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**EXAMINING SOUTH AFRICA'S PROCESS OF CULTURAL
TRANSFORMATION:**

***Interrogating the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS)
Policy framework***

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*A minor dissertation submitted in [partial] fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree
of Master of Social Science*

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signed by candidate

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
CM	Cultural Materialism
COSATU	Congress of South African Trades Unions
DST	Department of Science and Technology
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
MST	Manchester School of Thought
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPPHCN	National Progressive Primary Health Care Network
NRF	National Research Foundation
PAC	Pan-African Congress
PHILA	Public Health Intervention through Legislative Advocacy Work
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UDF	United Democratic Front.
VIW	Violence instigated by witchcraft
WHO	World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

South Africa's metamorphosis is witnessed through three transitional processes, two of which are more pronounced. The first is that of political transformation, which is now realized in a citizen representative government; the second is that of economic transformation. The third process, social transformation, tends not to be as prioritised as the former two; but it is as imperative to South Africa's transition particularly in respect to its cultural transformation initiatives. In efforts to balance the playing field, the new African National Congress (ANC) government is compelled to address inequities and violations of not only the economic and political systems and codes but of also the social – the ripple effect of which has been profoundly detrimental to the black population.

This study examines the extent to which social and cultural relevance, as part of transformation, is currently being pursued in South Africa. It scrutinizes the effectiveness of constitutional and legislative reform measures, namely the recently established policy framework of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and highlights violence as a major obstacle in South Africa's transformation pursuits. In pointing out the potential use of IKS as an effective development mechanism to combat various aspects of violence, the study argues, however, that IKS is conceptually incomplete. This is largely due to be a lack of engagement of critical elements of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, namely the Occult system of knowledge. This study raises questions about the manner in which indigenous knowledge issues are currently tackled within the development paradigm. It examines, with a critical lens, the role that history plays in the current conceptualisation of IKS with a view to challenge scholars, policy makers and ordinary citizens to seriously interrogate the reality and appropriateness of (cultural) development initiatives within South Africa.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As in most countries in Africa, Colonialism left a distinct mark on the South African landscape. But whereas other countries were thereafter free to implement a system of majority rule, South Africa was to endure two more periods of white minority rule. The end of Colonialism saw the country form into a union state again headed by a white governing authority. Like previous white governing powers, this government was equally fraught with unjust laws and practices towards the majority black population and continued to curtail their rights of citizenship (Wood, 2000). When a new government took over in 1948, the system of Apartheid (“apartness”), which had up until this time been arbitrarily implemented, became an institutionalized reality. Under Apartheid, racial separation was extended to a “Grand Apartheid” scheme meant to ensure white domination. Laws, which were aggressively enforced by armed forces and police units, served to control and regiment black labour and guarantee white economic privilege and dominance.

Elsewhere in the world, the 50s and 60s were experiencing an upsurge of demands, in the colonies, for self-determination and majority rule. Countries like the United States were also coming to terms with their own racial policies and making attempts to dismantle discriminatory legislation. Gradually, in many places, the aspirations for majority rule and the liberalizing of race policies were realized. South Africa, however, remained a nation under siege as segregationist policies of a white Apartheid regime ensured socio-economic and political inequality. The “separate but equal” policy¹ of the Apartheid government was a scant attempt to appease the black population as well as international critics of South Africa’s racist policies; it did little

¹ The official justification for this policy was that each race would co-exist harmoniously if permitted to develop separately. The rationale was that separate development and exposure to different facilities reduced the possibility of racial conflict which would arise because groups would compete for the same resources. Eventually, approximately thirteen percent of the land was divided into ten homelands for the 80% population of blacks (Praeger, 2004). Blacks were designated “homelands” and restricted from migrating between states.

to quell the growing impatience of the black population for change. These policies, and other unjust laws, are central to the structure of inequality witnessed in South African society today.

South Africa is now a nation in the throes of transition, attempting to come to terms with its past through processes of social, political, economic, and cultural transformation. The new government of the African National Congress (ANC) is tasked with transforming a racist and oppressive state structure into a system of institutions that embody democratic values. It is simultaneously challenged with addressing the psychological after-effects of its history upon its citizens – both victims and perpetrators – many of whom continue to bear the scars of a brutal past.

The new democratic climate affords South Africa the opportunity to celebrate its diversity, and the new constitution guarantees the right and space to debate issues which arise due to this diversity. Engagements that have sprouted underscore the challenges of equality; whether all colours of South Africa's "rainbow" can be accommodated, however, remains to be seen. As Apartheid ghosts continue to linger in the shadows of South Africa's new democracy, some become manifest in various forms. Violence is the most pronounced of these manifestations and continues to threaten the legitimacy of the new government.

A crucial part of crafting new ideologies in efforts to design a different kind of nation is the ability to forge a common national identity. It is a process which is hinged on pre-existing cultural dynamics of South Africa. And given the country's long history of division and subjugation, it would stand to reason that the cultural framework² will need to be thoroughly revised to reflect the reality of current and future endeavours of identity formation and representation.³

² The definition of culture or a cultural framework, in this context, is borrowed from Jyoti Mistry (2001) who understands it to be a mainstay in the process of citizenship which "serves as an extension to the core ethos of national identities". The notion of a cultural framework comes from the understanding that South Africa is in the midst of constructing new guidelines which will become the "blueprint" for the new nation and will reflect its progressive ambitions. This blueprint will be manifested through societal institutions as well as the daily habits of South African citizens.

³ This study considers two basic domains of identity in respects to culture: there is the one that is public and

Reconstructing a new cultural framework and forming a new social system requires dismantling unprogressive ideas which were formulated under Apartheid to support systems of division and unfair practices. These practices framed the realities of South Africans. Thus, the deliberate attempt to diverge from past practices, which were anchored on policies of exclusion and restrictive citizen participation, is currently being pursued by the new ANC government. As South Africa attempts to stimulate aspirations that offer a vision of a new society wherein racial categories cease to be important, and as it continues to undertake processes of cultural re-engineering, it must contemplate the many voices that demand to be heard. Inevitably, the history of separation and conflict continues to afflict efforts at transformation as these voices are catered to in ways that do not necessarily bode well for social harmony.

The views presented in this study pertain to South African cultural identity and representation in a time of change. On a broader scale, they also reflect the ambitions of many African leaders to re-define themselves in the post Colonial era. Leaders, like President Thabo Mbeki, believe that the development of their nations begins with re-aligning their development aspirations with, and in respect to, their tradition, history and culture. The ANC has undertaken to carry South Africa forward with this philosophy in mind. In recognizing IKS as an important tool for sustainable development (Masoga, 2006), countries like South Africa are making efforts to advance and develop their cultural frameworks in order to craft better development initiatives that are contextually aligned.

The study examines the process of cultural transformation⁴ undertaken by the ANC government, and explores why it is important for South Africa's transition to democracy and its path to self-(re)definition. It scrutinizes the government's

defined by aspects of nationhood/nationalism – in other words what it means to be a South African; and there is the other, which is private and defined by aspects of ethnicity, religion, class and so forth – that is, what it means to be Zulu, Xhosa, Muslim e.t.c. The study focuses on the former distinction, that of public identity, and some of the processes that are being implemented as part of the ongoing efforts to forge a common identity and culture.

⁴ In this context, the term cultural transformation is understood to be the process of altering the blueprint that, as expressed earlier, defines a society. Stated differently, it is the re-drafting of the 'set of guidelines' and norms that inform the manner in which people interact and see themselves.

management of this transition, as well as its socio-cultural implications, through the prism of a particular policy framework, notably the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) Policy. This policy framework served as an impetus for the drafting of legislation like the Traditional Health Practitioner's Act which, albeit being supported by organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), is a highly contentious policy. The study also serves as a prism into issues and controversies in South Africa which continue to reflect competing and contesting world views.

ARGUMENT

The discussion in this study centres on whether there is an adequate conceptualization of IKS in its overall design framework and implementation. The study argues that although the IKS has been hailed as a progressive step for South African development, it is conceptually incomplete in terms of its transformative incentives. This is mainly due to the fact that IKS does not thoroughly engage and acknowledge the wider system of traditional knowledge, dimensions of which include occult knowledge. Therefore, the study questions the capacity of IKS to actualize a successful reform in areas of cultural transformation, given that its current definition and application neglects to include other dimensions of indigenous life and culture. Knowledge systems, like the occult, for instance, are deemed controversial and are rarely part of IKS discussions. It is due to this reason mainly that systems like the occult must be incorporated in IKS discussions.

Neglecting to engage the occult knowledge system in discussions of IKS has had repercussions in various sectors of society in that certain elements within this system, which have been deemed problematic and seen to curtail the broader agenda of South African development, remain inadequately addressed. This is particularly true of the issue of witchcraft⁵ and the violence it is known to incite. Thus, the study also re-

⁵ On the one hand witchcraft is sometimes described by scholars as mystical and magical, and on the other it is known to occupy a more sinister space in occult practices (Middleton and Winter 1963; Harwood, 1970). Other ways that witchcraft has been viewed is: as a set of beliefs; as a religion, as a "social-strain" gauge or mechanism for managing wayward behaviour within society, or as a mechanism for controlling and explaining change in the environment, or as a method to obtain economic and political power, and also as a reflection of all that is evil in human nature (Moore & Sanders, 2001; Douglas, 1970; Marwick, 1964). The following study integrates all these definitions and applies Sean Redding's definition of witchcraft which understands it as a "supernatural force"

problematizes the dialectic between the witchcraft discourse and the mainstream paradigm of development. It explores the current development mechanisms for change identified by the ANC government as crucial to the process of cultural transformation in South Africa. – namely the newly established policy on indigenous knowledge systems – and discusses what the new scenario implies for South Africa and how it will affect the new cultural landscape. In making the case for integrating certain indigenous perspectives into South Africa’s wider knowledge system and showing how this can assist in creating new research paradigms and mental maps, the study illustrates how IKS can be used to develop strategies that are better aligned to certain aspects of violence.

