all the other names used throughout this work, except Mariama Akua Denteh, are not the real names of the interviewees. Akua Denteh's real name is used because she is not one of Saibu Mutaru's interviewees. We also used her name because it was the name used by all the newspapers and other media outlets when the story broke.

[7] Reverend Duru and Saibu once discussed during fieldwork the need for him to assist the church in writing good proposals to charitable organizations that could potentially support the accused women and the church.

[8] Mba Yidana, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, November 16, 2016.

opened for people accused of witchcraft.[9] Local legends attributed the origin of the Gambaga sanctuary to specific encounters involving local chiefs and an imam. In the first version of the story, the Gambarana (the chief of Gambaga town) paid a courtesy call to the Nayiri. His visit coincided with an attempt by the *gbandari* unit to execute an old accused woman. Touched by the plight of the accused, the Gambarana pleaded for clemency and requested that the woman be released and be kept under his protection. The request was granted and the woman was taken home. Over time, the Gambarana's sanctuary grew as more accused women came for shelter.

In the second version of this story, it was the imam of Gambaga whose visit coincided with the attempted execution. He pleaded for forgiveness for the woman and brought her home. The woman was made to swear on the Quran never to harm anyone with her powers. After this ritual, the woman lived happily in the imam's house. Over time, the imam's guardianship expanded to accommodate more accused women seeking protection. Eventually, this turned into an organized sanctuary for accused women. Over time, custodianship and authority over the women was transferred from the imam to Gambarana Bawumia, the chief of Gambaga town at the time.

During fieldwork in Gambaga, all the accused women Saibu interviewed in Poagnyaankura fongu came from the northern region. They had different ethnic affiliations, but the majority of them were Dagbamba. They came from various families, but with similar economic backgrounds: they were all poor, uneducated farmers. Since the northern region is predominantly inhabited by Muslims, the majority of the accused women arrived as Muslims. However, they later became Christian converts after having received consistent economic support from the local Presbyterian church, which had established an office in the settlement to take care of the women's needs. At some point, the Church organized special prayer sessions for the accused women on Wednesdays and made Sunday worship compulsory for all. As Reverend Duru explained during a long conversation in Gambaga:

> For a long time, the Church decided to bring them [accused women] closer to Jesus to receive salvation. Church authorities considered the accused women as children of God. So, they needed Jesus Christ in their lives when they felt neglected by community members. That was when the Church came in to lift them high and give them that joy. The Church started supporting them with food and talking to them about Jesus Christ and what he could do for them.

All of the women who lived in Poagnyaankura fongu had been accused of one form of witchcraft or another, except for relatives who had been brought in to provide care for them. The accusations ranged from the most banal aspects of daily life, such as seeing a person in a dream, to more severe and "unnatural" occurrences such as when a person died without any symptoms of illness, or as a result of a simple finger-knock on the head. The accused women Saibu interviewed all denied the occult "crimes" they had allegedly committed and which had resulted in their banishment. As Kalomo narrated:

> My son, I'm not a witch. I was falsely accused by my granddaughter who fell sick and thought I was punishing her for choosing a marital partner I did not support.

[9] This was a local containment strategy for witchcraft, and not a colonial imposition.

> She accused me for nothing. I didn't make her fall sick.[10]

As was the case with Kalomo, Tunteeiya at Tindaanzhee in Kpatinga also denied being a witch and said that her accusation was fabricated and misplaced.

> I'm here because of a false accusation. My brother's son died. He went to sleep in his room in the night. The following morning when his father went to wake him up, he found him dead. My brother accused me of bewitching and killing his son.[11]

We encountered a few cases where the accused had been violently driven away from their communities without any opportunity to prove their innocence. The majority of the accused women at Poagnyaankura fongu, when they presented themselves to the Gambarana, had tested positive for witchcraft prior to their admission. The testing procedure involved some cost to the accusing parties. Parties to a witchcraft accusation were required to report to the Gambarana – the oracle for witch-testing – with a local chicken each, for ritual slaughtering. Pronouncement of guilt or innocence by the Gambarana depended on the final position of the dead chicken. An accused person whom the oracle proved guilty was considered morally and socially compromised and therefore a danger to social order. As a result, villagers in the woman's original community were unwilling to accept her back. However, the Gambarana was willing to admit an accused woman into the settlement on condition that she agreed to submit herself to ritual cleansing processes. Once ritually cleansed, the accused woman's mystical powers were deemed deactivated and she became harmless to society. From this point, the person became a full member of Poagnyaankura fongu and locals in Gambaga could interact and work with her without any fear. However, there was something curious here: Why were the accused women accepted as harmless by the host community after being cleansed of their witchcraft powers, yet they were still rejected and feared by people from their original communities after these rituals? Wumpini, one of Saibu's local informants, answered this question in the following words:

> I have heard that when the accused women are coming for cleansing rituals, they throw their witchcraft powers into the bush. When they are returning to their communities after the cleansing rituals, they retrieve them from the bush. So, their people still don't trust them. They still fear them because they think that when they come back they can still cause harm.[12]

This view was repeated by a number of locals Saibu interviewed. However, the accused women offered a different reason as to why their kinsmen or other members of their own community would not accept them back. Some of the accused women Saibu interviewed narrated that their accusers had personal hatred for them, even though the accusations made against them were baseless. From this perspective, it does not matter whether the accused has been ritually cleansed or not; minds had already been made up.

From the perspective of locals in Gambaga, the accused women were not held against their will, since they were not compelled to reside in Poagnyaakura fongu upon proof of guilt. When Reverend Duru of the local Presbyterian Church – who worked

[10] Kalomo, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Nabuli, December 12, 2016.

[11] Tunteeiya, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Kukuo, January 9, 2017.

[12] Wumpini, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gnani, January 17, 2017.

directly with the accused women for more than fifteen years – was asked about his view on the alleged forced admission and maltreatment of the accused women, he provided the following response:

> The camp is a safe haven for accused women being persecuted. It is the journalists and the media people who portray the camp as a place of suffering. The Gambarana does not force people to come there and he does not force accused people to stay. They come on their own for protection. After which you can go home if you like. Those whose communities are not ready to accept them back are living there.

The pastor did not share the NGO narrative of maltreatment. The locals and the accused women interviewed held views similar to Pastor Duru's. The accused women did not feel that they were being held in these settlements against their will. Some of the accused pointed out that without the settlement, many of them would have been killed. Salamatu, a 70-year-old woman who had lived in Poagnyaakura fongu for six years, at the time of fieldwork, expressed this view when asked about the intentions of ActionAid and government to close down the accused women's settlements:

> Home is not safe. I don't want anybody to close down this settlement. Closing down the settlement means that more accused people will be exposed to harm or even death. People who are accused freshly will not get asylum if the settlement is closed.[13]

At another accused women's settlement in Kukuo, Azara, a middle-aged woman, mentioned that she would love to go back home but the fear of possible renewed attack kept her in the settlement. In one conversation with Saibu, she disclosed:

> Living conditions here are not very satisfactory. Home would have been better but because it is not safe there, we prefer to live here as long as we get protection from the *tindana*. It is not a good idea to close down this place. I want to go home but I cannot because the one who accused me is still there. My husband would love to have me back, but I cannot go.[14]

The human rights perspective implies that the accused women's stay in these settlements was a direct consequence of their accusations and forced evictions from their original communities, so that they were regarded as involuntary captives. This human rights view was not informed by the accused women's views and was actually opposed the perspectives of both these women and the host community.

Like in other accused women's settlements, Poagnyaankura fongu's Gambarana appoints a *magazia* (women's leader) who mediates between the women, the Gambarana himself, and the surrounding community. The victory of the newly appointed *magazia* was celebrated at a well-attended coronation ceremony held in the village. As the leader of the accused women in Poagnyaankura fongu, *magazia* Saanpoaga served as a liaison between the Gambarana and the accused women.[15] She was respected by all residents of Poagnyaankura fongu. She often conveyed messages and directives from the Gambarana to the women. The accused women considered the Gambarana as their metaphorical

[13] Salamatu, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, November 22, 2016.

[14] Azara, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, November 29, 2016.

[15] *Magazia* Saanpoaga, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, October 24, 2016.

“husband” because of his guardianship and the support he offered them in terms of food and protection. In appreciation of the chief’s support, the accused women worked for him and his family, especially during the farming season. The metaphorical reference to the chief as “husband” by the accused women was only a symbolical one, expressing the support a wife receives from a husband, for there was no marital contract between them and no conjugal love was professed, at least not overtly.

Apart from working for the chief and his family, the women in Poagnyaankura fongu also worked the farms of other local people during the rainy season. To reciprocate, local farmers supported the women with food and sometimes money to meet their little expenses. Except for a few of them, the majority of the accused women in Gambaga were more than 60 years old and looked very weak. As old as they were, they still had to struggle with farm work to earn their livelihoods. “They have no family here. They have to struggle like this to get food to eat”, Anas, a primary school teacher in Gambaga revealed.[16] An accused woman could leave the settlement permanently to go home only if her kinsmen, village elders, and local youth in her community sanctioned such a move. The accused women received additional support from government agencies, NGOs, churches, and individual philanthropists.