OBJECTIVE

South Africa provides a particularly apposite focus firstly on account of the timing of its transition and secondly because of the complex interrelationships between two highly charged processes. The first is the project of reconstruction and restitution which advocates an equitable environment in one of the world’s most inequitable societies. The second project is that of cultural identity and representation - a conditionality *sine qua non* for the assurance of democratic principle in the form of citizen inclusion.

In this new democratic era, South Africa finds itself engaged in complex intersections of new politics, old customs, prevailing ideologies and extreme violence. This is particularly evident in its cultural transformation program wherein countless debates over legislation, which, on the one hand, seek to redress former policies of Apartheid, but on the other attempt to reflect the new “rainbow” nation, are raging. Initiatives to recognize cultural systems of knowledge like the Traditional Healers’ system have come under fire and been subjected to severe interrogation and criticism. Many question the validity of upholding (Black) African cultural identity over the well being of the larger society. Although formalizing the Traditional Health Practitioner’s Bill can be seen as a progressive step towards integrating traditional systems with formal ones, there is still room for more change particularly in as far as challenging some of the pre-existing notions of how to deal with issues like witchcraft.

responsible for fortune or misfortune (2004:521).

Witchcraft surfaces as a concern first, because of its link to violence, and secondly, because it is increasingly evident that witchcraft discourses have become manifest in various sectors of society (Ciekawy and Geschiere, 2002) such as in the areas of gender, public health and justice. Since these are the areas which have been fervently pursued by government, many feel that witchcraft undermines the greater ambitions of democracy and must therefore be eradicated. But this conviction is not shared by everyone. To some, witchcraft in itself is not a crime and does not necessarily pose a threat to the community. It offers its own contribution to indigenous structures, and many argue that it is an integral part of African cultural development and must not be uprooted (Ralushai, 1996). Given the often contesting views on the validity and utility of this belief, and the fact that various practises instigated by this belief, such as witchcraft accusations, have led to community disruptions and even deaths, it would appear that the most appropriate platform to engage the occult on issues of violence instigated by witchcraft practises (VIW)⁶ is within the IKS policy framework where issues of indigenous knowledge are of relevance.

In arguing that the IKS policy framework is conceptually incomplete, the broader objective of the study is to propose that the conceptualization of IKS be interrogated and challenged. More specifically, it suggests that if the IKS framework policy were to recognize the system of the occult, in which witchcraft features, as an indigenous knowledge in its own right, it may garner support for, and facilitate processes to, streamline and capitalize on indigenous methodologies which could aptly serve to address the issue of VIW. Essentially, the very mechanisms of management and knowledge within the system of IKS can be employed to meet the challenges that witchcraft complexes⁷ present.

⁶ VIW in this study reflects all the types of violent acts associated with witchcraft such as: witchcraft accusations which result in acts of mob/vigilante violence, ritual killings, vendettas which manifest, for instance, in the damage of property, witch burnings.

⁷ The term “witchcraft complex” refers to the various manifestations of witchcraft. That is: witchcraft as a religious/spiritual/emotional base, as an explanatory tool, as a mechanism to control social deviance, as a mechanism to solve the injustices that accompany social, economic and political instabilities and so forth.

RATIONALE

Although authors like Mogomme Masoga (2006) and Gloria Emeagwal (2003) recognize conceptual inadequacies of IKS and have written to this effect, like many, they too steer clear of knowledge systems that may be seen to diverge from, or counter, current perceptions of modernity and development. Masoga in particular, while suggesting that additional areas such as culture and musical arts education need to be included in IKS discussions, nonetheless falls short of involving knowledge production within the occult system. The insinuation is that only those systems of knowledge that can be applied to development initiatives are of value and can thus be engaged in IKS discussions. What is problematic about this view is that firstly, as history has shown, this does not necessarily amount to the elimination of the problems associated with witchcraft like VIW. Secondly, and more importantly, it raises the question of where then can issues such as VIW be discussed if not under a forum like IKS? Lastly, the idea that culture should be evaluated on its usefulness to development is a false theory which is not supported by econometric analysis or history (UNDP, 2004); the term, definition and understanding of what constitutes “useful” and “development” is contestable.⁸

In arguing that witchcraft discourses have not been entirely deconstructed from a grassroots level and have so far been inadequately constructed, the study acknowledges that existing scholarship on Africa has not done enough to further African development. It problematizes the imposition of European/Western epistemologies (ways of knowing understanding, interpreting) on the African context and interrogates the production of African witchcraft discourses. It demonstrates how and why misappropriations and misrepresentations, which begin at the level of conceptualisation, are articulated and become reflected in policy-making and implementation and, ultimately, social reality. Stated differently, because these

⁸ Masoga cites Arun Agrawal (2002) who argues that the recognition of indigenous knowledge should be determined by its usefulness to African development. In Agrawal’s view elements of indigenous knowledge which fall out of sync of development philosophies are irrelevant and must be interrogated (2002). Masoga challenges these views and questions who determines what information is useful to development. He highlights real concerns regarding imposing a dominant Western worldview on an African context.

conceptual flaws are embedded in scholarship and academia,⁹ they have a profound influence on the discourse and interventions at the level of policy,¹⁰ which in turn impacts social engagement at the grassroots level. In retracing the footprints of this discourse production, one may begin to grasp why and how current circumstances are what they are and thereafter seek meaningful ways to reverse this trend.

This study departs from previous scholarship by stressing a fundamental claim: witchcraft should be considered an indigenous theory of human interaction.¹¹ By and large it attempts to demonstrate, how (human) agency, more than anything, when it comes to issues like VIW, plays a major role and must not be ignored. Complexes like witchcraft accusations, witch-hunts, witch murders and so forth serve as the vehicle to showcase insecurities that exist among individuals and groups within society; it is these insecurities, and the agencies that reinforce them, that need to be unpacked and addressed. Awareness of this observation will arguably encourage a more robust exploration of all areas of individual and social engagement.

⁹ Within academia, the tendency within the social sciences to neglect to acknowledge the power of witchcraft discourses within significant fibres of African socio-economic, political, religious, cultural society has meant that ill-fitting, inadequate and outdated methodologies have been too easily applied where African interests are concerned. In addition, there is in many ways a continued preference amongst scholars and policy makers to view issues related to witchcraft within a framework which “safely” confines witchcraft to a proverbial domain, applying to it well-known adjectives such as “phantogoric nothingness” (Devisch, 2001:103), primitive, archaic, backwards, anti-modern amongst other things. This has only served to downplay the extent to which witchcraft complexes can impact society and the seriousness that it should be accorded. It has also meant that, thus far, interventions aimed at addressing the problem of witchcraft violence have focused almost exclusively on a zero tolerance approach aimed at eradicating the practice of witchcraft, with insufficient attention given to alternative approaches. This focus on eradicating witchcraft, rather than addressing the socio-economic factors underlying it, to some degree explains the failure to manage the broader problem of witchcraft violence.

¹⁰ In as far as witchcraft has been handled on the policy level, laws like the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957, in addition to the various laws which were implemented by the Colonial administration before the Act, laid the groundwork for later complexities associated with dealing with the issue; they are a reflection of the system of inadequacy in regards to African issues. Systematically addressing laws from the past such as these is an essential part of the process of cultural transformation initiated by the government. These laws, along with the mindset that framed them provided the impetus for what became known as the worst cases of VIW ever witnessed in recorded South African history. According to John Hund, there are no records which reveal VIW as a serious problem as they came to be known (2003).

¹¹ This theory expands on Bond and Ciekawy’s proposal to explore witchcraft as an indigenous theory of human action (2001).

METHODOLOGY

Evans-Pritchard's (1937) study of the Azande in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Oracles among the Azande* set a benchmark for a new method of viewing, analyzing and interpreting African sociology. But although Evans-Pritchard offered useful insights and influenced the manner in which later scholars approached the study of African belief systems, he tended to base his theories on metaphysical aspects of witchcraft and neglected to incorporate a social dimension (Moore & Sanders, 2001) in order to create the link between the belief in witchcraft and local social structures.

This study similarly applies sociological theorizing to explore how societies and their members operate and function within the socio-cultural dynamics of their environment. More specifically it looks at how rural household structures in the Northern Province were affected by socio-economic and political conditions and the manner in which communities dealt with these changes. In recognizing that social dynamics are complex and far-ranging, the study relies on a combination of theoretical approaches. These are the theories of the *Manchester School of Thought* (MST) and *Cultural Materialism* (CM).

Manchester School of Thought

Theorists of the MST school¹² examine conflict situations which arise when individuals or groups within an apparent prevailing order are reluctant to accept conditions which run counter to their expectations (Werbner, 1984). The general view in this school of thought is that witchcraft elements (i.e. witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts) are linked to social control and change (Marwick, 1964). They become pronounced when social relations become ill-defined or abrasive (Moore & Sanders, 2001). Thus, MST is formulated on theories of structural-functionalism.