The accused women could usually visit relatives and friends in their original communities, but the frequency of such visits depended on where an accused came from. While some of them came from nearby villages and could visit home easily, others came from places very far away from Gambaga, such as Tamale. For example, the *tindana* of Gnani-Tindang claimed that he sometimes accommodated accused women from neighbouring countries such as Togo and Burkina Faso.[17] The reintegration efforts undertaken unilaterally by the Presbyterian Church in the mid-1990s, which did not yet advocate the closure of the settlements, became part of ActionAid’s larger campaign over time. At the time of our fieldwork, ActionAid Ghana had forged a close collaboration with the Presbyterian Church, aiming to close the settlements and permanently reintegrate the accused women.

“Witch camps” and current debates

Serious public debates concerning the accused women’s settlements started after 1990 following the profound democratization of the country’s public institutions and the acceptance of human rights slogans from Western governments and donors who rejected witchcraft beliefs. Unlike in pre-independence Gold Coast, where the colonizers explicitly fought witchcraft through specific witchcraft-related legislations, there is no such legislation in post-independence Ghana, even though state officials, like their colonial predecessors, equally reject witchcraft beliefs.

In 2016, the government of Ghana and ActionAid’s campaign against what they described as “witch camps” intensified. The condemnation of these settlements as places of human rights abuses and the efforts to close them had started long ago. In 1999, the U.S. Department of State issued a human rights report on Ghana. In this report, the Department complained about the human rights violations that (allegedly) took place in these settlements, including cases relating to what it regarded as “forced labour” (Mutaru 2019). Like the U.S. Department of State, the Ghanaian government was worried about the alleged human rights violations in these settlements. Since the proclamation of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the notion of human

[16] Anas, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, October 28, 2016.

[17] *Tindana* of Gnani-Tindang, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gnani, November 4, 2016

rights has been central to emerging discourses around witchcraft and the accused women's settlements. The human rights perspective, often popularized by civil society groups, stands in opposition to other narratives that emphasize local epistemologies.

During a chat with Mashina, an employee of ActionAid in Tamale, in 2016, she made reference to the closure of the Bonyase settlement in 2014, mentioned earlier. Although locals had claimed that the accused women reintegrated from Bonyase had run back to seek refuge in other settlements, Mashina denied this. "That is what they will always tell you. The people are saying all these things just to create the impression that the women want to live in the camps," she said dismissively.[18] Mashina's rebuttal certainly served to justify ActionAid's intervention. But the majority of the accused women interviewed during our stay clearly stated they preferred to remain in the settlements for their security. Kelija, a 75-year-old at Nabuli, revealed:

> This place is a good place for us. It has saved our lives and it will continue to save the lives of many accused women. I will not support any government idea that seeks to close it down. Without places like this, many women would have been murdered.[19]

At Kukuo, when Maata, an accused woman, was asked how she and her colleagues were responding to calls for reintegration and the closure of the settlements, she responded:

> I will always speak against any suggestion for the closure of these settlements. They are very useful to us. Nobody can get to harm you. If they are closed, we are not safe. Even if they convince our people to accept us back, our safety is still not guaranteed. If a misfortune strikes again in the village you become the prime suspect. So, they should let us be here.[20]

At Leli-dabari, the accused women's settlement in Gushegu, Godia voiced similar concerns:

> I have seen that the people live a normal life here. It is really not different from home. I prefer to be here than going back home. I think that this place serves a very useful purpose. I do not support the idea of closing down the place. This place protects us. It saves our lives. Without it, many women in our villages will be killed when villagers turn against them by accusing them over certain misfortunes.[21]

Rukayatu's seven-year stay at the accused women's settlement in Kukuo was a mixture of happiness and regret. Life was not all that auspicious, but she commended and appreciated the efforts of the *tindana* in protecting her. During a conversation with Saibu, she noted:

> I came here because I wanted to save my life after my husband's brother accused me of trying to kill him. He said he was seeing somebody in his dreams chasing him, and when he went and made his "enquiries" [divination], they told him that I was the one trying to kill him. I was forced to leave home because this man was hostile

[18] Mashina, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Tamale, October 18, 2016.

[19] Kelija, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Nabuli, November 24, 2016.