Structural-functionalism

Empirically, structural functionalists focus on political and economic issues; they tend to emphasize homeostasis and concentrate on events rather than the historical

¹² Max Gluckman (1956), Victor Turner (1957), Clyde Mitchell (1956) Max Marwick (1965) are the leading figures in this school of thought.

antecedents and processes that make these events possible. In this way, a synchronic analysis which focuses on illustrating how relationships are structurally contradictory or strained is heavily drawn upon (Ritchken, 1989). Under this model, witchcraft is understood as a pressure valve and method of relieving tension in order to prevent the occurrence of change (Moore & Sanders, 2001). According to Moore & Sanders, this type of analysis creates an ambivalent relation with regard to issues of social change (2001). Although there are implications of periodisation of a social identity within structural-functionalism (Ritchken, 1989), little attention is paid to explaining how accusations become rife, in the first place. This would serve to reveal a pattern of VIW occurrences within the context of a historical process, and the circumstances and events that shape and influence this pattern. Understanding what, at a given time, constitutes a witch, for instance, may help explain the level to which socio-economic and political circumstances impact on, shape and determine the dynamics of witchcraft and witchcraft complexes.

However, because the general emphasis in structural-functionalism is on the methods that members within societies resort to in rejecting change, and not on the possibility that a society may resort to these methods as a way to *facilitate* change, MST falls short of some of the assumptions of this study which postulate witchcraft both as a tool to better accommodate the advent of modernity and as an *aspect of* modernity (Finnström, 1996). It is, nonetheless, useful in analyzing VIW and is particularly applicable to this study primarily because it analyzes conflicts of actual situations (Colson, 1979) and highlights social control and change as a crucial feature within society. More importantly, MST places emphasis on *how* social actions, such as VIW, affect local structures, rather than on *why* people share a particular belief (Moore & Sanders, 2001). This school of thought scrutinizes the structures and ideologies which have emerged as a consequence of VIW, such as the creation of new villages and lineages and correlates these outcomes with the socio-economic and material realities of society as opposed to the witchcraft belief itself (Moore & Sanders, 2001). While some of the assumptions made by the MST render it inadequate for the present study, on the whole, it offers an appropriate theoretical framework because it highlights the very real need to address conflict situations in society by illustrating how the socio-economic and political changes within the environment affect cultural conditions and norms.

In pointing out past failings in addressing the issue of witchcraft complexes, the study proposes that solutions be more empirically formulated in order to obtain verifiable results which can be translated into concrete terms. In this respect, explorations into theories of cultural materialism (CM) are particularly pertinent.

Cultural Materialism

Cultural materialism is a theoretical analysis that supports the realization of outcomes which are measurable, and can be applied, formulaically, in numerous contexts. Like MST theorists, cultural materialists are less concerned with interpreting cultural change in human systems of thought than with material conditions. According to Marvin Harris (1979), cultural materialists look beyond the dimensions of human thought and correlate the material base of societies to human actions and behaviours; they argue that researchers should be more concerned with those factors within societies that can easily be observed and measured.

In the case of witchcraft complexes, tangible results have been hard to achieve. This may be largely due to the manner in which witchcraft complexes have tended to be tackled. For instance, aside from investigating how VIW affects people and pursuing a culturally sensitive approach, which largely informed data collection, the Ralushai report examined in Chapter five does little by way of producing data that are translated into measurable results. There are indeed benefits to forming solutions that are empirically framed. The methodology of “mapping” occurrences of violence instigated by witchcraft, for instance, may help to illuminate patterns of VIW (time and place), and relationships between various variables, concepts and issues and help to better forecast incidences of VIW In order to plan how to circumvent them. Furthermore, this method of mapping is particularly vital in today’s current climate of resource allocation and donor aid distribution, wherein empirical information is often the difference between meeting development goals and not being able to achieve them because of an inability to showcase results that can readily be translated into concrete results and thereafter solutions.

However, critics of this approach, like Friedman (1974), complain about its simplicity because, in reality, issues like witchcraft are complex and can not be reduced to generalized scientific formulas that are universal. It is, indeed, as important to take into account people's mental processes and symbolic structures (*emic*), as it is to observe physical and behavioural phenomena (*etic*). However, cultural materialism, which supports this latter view, sends a questionable message: that evidence-based measures that are unquantifiable and thus non-scientific are of little or no value when it comes to properly understanding or explaining social phenomena.

What is problematic with this view is that there are many elements in African culture that are not amenable to empirical formulations. Whereas African culture honours the gift of dreams and intuition bestowed on traditional healers as repositories of wisdom, within Western culture, acquired (empirical) knowledge is what commands recognition (Fedler & Olckers, 2001). Harris, however, notes the discomfort that many have of an approach based on science, it is no less problematic because it is itself culturally-determined and susceptible to class, race, and other structural and infrastructural variables and biases (Harris, 1995). But while the premises and conclusions of CM are in many ways questionable, CM, which offers solutions that are measurable and can be translated into concrete terms, is nevertheless a critical approach to consider for this study, largely because it offers an alternative method of addressing the issue of VIW.

In arguing that witchcraft discourse production greatly influences the manner in which witchcraft is addressed by policy makers, it is important to try to draw out patterns which are likely to reaffirm this point. Thus, a second methodology involves examining the policies (past and present) that have emerged regarding this issue. These include the 1957 Witchcraft Suppression Act, which was amended in 1970, as well as documents produced by government to address this issue. Of main focus will be the Ralushai Commission report produced in 1996. Juxtaposing what has been written on witchcraft with what is currently being done about witchcraft draws attention to the potential effect and role that past discourses may have in shaping present policies.

LIMITATIONS

This study is subject to some limitations. The first limitation is that of time. The process of cultural transformation is not limited to the area of indigenous knowledge but encompasses other areas and dimensions. In this regard, the issues raised in this study are part of a much broader discussion, which, given the scope and requirement as well as time constraints of this dissertation, can not be fully explored or adequately engaged. Similarly, implications of violence in South Africa are not limited to complexes of witchcraft, they too encompass far more complex dynamics of which extensive exploration and expansion is required but can not be pursued again due to time limitations. VIW only brushes the surface of these explorations but offers useful insight in regards to society and culture by way of engaging in these discussions.

The second limitation may be construed as an insufficient coverage of one of the three areas of focus. The study looks at three areas of redress: justice, public health and gender relations. All these areas are touched upon in chapter four, however, only two – justice and gender – are revisited in greater detail in chapter five's case study of the Northern Province. The choice to primarily focus on these two areas was based on the following reasoning: there is a prevalent view that IKS only pertains to elements of traditional healing (Masoga, 2006) and is, therefore, largely the domain of public health and science institutions.¹³ In actuality, indigenous knowledge production is not limited to the area of traditional healing which, according to Masoga, comprises only a miniscule part of a wider system of knowledge (2006). Ways of interpretation of life can be expressed through other forms of culturo-theoretical channels such as the musical arts (Masoga, 2006). The overemphasis of this area, however, has meant that other areas that may contribute substantially to IKS, such as indigenous systems and practises of justice, remain neglected and are left underdeveloped as useful contributors to development and the well being of the society at large.

¹³ What is particularly apparent within in international discussions and engagements on IKS generally fixated on issues of protecting and expanding indigenous property rights with primary interests in the area of medicinal and agricultural (traditional) knowledge. Moreover, in South Africa, indigenous knowledge programs tend to be concentrated in various Science Councils such as the Agricultural Research Council, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Human Sciences Research Council and the Medical Research Council.

However, given the poignant nature of the topic, and the particularly sensitive space that it occupies in South Africa's public health debates, it is essential to discuss it if even briefly. But, the main intention of the study is to highlight and expose those areas that are insufficiently addressed within the system of IKS, or not discussed at all. Since IKS has increasingly become crucial as a development policy and tool, its capacity to effect change should not be limited to a single area, but allowed to be effective in other dimensions of social life. For purposes of affirming this point, the study identifies an area of indigenous knowledge system which is neglected – the area of occult knowledge. It is hoped that the exploration into this single area will stimulate further research into other areas of IKS.

Admittedly this study is not without its own contradictions. Notwithstanding making the case for de-emphasizing Eurocentricity in African discourse production, and supporting efforts to promote representation on African issues that are innately Afro-centred, this study suffers from a prominent problem faced by countless Africanist scholars. It succumbs to the almost unavoidable tendency of placing African discussions, against the proverbial Colonial narrative. This gives the impression that African identity and evolution begins at the (historical) moment of Colonialism. As a result, the African pre-Colonial period is often neglected as a qualified point of reference with as much to offer in the area of African studies as the legacy of Colonialism.¹⁴

Indeed, most scholars recognize that African discourses have undergone profound changes in the twentieth century; however, establishing the reality of these transformations and analysing their nature is largely determined and hampered by a “hazy understanding of pre-Colonial practices” (Delius, 2001:430). Therefore, most studies tend to concentrate on the Colonial and post Colonial periods. However, it

¹⁴ Thabo Mbeki's conference speech at the Association of African Universities in Cape Town addresses the extent to which outside intrusion, in the form of European systems of Colonialism and Apartheid, have impacted African educational thought and practice. The Eurocentric system that many African universities emulate, due to these histories, has subsequently hampered the efforts of African universities to exemplify endogenous creativity in their search for their cultural roots. Therefore, the genuine emancipation from the chains of Colonialism and Apartheid are hard to achieve because the very tools that are needed to combat them are themselves established through European models, formulas, and philosophies of thought (Mbeki, 2005).

should not be assumed that witchcraft complex transformations are only limited to this era. Outside of the Colonial and Apartheid era, Africans were faced with many socio-economic and political disruptions like internal wars and natural disasters. For example, the Zulu conquests of King Shaka, which preceded both the Colonial and Apartheid eras, and the Bambata rebellion in 1906 against foreign intrusion, were both steeped with witchcraft transformations and complexes. These were both periods of conflict and uncertainty which likely led to an increase in witchcraft complexes. Time constraints prevented any thorough exploration of this theory and time period. A comparative analysis between the eras would have offered crucial insight by way of affirming or rejecting the argument that witchcraft complexes are influenced by changes within the socio-economic and political environment.