[20] Maata, interviewed by Saibu, Kukuo, January 16, 2017.

[21] Godia, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Leli-dabari (Gushegu), November 2, 2016.

> towards me. I came here and thankfully the *tindana* accepted me.[22]

Unlike ActionAid and other civil society organizations, who still regarded witchcraft beliefs as mere superstitions, local people, including the accused women themselves, felt that witchcraft was real. ActionAid's campaign for reintegration seriously overlooked the lurking danger that awaited these accused women back home. As in the case of Akua Denteh, who had denied the accusations against her, all the accused women Saibu interviewed claimed to be innocent of the malevolent powers attributed to them that had resulted in their banishment. Nevertheless, they admitted themselves that witchcraft was real and that no amount of sensitization conducted by the government or NGOs could erase the hatred and bitterness that people harboured against witches. This complexity was portrayed in the following responses of some of Saibu's interlocutors in Gambaga:

> ***Lamisi***: I'm not saying medicine [witchcraft] is not there. It is there, and I know you also know it is there. But what happened was that my co-wife's son accused me falsely. I didn't do anything to him. He was only dreaming and seeing me, but I don't have medicine.[23]

> ***Memuna***: Medicine [witchcraft] is there. I can't say there is nothing like medicine. A Mamprusi person cannot say there is no medicine. But I don't have it. Neither my mother nor any of my grandmothers from both paternal and maternal sides had ever been accused of witchcraft when they were alive. So where did I get medicine?[24]

The debate around witchcraft and the "witch camps" thus remains endless and inconclusive. The crux of the debate revolves around the core issue of "belief" versus "disbelief". Witchcraft is a complex issue and will not simply disappear through education, empowerment, and reintegration, as human rights advocates assume. Adam Ashforth (2015), in his work on law and belief in witchcraft, contrasts the world of people who do not believe in witchcraft with the world of those who do. For those who do not live in a world of witches, the most difficult issue to understand "is the ontology of witchcraft as violence, as a variety of multitudinous harms that humans are wont to inflict on one another" (Ashforth 2015, 10). Among such people, witchcraft remains purely a matter of belief and therefore irrational; one that exists only in the cognitive domain (in the mind). However, when dealing with those who live in a world of witches, "there is no essential ontological difference between the violence perpetrated by witches and ordinary forms of violence perpetrated by physical means" (Ashforth 2015, 10). The ontology and complexity of "belief" in witchcraft should be at the heart of the discussion. Belief is such a complex issue that we ought to exercise extreme caution in allowing a universalist human rights discourse to simply overthrow local cosmologies and realities. For Ashforth (2015, 29), the "human rights approach to witchcraft accusations denies their validity" and does not provide any chance for a trial, fair or otherwise. He concludes that "while there is much to be said for a bracing rationalism in all aspects of life, evidence from Africa over the past couple of centuries shows no sign that witchcraft narratives lose their plausibility as a result of people being

[22] Rukayatu, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Kukuo, February 12, 2017.

[23] Lamisi, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, December 13, 2016.

[24] Memuna, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, December 19, 2016.

told that witches do not exist" (Ashforth 2015, 29).

The foregoing discussion suggests that belief is a "thorny concept" (Engelke 2002, 3) because it poses irreconcilable challenges not only in the attempt to engender consensus, but also in any efforts to understand and appreciate different knowledge systems. Within anthropology, it is accepted that the problem surrounding the issue of belief cannot be resolved, yet that means it needs to be seen as irresolvable everywhere where different knowledge systems meet and consensus is required. As anthropologists, our stance is that cultures must still be understood holistically and on their own terms. This is a disciplinary injunction that anthropologists generally respect. This relativistic stance could be adopted by all stakeholders working with the accused women's settlements – state agencies, NGOs, churches – that are interested in understanding the inherent logics, local politics, and socio-cultural nuances that underpin the ontology underlying witchcraft accusations. These stakeholders often approach witchcraft with prejudices and assumptions that have a firm basis in colonial history. These biases and assumptions often inform the actions of NGOs and the government and pit them against local experiences of reality.

The accused women's working relationship with locals in the host communities was seen locally as *songsim* ('help'), but the human rights officer at CHRAJ in Gambaga, Mahmood, held a different view about this help. In his view, the Gambarana and other locals who benefitted from the work of the accused women did not pay commensurate compensation. According to him, "these women are exploited to some extent. They provide cheap labour for the chief and his immediate relatives. They sow and harvest the chief's crops at no charge."[25] This was recast as exploitation and human rights abuse. The accused women, in contrast, expressed their gratitude to the Gambarana for agreeing to accommodate them when their own kinsmen had rejected them for being morally compromised and untrustworthy. They also interpreted the invitation by the chief and other locals to work on their farms as enormous generosity, since they risked going hungry without any work to do.