Lastly, it is acknowledged that ethnographic research, by way of fieldwork (interviews of those affected by VIW) may well have offered valuable insight as well as served to enrich further the discussions on the issue. However, the study is not meant as an in-depth exploration into the lives of those affected by VIW – this has been the more common methodology employed in previous studies in this area. Rather, the intention is to deliberately diverge from this practice and focus on another dimension to this discussion – that is, the assessment of *policy formation* in regards to indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

In the final analysis, it will take more than proverbial interpretations of witchcraft to address some of its very serious challenges. Because the study argues that VIW is a reflection of, and a response to, the socio-economic and political dynamics of society, it sees explorations of these dynamics, by way of addressing the issue of agency, as a crucial starting point in the quest for solutions. It examines the factors which drive VIW, rather than attempting to address people's decisions to practice this belief. Thus, witchcraft in this study is examined as a social diagnostic rather than a belief system.¹⁵

¹⁵ This is a phrase which is borrowed from Moore & Sanders who, in recognizing and studying the influence that witchcraft carries particularly within social domains, propose that it is studied as a social diagnostic (2001).

OUTLINE

Chapter two provides the overall framework to some of the issues which arise within the process of cultural transformation in South Africa. It sketches the background to the policies undertaken by the new government and identifies violence instigated by witchcraft (VIW) beliefs as an issue which features in discussions concerning this process. Chapter three sets the stage for issues discussed in Chapter four examines and probes the discourses and literature which have framed much of the discussion on VIW. Chapter four further unpacks issues highlighted in chapter two. It addresses the issue of VIW and examines how it has come to affect current cultural initiatives by mapping South Africa's journey of cultural transformation. Chapter five looks at a region most impacted by VIW – the Northern Province (present day Limpopo); it serves as an illustration to the issues discussed in preceding chapters. Chapter six concludes by canvassing some of the suggestions that have been proposed on how to take these discussions forward as well as provide its own recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

History has been particularly unkind to South Africa but contemporary times offer the country a promising and bright future. Emerging from the ashes of tyranny, the new government has made tremendous efforts to enact laws which address conditions of inequity. The country now holds one of the most progressive legislative frameworks in the world – that is, its constitution (Govender, 2005). Simultaneously, the government is striving to reverse a Colonial-Apartheid psycho-cultural mind set which is hundreds of years in the making. It is drawing on a combination of approaches which require immense ingenuity along with the capacity to withstand the slew of criticisms and allegations against many of the policies that have emerged out of this process.¹⁶

Constitutional and institutional retrenchment of indiscriminate laws, economic redress, and reconciliatory commissions, although useful places to start, will not alone successfully triumph over the tragedy and shame that Apartheid bestowed upon South Africa. It is a legacy that now sees South Africa with an economy of grave unequal distributions which are unparalleled anywhere in the world save for Namibia and Brazil.¹⁷ It is against this background that the ANC is challenged with taking South African aspirations forward.

In applying all measures of approaches, not least including the transformation of its cultural configuration, the new government of the ANC is determined to reverse the history of subjugation. Addressing the cultural framework of the country is one of

¹⁶The most controversial program, which is provided for by Article 9 of the constitution, is the affirmative action program supported by the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act of 2003. This initiative is meant to promote black corporate wealth investment but has been criticized as endorsing unequal wealth distributions to elite black groups (Alexander, 2006).

¹⁷ According to the 2006 Economic Policy Institute (EPI) and the UNDP's 2005 Human Development Report, the GINI co-efficient, which measures income disparities, indicates that South Africa and Brazil have the highest gini index, and most unequal economies in the world ahead of Namibia.

many entry points into tackling the broader issues of transformation such as citizen representation. However, as shall be discussed, the issue of cultural transformation, albeit a much needed process in South Africa's development, poses many challenges which continue to frame and determine the face and future of the new South Africa. It is, nonetheless, a challenge which is being fervently pursued on various fronts.

In order to gain a fuller picture of how and why cultural transformation emerges as an essential part of South Africa's overall redress efforts, it is necessary to look into South Africa's history and understand the root causes of problematic issues like violence which have carried over from its past.

BACKGROUND

South Africa is a nation of contradictions. On the one hand, it is Africa's most economically advanced nation and has a fledging and promising democracy. On the other, it is home to extreme human rights violations perpetrated to sustain its economy. For over 300 years, the fruits of South Africa's successful infrastructure were reaped by a white population, which comprised a mere 12% of the total population. Consequently, the South African economy developed structures of unequal distributions of resources and a distortion of industrial development.

At a conference in 1997, Assistant General Secretary of the Congress of South African Trades Unions (COSATU), Zwelinzima Vavi, described the conditions under which most black South Africans lived and the "them and us" syndrome that subsequently developed. Vavi stated that the labour market was segmented, and for the majority of South Africans, standards of living were low, public service delivery inefficient and skewed along racial lines. This state of affairs culminated in what President Thabo Mbeki has referred to as two economies. The first, which is characterized by advanced infrastructures and competitive industry (Beaumont, 2004), is occupied by the minority, white population. The second economy, which is characterized by mass unemployment, underdevelopment and marginalization, comprises the majority black population. This inequity was aggressively supported by Apartheid which, in systematizing all the inequities of Colonialism, paved the way for repercussions on a large social, economic, political and cultural scale.

Apartheid

The Colonial legacy impacted pre-Colonial tribal institutions and moral codes (Richards, 1935); the system of Apartheid expanded this legacy and continued to implement laws and policies that disenfranchised the black population (Wood, 2000). Like the Colonial and Union governments before it, the Apartheid government set up proxy black governments – a form of indirect rule that affected traditional structures of rule by impairing the relationship between traditional leaders and their communities (Hund & Van der Merwe, 1986; Delius, 1996; Kohnert, 2003).

Demarcating the population and the land became a hallmark feature of Apartheid, as forced removal of blacks from their ancestral homelands became common practice. This practice was not only driven by economic factors, which translated into and led to the seizing of arable land with impunity for white populations, it was also influenced by perceived cultural incongruences. These incongruences were used to justify Apartheid laws which were implemented to divide the nation along geographic and racial lines. They were cruel policies which had their genesis in earlier systems of abuse and subjugations before and during times of Colonialism.¹⁸ They included: the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 which forbade inter-racial unions, the Race Classification Act of 1950, which categorized people into racial categories;¹⁹ the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which stripped blacks of citizenship,²⁰ the 1952 Native

¹⁸ It should be noted that Apartheid simply formalized past systems of inequity while adding to them. Its system of demarcation emerged from policies of racial segregation first implemented by the Dutch and British. These early laws included the Land Act of 1913, and the Development and Land Act of 1936. Laws such as these provided legislative authority for the initiating of land seizure by white settlers and preceded Apartheid policies like the infamous Group Areas Act of 1950 which cemented a system of division.

¹⁹ Under this Act, each person was to belong to one of the four classification groups: White, Colored, Black African or Other.

²⁰ Under this Act, the Apartheid government assigned “homelands” to Africans with the idea that African governments could govern their own and independent territories. African political rights, like voting, were restricted to the designated homelands and they were made to carry passports when entering into territories outside of their designated homelands. The intention was to make Africans citizens of their own homelands and to strip them of any political involvement and citizenship within the South African parliamentary structure – which still held complete hegemony over the homelands. From 1976 to 1981, 9 million Black South Africans had their citizenship revoked when four territories were turned into homelands. However, homeland administrators refused this new status of nominal independence and demanded political inclusion within the country as a whole.

Law Amendment Act, which stripped blacks of their land,²¹ and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act No. 49 of 1953.²² Furthermore, many traditional practices which were perceived as unconventional and primitive were outlawed by the state or forbidden by church missions (Niehaus 2001a; 2003b).²³ Thus, mechanisms to separate and distinguish between the races, such as the above laws, became institutionalized norms and served to further dismantle traditional systems and structures.²⁴

Knowledge Systems under Apartheid

In this way, Apartheid, and its precursor systems of white domination, helped to sustain divisions between Western-based and indigenous knowledge systems, restricting them to their perceived respective environments. Consequently, the social, cultural and economic development of the population was profoundly distorted; indigenous knowledge systems were marginalized, suppressed and subjected to ridicule (Jackson and Eksteen, 2001). The ramifications were such that two polarized systems of knowledge existed side-by-side, for many years, with little to no fruitful interaction. Indigenous knowledge was mainly confined to the disenfranchised sectors of black African society, while Western-based knowledge mainly served the interests of the white minority population.²⁵ Subsequently, according to the Department of Science and Technology (DST) much of the nation's indigenous structures and knowledge systems are now underdeveloped and "shrouded in mystery" (2005:11).

²¹ This entailed the forced removal of natives from towns to reserves.

²² This Act enforced the segregation of public facilities in order to discourage contact between races. Under the Act facilities for different races were unequal and the best facilities were reserved for whites while those for other races were inferior.

²³ The church was driven by ambitions of conversion to Christianity; the state was driven by ambitions to conform to Western and modern systems. In both cases, the traditional knowledge and beliefs, and traditional systems of law were seen as obstacles to these ambitions and were perceived as a threat to the authority of Western-based administrations (Niehaus, 2003).

²⁴ A more comprehensive list of Apartheid laws can be found on Alistair Boddy-Evans' website at: <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm>.

²⁵ Where healthcare was concerned, the majority of the black population relied on traditional medicine not only because these methods were most familiar to them, but also because Western based health care was both unaffordable and inaccessible (Pefile, 2005).

These deep-rooted divisions have impacted on three areas of interest for the current government – public health, gender-relations and justice systems.

In the area of public health, the need for dialogue between the two knowledge systems has become critical owing to the impact of HIV/AIDS which tends to be interpreted through competing epistemological perspectives like witchcraft (Yamba, 1997; Ashforth, 2001). A review of these knowledge systems is equally important in the area of justice, where some elements of crime are directly linked to certain cultural practices and can also be attributed to the past mismanagement of traditional and formal systems of justice – implications of which see women as the targets of much of this crime.

Post Apartheid Initiatives

In the aftermath of Apartheid, the new government continues to be faced with a wide socio-economic gap. Set against this background, the ANC is tasked with translating the official policy of change and transformation into concrete results. The challenge to this process is in establishing an approach which will not further fragment a population already traumatized by a brutal past. In efforts to facilitate the process of transition, the government has actively pursued an agenda of cultural transformation that relies on an Afro-centric²⁶ approach wherein the African Renaissance concept – a discourse which emphasizes wider African recovery as a condition *sine qua non* to South Africa's own development (Bongmba, 2004) – has emerged as the way forward.

African Renaissance

In 1994, former South African president, Nelson Mandela, spearheaded the concept of African Renaissance by urging African leaders to bring to the forefront African endeavours at self-determination and self-development (Kessel, 2001). It was seen as a way to revive the African continent and has been promoted as a tool for African

²⁶ The Afrocentric paradigm is a philosophical and theoretical paradigm intended to relocate Africans from the periphery of human thought and experience (Asante, 2003). Initially coined by Molefe Asante, Afrocentricity aims to convey the profound need for African people to be re-positioned historically, economically, socially, politically, and philosophically.

socio-economic, political and cultural development. The idea behind the African Renaissance was to challenge Africans to a “rebirth” of the continent by providing a framework to explore all areas of human political, economic, social, technological, environmental and cultural endeavors in order to position Africa as a significant partner in the New World order (Jana, 2001). The overarching concept endeavours to encourage Africans to apply African solutions to their problems.

Following in Nelson Mandela’s footsteps, Thabo Mbeki continues to strongly promote the African Renaissance vision. In a 1998 statement to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Mbeki described the ambitions that African Renaissance underscores as “a new wave” for the African continent. It is his belief that for these ambitions to materialize, Africans must restore their self-esteem and confidence and undergo their own journey and in the process (re)discover their histories, cultures and creativity (Mbeki, 1998b).

The prominent role that South Africa assumes on the African continent is crucial in generating momentum for, as well as giving content to, an African Renaissance. Aware of this, Mbeki has emphasized the ANC’s commitment to proactively advance the concept.²⁷ Furthermore, speaking at the United Nations University in 1998, Mbeki paid special tribute to the support and solidarity that African countries had extended to South Africa during the years of struggle for majority rule. Mbeki further stated that in being granted the gift of freedom, South Africa is obligated to extend it to its African neighbors. Championing the African Renaissance cause and providing leadership for this initiative is part of this obligation. However, while continuing to popularize the concept, Mbeki strongly believes that his leadership credibility can be better strengthened if the African Renaissance concept first gains ground in South Africa. This goal, he feels, can be realized through efforts of a much needed cultural resurgence and empowerment, within South Africa, which is driven by the principles of the African Renaissance (Mbeki, 1998a).

²⁷ At the 1998 African Renaissance Conference, the ANC officially adopted this discourse and made it a prominent feature in its governance strategies (Maloka, 2001). Moreover, its Strategy and Tactics document reflects the high importance that the South African government attributes to its leadership in this initiative.

Cultural Empowerment

The issue of cultural empowerment is particularly crucial in a country like South Africa where the social, economic and political emancipation of the majority black population has only recently been realized. In viewing cultural transformation as a springboard from which national transformation can proceed, Mbeki believes that if various cultural elements within broader society are identified, such as indigenous knowledge, the more immediate objectives of transformation within South Africa can be strengthened. In numerous speeches and statements he emphasizes various principles which he believes are cardinal to these efforts three of which are: 1) The art and quality of being human –“*Ubuntu*”; 2) the promotion of an indigenous African heritage; 3) the promotion of Africa and its people. The second principle, which is the focus of this study, while being a much needed asset to the cultural resurgence program pursued by the government, has also come to complicate the African Renaissance goals of the ANC government. In highlighting indigenous knowledge systems as a legitimate field of academic inquiry in its own right, the government is engaged in debates and discussions on how to continue to expand and pursue this initiative. Relying on the expertise of research institutions and bodies, it has earmarked funds in this area.

In 1997 the ANC government carried out a series of public consultations with various stakeholders – representatives of various government departments, non-governmental organisations, research institutions, traditional healer representatives, private sector organisations, science councils, tertiary institutions and NGOs. The outcome of these consultations was the development of new legislation, policies and programs aimed at regulating and promoting cultural and traditional systems of indigenous knowledge. One crucial development of these consultations was the drafting of legislation to protect indigenous knowledge, namely the indigenous knowledge systems policy framework.²⁸

²⁸ Information on public consultations of traditional healers can be found on the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network (NPPHCN) website under their Public Health Intervention through Legislative Advocacy Work (PHILA) program at: http://www.healthlink.org.za/pphc/Phila/summary/vol3_no23.htm.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS)

An Overview

The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Policy emerged as “an enabling framework to stimulate and strengthen the contribution of indigenous knowledge to social and economic development in South Africa.” (DST, 2005:10). According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the IKS policy constitutes an integral part of the African Renaissance agenda (HSRC Annual Report, 2001). In applying Michael Warren’s description, the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Unit in the Department of Science and Technology understands it to be “local knowledge which is unique to a given culture or society” (Warren, 1987). Not only does indigenous knowledge stem from long histories of know-how, interpretations and practices that are maintained and developed by a particular group of people (International Council for Science, 2002), it also incorporates more recent experiences with modern technologies (Mosimege, 2006). Unlike Western-based knowledge which is supported by written documents and generated by universities, research institutions and private firms, indigenous knowledge is seldom documented (Grenier, 1998). It is captured through the process of cross-generational oral transmission and provides the foundation for local-level decision-making on important aspects of day-to-day life (Warren, 1991). Its main policy drivers are:

- The affirmation of African cultural values in the face of globalisation.
- Development of services provided by IK holders and practitioners, with a particular focus on traditional medicine, but also including areas such as agriculture, indigenous languages and folklore.
- Underpinning the contribution of indigenous knowledge to the economy – the role of indigenous knowledge in employment and wealth creation.
- Interfacing with other knowledge systems (Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy, 2006).

The Department of Science and Technology justifies establishing an IKS policy on the grounds that the knowledge base of indigenous structures in the country should no longer be undermined, but affirmed, promoted, developed and protected (2005). According to the Minister of Health, Manto Tshabalabala-Msimang, the recognition

of African indigenous structures is empowering to South Africans because it allows them to reclaim their scientific and socio-cultural heritage and offers insight into these areas (2005). To others like Mosibudi Mangena, Minister of Science and Technology in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, highlighting the value that indigenous knowledge can offer society, and encouraging its use in mainstream society sets a milestone towards “efforts to recognize, affirm, develop, promote and protect indigenous knowledge in South Africa.” (DST, 2005:3).

Benefits of IKS

The benefits of including traditional structures as part of a nation’s primary health care system, are numerous and wide ranging. To begin, according to the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network (NPPHCN),²⁹ traditional healers are most familiar with the socio-cultural backgrounds of their patients. Second, they spend many more years than Western doctors learning their trade and so offer vast experience. Third, they are highly respected in their communities. Fourth, traditional methods still remain the most affordable and available means of healthcare for many South Africans (Pefile, 2005). In addition, the traditional system often supplements the shortage of health professionals, particularly in rural areas. Finally, the strength of traditional belief systems can not be underestimated in their capacity to heal and be seen as invaluable to those who rely on them because they cater for well being of the complete person, within the family and community context (NPPHCN, 1997). Because IKS is crucial to the quality of life of a vast majority of the population, ignoring it has the potential to increase and further exacerbate social disparities (DST, 2005). Thus, efforts to redress ongoing inequalities should not ignore “the knowledge systems of indigenous communities and specific knowledge traditions within these, such as guilds of traditional healers” (DST, 2005:10).

In establishing IKS, the government has formally recognized a knowledge system which has been in existence for years in the lives of the majority population. It has also acknowledged two additional points. The first is that this population has been culturally disenfranchised and had its way of life destabilized; the second is that if

²⁹ The NCCPHCN is a national non-government health advocacy organisation which promotes: collaboration, participatory research and policy formulation, appropriate training and organisational development.

South Africa is to continue to pursue a transformative agenda which serves the interests of all who live in it, a rectification to this situation is in order.

The passing of the Traditional Health Practitioner's Act in 2004 served as one of the ways to address these circumstances. However, the Bill has raised many concerns and it continues to be challenged by various groups.³⁰ The main concern is that knowledge in this area can not be empirically proven (Doctors for Life International, 1998) and that destructive occult practises like witchcraft are now being protected by the Bill. These concerns and the government response to them are discussed at length in the upcoming chapter.

Concerns with IKS: Witchcraft within the occult system of knowledge

The practice of witchcraft has been linked to many incidents of violence in the country and is seen to be manifest in various sectors of society. For this reason, many feel that it must be actively pursued and eliminated. But not everyone shares this view. Others see witchcraft as vital to African indigenous culture, and as offering insight into African psychology (Ralushai, 1996). Further, there are those who feel that solutions to the problem of VIW are not necessarily addressed by eradicating the belief itself, but rather through efforts at, and programs of, poverty reduction, awareness and education campaigns (Ralushai, 1996; CGE).