The dichotomized perspectives held by locals and accused women on the one hand, and development NGOs and human rights activists on the other hand, points to the possible complications in social life when a diversity of knowledge is suppressed by those in power. While anthropology recognizes diversity and encourages multi-culturalism in the face of profound globalization, these diversities are still often ignored in the face of the dominant global modernity, driven by meta-level narratives of democratization and human rights ideals. While the notion of single modernity still appears to dominate western and global discussions of the human rights project, in anthropological and other humanities the concept of multiple modernities has been widely accepted for a long time now. In human rights work too, a balanced dialogue with local stakeholders, respecting such diversity, could be the only way of preventing more violence and creating a means to achieve more sustainable solutions with their support.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the salience of witchcraft beliefs among the Dagbamba. We have argued that the concept of witchcraft is a complex, relativized, and highly positional one which is vital to understanding the diverse conceptions and discourses surrounding the accused women's settlements, both those of local actors and of human rights advocates. As we saw earlier, this is the sense in which Connors and Halligan (2015, 2) have invited

[25] Mahmood, interviewed by Saibu Mutaru, Gambaga, December 2, 2016.

us to see beliefs, as the mental acceptance or a sort of personal or collective conviction of the truth of an idea. Irrespective of how they are viewed by others – true or false, right or wrong – beliefs hold sway over the beholder and lead to "enduring, unquestioned ontological representations of the world" (Connors and Halligan 2015, 2). To return to Latour, the invocation of the notion of belief at any time favours either the "inocophiles" or the "iconoclasts", the believers or the non-believers, leading to polarization between them. An important point worth emphasizing is that all cultures – Western and non-Western – have "beliefs". These beliefs, which are not ranked, provide the blueprint for social life. Consequently, we should note that different social groups and actors can pursue different modernities based on different beliefs. By examining the beliefs, discourses , and practices of Dagbamba witchcraft – expressed through the existence and management of the accused witches' settlements – vis-à-vis the analysis of civil society's (presumably Western-led) understanding of the phenomenon, this research has invited us to rethink, or even to challenge, the normativity of modernity presented as a single global project. Through ethnographic analyses of the so-called "witch camps" and Dagbamba ideas of witchcraft, we have shown the need to acknowledge and appreciate the relevance of the multiple modernities approach, thereby suggesting the salience of cultural translation or contextualization. The discussions presented in this article suggest that "if universal norms and principles are to be applied in local contexts, they need to undergo a complex process of contextualization, of adaptation to local circumstances" (Isa 2017, 80).

The analysis of different perspectives on the accused witches' settlements held by the accused witches and other locals on the one hand, and civil society actors on the other, only points to the nebulous, slippery, and contested nature of "belief". While this article argues once again for the continued decolonization of Western epistemologies, it provides an ethnographic basis for the reader to appreciate the concept of "multiple modernities" for this purpose. An important implication of the notion of multiple modernities is that "modernity and Westernization are not identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only 'authentic modernities', though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference to others" (Eisenstadt 2000, 3).

Differences between groups with regard to belief in witchcraft cannot be pragmatically resolved with ease. We cannot advise the abandonment of beliefs or convictions of any sort on either side of the divide. Perhaps a constructive and realistic approach would be to pursue a more sustainable moderation between state's views on human rights and measures taking into account the views of the accused women and, more broadly, of the local community on improving the women's quality of life. Our research has pointed out that the current human rights-driven actions clash with local beliefs and realities and potentially have perilous consequences for the women involved, since beliefs cannot simply be ignored. Based on our research findings, a new research project could be set up, investigating successful – and unsuccessful – cases of reintegration, including what local stakeholders deem to be the secrets of the successes. Such a study could lead to suggestions for research-based and potentially more sustainable forms of reintegration.

References

ActionAid. 2012. *Condemned Without Trial: Women and Witchcraft in Ghana*. London: ActionAid. https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/ghana_report_single_pages.pdf

Adinkrah, Mensah. 2015. *Witchcraft, Witches and Violence in Ghana*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Ashforth, Adam. 2015. "Witchcraft, Justice Human Rights in Africa: Cases from Malawi." *African Studies* 61 (1): 5–38.

Becker, Heike, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen. 2005. "Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 28 (3/4): 123–132.