The issue of witchcraft practices, as well as debates around its legitimacy and legislation directed towards it, are not new. From as far back as the 1940s and 1950s there have been speculations that clamping down on witch-hunts and passing legislation against the practice has only further fuelled complexes like VIW (Marwick, 1965). However, laws to curtail the practise continued to be drafted with unsuccessful results. The most prominent law was created in 1957 and is known as the Witchcraft Suppression Act. This law combined previously existing Colonial laws on witchcraft – which had, before its inception, been inconsistently implemented –

³⁰ Doctors for Life advocates strongly against the inclusion of Traditional Healers in the national health scheme on the grounds that their knowledge system is “primitive” and does not offer quality health services. Press releases by this group on this specific topic can be found on their website at:

<http://www.doctorsforlifeinternational.com/about/media/releases/healers/index.cfm>

into one systematic law. It was revised in 1970 but the new amendment only further obscured the law and its intentions and did not sufficiently address the issue of witchcraft (Kohnert, 2002a).

To date, there is a perception that legislation on witchcraft still reflects Colonial reasoning and can not adequately cope with the issue and complexes of witchcraft (Geschiera, 1997; Harnischfeger 2001; Hund, 2004; Kohnert, 2002b). In its current state, it displays what Moore & Sanders describe as an “ambivalent relation of modern state to culture” (2001:18) in that it does not properly cater to those who believe in witchcraft and consider their lives at stake (Fisiy and Geschiera, 1990; Ashforth, 2005a). Under the Act, anyone who expresses fear of being accused of witchcraft can be punished; at the same time, the “real” culprits are free to use the Act as a form of protection and remain a threat (Kohnert, 2002a). Seemingly left to their own devices, “victims” who feel that public institutions are unwilling to deal with the controversies around witchcraft and have therefore failed them, have often resorted to their own forms of justice. This has served to weaken the legitimacy of public institutions (Kohnert 2002a). Moreover, some believe that intervention by the state in witchcraft complexes has only exacerbated situations and led to an increase of VIW and unnecessary deaths (Ciekawy and Geschiera, 2002; Harnischfeger, 2003; Hund, 2003; Kohnert, 2003).

Reconciling traditional and conventional systems is, thus, proving a challenge with many feeling that there has been a “culture of silence and untruth” on the part of the government (Peires, 2003:217). But, in commenting on singling out particular indigenous knowledge elements, some scholars feel that various forms of indigenous knowledge are being judged out of context (Science and Development Network, 2002). They argue that indigenous knowledge needs to be further researched in order to avoid overgeneralizations and oversimplifications which could likely jeopardise unique and important contributions from this system (Science and Development Network, 2002).

Another reason for what some scholars like Peires (2003) feel has been an inadequate government response to the issue has to do with the manner in which witchcraft discourses have so far been produced. Numerous changes within the social sciences

have sought to incorporate a more Afrocentric approach to studies on Africa, as well as provide Africans an opportunity to define the parameters of their own discourse. Notwithstanding these efforts, remnants of previous and outdated modes of thought and research, which feature unproductive views of Africa, have likely trickled into areas where profound changes are occurring. These include the area of policy making and implementation. Policies and programs such as the Indigenous Knowledge System can not be assumed to be unaffected by these changes.

In order to comprehend how the varying and often opposing views of witchcraft are constructed and why they persist, it is necessary to explore the circumstances under which they are developed. Chapter three assesses the current discourse on witchcraft and examines the history of this discourse by probing the views of various scholars. It is important not to disregard the role that previous discourses have played in shaping current discourses. Neglecting to take this into account increases the probability that old and outdated methods of analysis of Africa will assume new guises and continue to persist. Additionally, examining this discourse, with all its complexities is imperative for understanding the manner in which policies regarding culture, identity and society in South Africa are constructed and implemented.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION

European and African modernisation is inextricably intertwined with Colonialism. This seemingly simplified claim is profound because it allows for two sub-claims: first that Europe developed largely on the basis of Colonial depredation; secondly, that post Colonial (modern) Africa is largely defined by the ravages of the Colonial experience. As Africans struggle to redefine themselves in the post Colonial era, there remains an umbilical relationship which some scholars argue must be severed and others argue will always exist as part of the African heritage and therefore identity. But various scholars strongly believe that as long as European perceptions continue to dominate African studies, little headway will be made in adequately addressing African issues (p'Bitek, 1970; Mudimbe, 1988; Thiongo, 1998).

The study of African witchcraft, for example, has been argued as projecting Eurocentric epistemologies (Kohnert, 2002b). According to Ashforth, when Europe began to see itself as having progressed beyond an era of backwardness and superstition, it imposed this perspective on other civilizations (2005a). Societies in which practices like witchcraft were prevalent were deemed underdeveloped and incapable of self-governance (Bond and Ciekawy, 2001; Ashforth, 2005a). Views like this became one of the many justifications of European social, economic and political conquest of Africa and Africans (Ashforth, 2005a).

Years on, the view that witchcraft is associated with elements of underdevelopment, backwardness and uncivilization is still prevalent and scholars are often reluctant to associate witchcraft elements with Africa for fear of being accused of perpetuating the same racist views of previous times (Bond and Ciekawy, 2001; Ashforth, 2005a). Moreover, African scholars themselves are not unaffected by this reluctance. According to Ashforth, there is a prevalent perception among Africans that indulging in witchcraft matters may “compromise the fruits of victory over racism and oppression” (2005a:112). This conduct extends beyond the academic sphere into other areas such as governance where, irrespective of witchcraft complexes existing in

every linguistic configuration, there is an unwillingness to discuss it publicly (Ashforth, 2005a). This is particularly evident in South Africa, which displays strong Western influences while simultaneously exhibiting elements which appear to fall out of sync with those of the West.³¹

In its new role, South Africa has dual obligations. On the one hand, as the putative leader of the African Renaissance movement, it is obligated to further initiatives which highlight African culture as essential to African development; on the other, as an influential international player it is inclined to adhere to Western philosophies. Under such conditions, a “schizophrenic” disposition is almost unavoidable.

BACKGROUND

In the post Apartheid era, the new government has needed to reconstruct many of its former policies in order to reflect the much needed elements of change. To facilitate this process, it relies on academic research to help inform many of its new policies. Because cultural transformation was highlighted as an essential component of South African’s transition, the government mandated the National Research Foundation (NRF) to drive research on indigenous knowledge. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology allocated R10 million to the NRF to establish a program to support and promote research in this area. It was hoped that such a program would help to establish policies aimed at preserving and supporting IKS and the larger agenda of cultural transformation. But, in as much as the government recognizes the importance of research, certain scholars are wary and cautious of this approach.

³¹ A case in point is the issue of female virginity testing which has been argued by many South Africans and traditional practitioners to be adhering to age-old cultural practices and as particularly necessary in current times. In light of an HIV/AIDS epidemic which sees many young girls falling victim to this disease or becoming pregnant, many view this practice as a much-needed cultural intervention. However, in view of South Africa’s new democratic laws and constitution, the ritual has been criticized as a violation on the personal rights of a girl because of its intrusiveness. As a consequence of this view, efforts to cease the practise have come in the form of the 2005 Children’s Rights Bill which bans this practice. However, a point made by Fiona Scorgie (2005), which highlights the poignancy of this issue is that the controversies concerning this issue centre on differences of perception in respects to human rights notion – individual rights versus cultural rights. To many, virginity testing is a revival of tradition (Scorgie, 2003) at a time of grave social and cultural crisis. Its prohibition, in the minds of many, calls to question the nature of liberal democratic citizenship in South Africa.

According to statistics, 95% of all research in South Africa regarding issues of transformation, such as Affirmative Action, is conducted by white researchers who comprise only 8% of the population as a racial group (Zwane, 1995). In as far as IKS research is concerned, Masoga (2002) states that current research displays a lack of space and that research in present day South Africa is conducted under the same pretexts as previous times – power dynamics continue to play a major role in how research is conducted and it continues to be beneficial to those who yield power. In citing Seepe, Masoga links this inadequacy, to the dominance of “Western epistemology” and the political and cultural location in which research is conducted (2001). Furthermore, in substantiating these views, Kohnert states that there is quite often a hidden agenda behind research ethics which “hardly veil political motives or missionary zeal of ethnocentric researchers *vis`a vis* African stakeholders, without due respect to indigenous knowledge” (2002b:3).

The debates of adhering to a dominant Western epistemology reveal the many challenges and struggles that African scholars face in attempts to carry African discourses forward. Subsequently, contemporary research on society and culture in Africa comprises a controversial aspect of general discourse on Africa (Pals, 1996) and reflects an antagonism between Western and African schools of thought within the social sciences (Kohnert, 2002b). This antagonism can be largely attributed to the fact that scholars have traditionally tended to conduct research on Africa in two ways: the first has been to examine African discourses within a European paradigm of knowledge (Bongmba, 1996; Bond and Ciekawy, 2001); the second has been to comparatively evaluate it against this paradigm.

African Discourse Production

Around 1870, concerns regarding the manner in which Europeans conducted their research on non-European societies began to surface.³² The early 1930’s saw scholars like Evans-Pritchard (1937) and Clifford Geertz (1973) become vocal on the same. These scholars believed that European social scientists were substantiating European

³² At the London Royal Institution philologist, Max Muller, publicly rejected the manner in which European theologians deduced their theories of other cultures believing that they were more concerned with proving the authenticity of their own religions (Pals 1996).

values at the expense of African values and reality, and reducing people's world view to a validation between the rationality of science and the illusion of fiction (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Geertz, 1973).

Subsequent years have witnessed more scholars become increasingly critical of the manner in which African discourses are conducted. Africanist scholars like Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2001) have placed the inadequacies of African discourse on the lap of the social sciences. Nyamnjoh has accused Europe of dominating the social sciences and of being responsible for the production of an "epistemological export" in efforts to enforce a homogenous and Western culture (2001). This, he says has been achieved by European researchers applying subtle methods to advance the European world view for hegemonic purposes (Nyamnjoh, 2001). Furthermore, Nyamnjoh criticizes Europe for upholding a view which is often insensitive "to new perspectives that question conventional wisdom and myopic assumptions..." (Nyamnjoh, 2001:29). To Nyamnjoh and countless scholars, the Western mode of thought has been *the* bar against which all other non-Western realities have been measured and judged. In this way, Western epistemologies preside over "other ways of knowing" (Le Grange, 2001:139) and remain the benchmark for determining the validity of all other types of epistemologies.

Implications to African Development Initiatives

Numerous scholars besides Nyamnjoh (p'Bitek, 1970; Mudimbe, 1988; Chakrabarty, 1992; Even-Zohar, 1996; wa Thiongo, 1998; Rajagopal, 2003) have written about this Western hegemony stating that it has produced a matrix of Western philosophical, epistemological constructs which continue to ensure the dominance of a global and Western culture even in pursuits of development initiatives. Rajagopal's argument, in particular, allows for a more precise analysis of this claim and may be summed up as thus: historically, the West has employed different projects aimed at managing its antagonistic relationship with the Third World, and particularly the resistance from the latter. In the pre-Colonial era, such a project took the form of a cultural perspective in which any constituency that did not fit the Christian mould became the target of conquests by the West. During Colonialism, this was transformed into a mission of civilization in which the "Other" became the target of Colonialism aimed at bringing Western civilization. In the post Colonial era, the ideology of dominance

became the Modernization Theory in which the Third World would be assisted in catching up with the West. The Modernization Theory essentially played out in the form of the development paradigm. Although this paradigm was eagerly embraced by the Third World as a progressive project, it was less than the benign project it was made out to be. In fact, Development Theory, as well as the series of development institutions created in the 1960s and 1970s was an attempt by the West to manage and contain Third World resistance by appearing to respond to it without really altering the status quo – that is institutionalizing radicalism (Rajagopal, 2003).

The ideology of development has since transformed to accommodate perspectives of human rights, democracy, peace and good governance schemes. Although Third World activists have eagerly embraced these notions, particularly human rights, as emancipatory ideologies, they fall short of promoting Third World emancipation precisely because they are not ideologically neutral propositions, but rather inherently tendentious discursive frameworks which serve to reproduce some of the very asymmetries from which the Third World seeks emancipation (Rajagopal, 2003).

Implications to African Discourse production

The perceived incongruities between European and non-European world views have subsequently led to the branding of non-European beliefs and practices as inadequate and unequal intellectually and morally to those of Europe. Until Evans-Pritchard reoriented the study of African society and culture with his 1937 book: *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*, rarely were African standards of thought and practice explored beyond the parameters of a Western viewpoint, and seldom did scholars attempt to interrogate the appropriateness of their theoretical formulations. The tendency to apply interpretations to African contexts which are rooted in Western philosophical reasoning and experiences and neglecting to take into account dimensions of African life which, if interpreted in their interplay, would incited a more adequate discussion of the African world view, has resulted in African witchcraft discourses being insufficient and methodologically biased.

Being influenced by a Western context has proven problematic for African research for several reasons. First, the tendency within the social sciences to perceive African societies as void of reason and as dominated by irrational customs and beliefs, and

perpetuating this worldview unceasingly, has ensured that African thought has developed as a product of the West (Mudimbe, 1988). Further, it influenced the manner in which Africanists oriented themselves in respect to research and writing in the 1970s and early 1980s (Delius, 2001). According to Delius, there is still an over-inclination on the part of Africanists to counter views which render African communities as dominated by irrational customs and beliefs (Delius, 2001). Rather than engineer new methodologies which would themselves serve to challenge the status quo, Africanist preoccupations have been to prove that Africans responded in rational ways (Delius, 2001). In this way, African intellectuals not only give validation to the Western perspective on rationality, which is uneasy about incorporating the attitudes of ancestors or the wiles of witches (Delius, 2001), they also help to transplant “Western intellectual Manichaeism” (Mudimbe, 1988:185). The African epistemological development, thus, remains fundamentally structured by Western analytical and conceptual modes. Far from enabling Africa’s epistemological emancipation, the reliance, by Africanists, on Western approaches has served to deepen the continent’s epistemological subjugation by the West.

Second, inadequacies in respect to the comprehension of certain cultural norms and realities have meant that elements like witchcraft have typically been understood and perceived through the same lens that it was historically viewed in Europe, where it is portrayed as malevolent (Parrinder, 1970). African witchcraft discourses, which have reflected these views, have ordinarily been reduced to “an unequivocal opposition between good and evil” (Geschiere, 1997:12), yet there are fundamental differences between Western and African witchcraft which reflect “deeper and pervasive differences in philosophical outlook” (Schoeneman, 1992:337).

Parrinder informs us how comparing the ideologies of African witchcraft with those of Europe is misleading because they both surface out of different circumstances (1970). In citing Pennethorne Hughes, he states that whereas in Europe the idea of witchcraft was a mass secret society movement headed by a high priest who worshipped the devil, this was not always true for Africa “where the idea of the devil is foreign...” (1970:131). Hughes acknowledges that although similarities in perceptions prevail in both societies – in that witchcraft is largely considered an anti-social practice outside of the law – in Africa people do not limit their views to this

perception (qtd. in Parrinder, 1970). On a similar note, Lucy Mair (1969:18) refers to Evans-Pritchard's study of the Azande wherein she found that although "witches were the objects of severe moral judgment", they were not ostracized from their societies, since their being a witch was believed to be a mishap that could only be confirmed upon death. In contrast, Europeans saw anything considered supernatural and outside Christian values as "uniformly bad and antisocial" (Redding, 2004:521).

Misappropriating this term has not only invited a host of serious misapprehensions (Crick, 1979), and served to undermine local African understandings which often counter these perceptions (Geschiere, 1997), it has also prevented scholars from gaining proper insight into explanations as to why witchcraft remains a potent and influential feature in the lives of many Africans today. In the meantime, witchcraft discourses have remained under-developed.

Another major criticism of past studies of African cultures and societies has been the tendency of social scientists to examine African cultures and traditions as static with little regard to elements of change and evolution. The view that African cultures are irrelevant where progress is concerned has served to justify sentiments that non-European cultures lack the capacity to progress and can only gain salvation if and when they have been guided by European/Western philosophies of modernity (Niehaus, 2003; Ashforth, 2005a). These views have historically been reflected in Western literature on Africa in that aspects of adaptation and change, in regard to African cultural elements, have been disregarded and ignored. When it comes to Africa, the preference has typically been to study it as "a mode of thought prior to science" (Bond and Ciekawy, 2001:10).

These views are still apparent in contemporary times where, in the opinion of writers like Petriatis (2000:6) Africa's belief in witchcraft is a *curse* enshrined in simplistic causality "better left in Man's past". Witchcraft is reminiscent of an era which is pre-industrial, pre-logical and pre-modern and serves little purpose within contemporary times (Petriatis, 2000; 2003). It is often seen to have somehow, against all odds, survived eradication by modernity, Christianity and education (Niehaus, 2003). Like many, it is Petraitis' hope that science and rationality will eventually deliver Africa from self destruction. In his words, "it may take several generations to win, but a

crusade against irrational beliefs, south of the Sahara, must be won to free many Africans who are held prisoner by magical thinking” (2003: para.9)

The position that authors like Petraitis hold is that witchcraft can be systematically eradicated, if not through rigorous government policies and legislation, then certainly through advents of a modern era such as science and rational thought. Yet, in reality, witchcraft continues to integrate human experiences into local philosophies and cultures; these experiences link into everyday life through thoughts and practices (Bond and Ciekawy, 2001) and can not be easily discarded. According to Bond and Ciekawy, rational thought can not be attributed to modernity because the need to resort to elements of witchcraft is “part of the human condition” and knows no time or place (2001:10). There is also a danger in judging people’s world’s view and comparing epistemologies with the intention of creating what other scholars have pointed to as a homogenous and Western world view. It is a position that shows total disregard and, as Nyamnjoh (date) phrases it, a particular “insensitivity” to the fact that people’s world view are, in large part, shaped by their experiences. And, according to Bond and Ciekawy (2001), these experiences will vary, so too will the methods and processes used to analyze them .

It is this line of reasoning that set Evans-Pritchard apart from early social scientists and which is seen to have transformed the manner in which scholars later engaged in affairs of the “Other”. The base of Evans-Pritchard’s argument was that people’s world view are constructed for, and within, their individual contexts (qtd. in Pals, 1996). It is therefore imperative that these contexts are considered. Moreover, the fact that these world views can not be translated into a different context should not qualify them as inferior, irrational or as invaluable. The unrealism of attempting to enforce a homogenous world view is brought to the fore by Evans-Pritchards. In evaluating his work, Daniel Pals speaks of the attachment that certain societies place on their beliefs stating that these beliefs are often viewed as fundamental to the preservation of that society’s life, structure, history, social order and “must at all costs be preserved” because “they are too precious to lose” (1996:209). Witchcraft thus allows “the collective imagination to affirm a set of principles indispensable for the maintenance of society” at large (Devisch, 2001:113). Therefore, witch-hunts serve a socially constructive function by illustrating the connection between the discourses around

acceptable versus unacceptable behaviour in a given society (Devisch, 2001). Under these circumstances, witch-hunters are regarded as the heroes as opposed to the villains because of their roles as the cleansers of evil (Delius: 1996).