Blunden, Alice. 2022. "Anthropology: Witchcraft and Social Control in Ghana: Is it Magic or Mystery," 25/12/2022. Accessed February 15, 2023. https://www.yoair.com/blog/anthropology-witchcraft-and-social-control-in-ghana-is-it-magic-or-mastery/

Cheater, Angela. 1987. "The Anthropologist as Citizen: The Diffracted Self." In *Anthropology at Home*, edited by Anthony Jackson, 164–179. London: Tavistock Publications.

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff, eds. 1993. *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Connors, Michael H., and Peter W. Halligan. 2015. "A Cognitive Account of Belief: A Tentative Road Map." *Frontiers Psychology* 5: 1–14.

Drucker-Brown, Susan. 1993. "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations." *Journal of International African Institue* 63 (4): 531–549.

Eisenstadt, S. N. 2000. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129 (1): 1–29.

Engelke, Matthew. 2002. "The Problem of Belief: Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner on 'the inner life'." *Anthropology Today* 18 (6): 3–8.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. 1937. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne. 2012. "Being Affected." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1 (1): 435–445.

Gary, Ian. 1996. "Confrontation, Co-operation or Co-optation: NGOs and the Ghanaian State During Structural Adjustment." *Review of African Political Economy* 23 (68): 149–168.

Geschiere, Peter. 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gray, Natasha. 2001. "Witches, Oracles, and the Colonial Law: Evolving Anti-witchcraft Practices in Ghana, 1927–1932." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34 (2): 339–363.

Gray, Natasha. 2005. "Independent Spirits: The Politics of Policing Anti-Witchcraft Movements in Colonial Ghana, 1908–1927." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35 (2): 139–158.

Isa, Felipe G. 2017. "Human Rights, Cultural Diversity, and Legal Pluralism from an Indigenous Perspective: The Awas Tingni Case." In *Human Rights Encounter Legal Pluralism: Normative and Empirical Approaches,* edited by Giselle Corradi, Eva Brems, and Mark Goodale, 74–99. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Johnston, Barbara R. 2010. "Social Responsibility and the Anthropological Citizen." *Current Anthropology* 51 (S2): S235–S247.

Latour, Bruno. 2011. "Fetish-Factish." *Material Religion* 7 (1): 42–49.

Lichterman, Paul. 2017. "Interpretive Reflexity in Ethnography." *Ethnography* 18 (1): 35–45.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. 2013. *Chiefs, Priests, and Praise-Singers*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

McCaskie, Tom C. 1981. "Anti-Witchcraft Cults in Asante : An Essay in the Social History of an African People." *History in Africa* 8: 125–154.

McNeil, William H. 1986. "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians." *The American Historical Review* 9 (1): 1–10.

Mohan, Giles. 2002. "The Disappointments of Civil Society: The Politics of NGO Intervention in Northern Ghana." *Political Geography* 21 (1): 125–154.

Moore, Henrietta L., and Todd Sanders, eds. 2001. *Magical Interpretations and Material Realities: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Mutaru, Saibu. 2018. "Conducting Anthropological Fieldwork in Northwern Ghana: Emerging Ethical Dilemmas." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 41 (1): 185–198.

Mutaru, Saibu. 2019. "Naming the Witch, Housing the Witch and Living with Witchcraft: An Ethnography of Ordinary Lives in Northern Ghana's Witch Camps." PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University.

Mutaru, Saibu. 2022. "Access to Land in Difficult Times: An Ethnographic Study of Morally Compromised Strangers in Northern Ghana." *Social Dynamics* 48 (2): 314–337.

Niehaus, Isak. 2001. *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld*. London: Pluto Press.

Niehaus, Isak. 2010. *Witchcraft and a Life in the New South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Onyinah, Opoku. 2002. "Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5 (1): 107–134. https://www.aptspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/02-1-Opoku.pdf.

Parker, John. 2004. "Witchcraft, Anti-witchcraft and Trans-regional Ritual Innovation in Early Colonial Ghana: Sakrabundi and Aberewa, 1889–1910." *Journal of African History* 45: 393–420.

Qamar, Azher H. 2020. "At-Home Ethnography: A Native Researcher's Fieldwork reflections." *Qualitative Research* 21 (1): 51–64.

Strathern, Marilyn. 1987. "The Limits of Auto-Anthropology." In *Anthropology at Home*, edited by Anthony Jackson, 16–37. London: Tavistock Publications.

White, Luise. 2000. *Speaking with Vampires*. Berkeley: University of California Press.