For these reasons, Piot (1999) considers it erroneous for scholars to perpetually contrast the past with the present whilst ignoring the fluidity and continuity of witchcraft within current times. Doing so creates the illusion of two separate realities – that of a “buried” past and an “active” present; furthermore, it suggests that witchcraft is a component of these realities while overlooking its role as a shaper of these realities. Thus, scholars like Ashforth, Niehaus and Van Binsbergen, pay less attention to the question of rationality and focus instead on the issue of agency, of impact, and of contemporary material conditions.

In addressing the contemporary problematics of witchcraft in Soweto, Ashforth points to “spiritual insecurities” which accompany modernity and its malcontents (2005a). Similarly, like-minded scholars, like Win Van Binsbergen (2001), are more inclined to study factors within society that drive and motivate people’s actions.³³ In their view, witchcraft complexes, such as VIW, are simply the vehicle through which people channel and express their uncertainties. They, and many more scholars, attempt to produce discourses on witchcraft which reflect, and are aligned with theories of change and modernity. They recognize that witchcraft complexes are not static but are fluid, multifaceted and susceptible to many changes within the environment. More than anything, they understand that if research on African culture and society is to become relevant to contemporary issues, then addressing the real challenges of witchcraft requires coming to terms with its new authority. Their approaches challenge previous discourses and elicit new theoretical frameworks in which to examine witchcraft.

³³ In its new capacity, witchcraft has assumed what Van Binsbergen terms as a “virtuality” which is in compliance with transformations that are within the order of the day (2001). It has manifested itself in ways which run counter to old assumptions and labels which reject outdated formulas (Van Binsbergen, 2001).

There is thus a prevailing view among contemporary scholars that the Eurocentric heritage bestowed on Africa must be systematically deconstructed.³⁴ As witchcraft complexes continue to challenge contemporary African realities and as they remain inadequately addressed, a significant number of scholars continue to question the representation of Africa by non-Africans and insist that African dynamics be interrogated with a view to producing solutions that are tangible and have the interest of Africa and Africans at heart. If the social sciences are to legitimately claim that efforts are being made to move beyond the biases of previous times, then efforts to reflect this change must become more pronounced.

COMTEMPORARY APPROACHES

Revisiting African discourse production

Although the years following Evans-Pritchard's study of witchcraft among the Azande saw a marked decline in the study of witchcraft, in recent times witchcraft has drawn increasing interest within the social sciences; research in this area is subsequently experiencing a revival (Moore & Sanders, 2001). There is a new and dynamic approach to the discourse with a shift in terminology as well as theory. Although the general perception among scholars is that witchcraft is on the increase in South Africa and other parts of Africa (Geschiere, 1997), another school of thought offers an alternative reading of the situation, suggesting instead that witchcraft is becoming more visible *because* South Africa is changing (Kapstein, 2002). In more ways than one, contemporary scholars part company with their predecessors by attempting to keep pace with witchcraft realities and constructing theories that reflect its transformations in addition to applying methodologies which can better analyse, engage and illustrate current dynamics (Moore & Sanders, 2001). The theories that they present help to generate more invigorating and richer discussions on witchcraft discourses, while inciting constructive debates.

³⁴ Okot p'Bitek (1970), V.Y. Mudimbe (1988), and Ngugi wa Thingo (1998) are some of the many scholars who have advocated for change in the production of African discourse stating that for the most part, the African voice is largely silenced.

Increasingly, scholars are being encouraged to conduct their explorations within the social sciences with less of an interest in justifying and upholding Western conquests and standards of morality. And, there is a heightened realization that discourses must reflect actual realities on the ground if they are to be useful to institutions like government and society in general. Besides, Ashforth and Van Binsbergen, several other scholars (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993, 1999; Geschiere and Meyer, 1998; Moore & Sanders, 2001) explore the witchcraft discourse beyond the narrow boundaries to which it has typically been confined. Not only do they insist on correlating social change with witchcraft practices, but they also maintain that witchcraft operates and engages fully in the modernity paradigm (Moore & Sanders, 2001). In this way, modernity, which is described by Moore & Sanders as a “cultural project” (2001:13) is shaped within a given context to fit the epistemologies of a given society.

Ashforth's book, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (2005) explores witchcraft in Soweto and is an example of how contemporary scholars continue to challenge discourses and preconceptions on African witchcraft. Ashforth analyses witchcraft beyond the confines of the rural domain and examines how applicable it is within the urban setting. There are other scholars, like Van Binsbergen, who also seek to locate witchcraft discourses within contemporary dynamics and produce theorizations that reflect these locations. Ashforth and Van Binsbergen both draw similar conclusions about the transformation of witchcraft in contemporary times and in the modern setting. They state that, urban Africans choose elements that they are most familiar with to address the challenges of an urban environment (2005a; 2001). This includes witchcraft.

However, because the urban environment is not always entirely accommodating towards rural elements, in order to adjust to these circumstances and to reconcile the village community with the global community, rural elements are reinvented in creative ways (Van Binsbergen, 2001). In this way, urbanites appropriate a virtualized rural model which is tailored to the urban domain and the formal structures associated with modernity and urbanization. They no longer need to rely on the actual village in order to direct these interests (Van Binsbergen, 2001). But as rural elements become immersed with and adaptable to urban elements, they take on a life of their own

(Geschiere, 1997; Moore & Sanders, 2001) and become so integrated with modern elements of the globalised markets making their detection difficult (Kohnert, 2003).³⁵ Thus, efforts at management and resolution aimed at addressing root causes of many modern day witchcraft conflicts are hindered by this adaptability (Kohnert, 2003).³⁶

The post Colonial economy is thus demonstrating that witchcraft is as dominant a discourse among urban Africans, as it is among rural Africans (Ashforth, 1996, 2005; Van Binsbergen 2001; Moore & Sanders, 2001). As urbanites continue to respond to the many anxieties of modernity by applying their own methods of survival in order to adapt to pressures of commoditization and the free market environment (Auslander, 1993; Ashforth, 1996), scholars are replacing their views and interpretation of witchcraft as a force which crystallizes the experiences of modern African realities (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993, 1999, 2000; Geschiere & Meyer 1998; Moore & Sanders 2001). These realities, of which witchcraft discourses features (Auslander, 1993), include discussions on the effect of modernity, war and violence in post Colonial Africa, as well as other economic transformations (Eze, 2001).

Modernity, Globalization and Witchcraft

The shift from cultural specificity to more pragmatic explanations on witchcraft (Fauvre, 2003) has meant that new incorporations entail economic and material concerns of modernity. This shift also witnesses a second wave of democratization which has resulted in the “reorientation of major conflict lines from the global and local dimension” and reveals an “interdependency of global and local modes of production, of social, religious and economic transformations...” (Kohnert, 2002b:5).

³⁵ Moore & Sanders describe witchcraft as a “culturally-inflected guise” which reflects the realities of modernity in its various forms (2001). Maladies like child abuse can be similarly interpreted within the witchcraft paradigm.

³⁶ Ashforth highlights this quagmire in his book when he discusses the inability to distinguish between crimes which are committed by people due to an underlying belief in witchcraft or acts which are simply a reflection of the worst of human traits such as greed and jealousy (2005). Furthermore, current realities in South Africa see witchcraft heavily steeped in politics (Geschiere, 1997). Numerous empirical studies highlight the state and politics as breeding grounds for modern transformations of witchcraft (Geschiere, 1997) where it remains a symbol of power and authority (Niehaus, 2001b 196-8; Kohnert, 2003; Faure, 2003; Delius, 1996; Minnaar, 1997; Geschiere, 1997).

The precarious and unpredictable circumstances in which Africans frequently find themselves – such as political rivalry and upheavals, ethnic violence, economic insecurity, and class polarization – correlate with interactions between local and global forces (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999; Devisch, 2001; Eze 2001; Werbner, 2001; Kohnert, 2002b). In this way, scholars see a link between the influence of capitalism – and the maladies that accompany globalization and modernity – with the rise of witchcraft. Elements associated with a rapidly changing and contradictory modern world such as the accumulation and depletion of wealth (Meyer, 1998; Ashforth, 2005a), overseas wage labour, international migration and smuggling (Masquelier, 2000), illicit production and accumulation (Shaw, 1997; Sanders, 1999), divorce, unemployment, illness (Ashforth, 2001) create insecurities. These insecurities generate tensions and produce new points of reference in which to evaluate social conduct (Geschiere, 1998a). In order to mitigate the risk, contingency and unpredictability confronted by people in these volatile contexts, these tensions are managed with all manner of social adaptations. Esoteric knowledge offers its own contributions to, and can be seen as a medium for exploring, comprehending and articulating the dynamics of globalization (Apter, 1993; Devisch, 2001; Eze, 2001; Werbner, 2001). In particular circumstances, witchcraft serves as an instrument against exploitation, as was the case in Colonial and Apartheid times, and it is becoming so in contemporary times that witnesses growing inequities among poor and urban blacks.³⁷ In this way, some aspects of the social dynamics of life continue to be examined “in a world of witches” (Ashforth, 2005a:1).

Thus, new dynamics of witchcraft are invoking new forms of modernity which reflect the dialectic between modernity and traditionalism through expressions of social

³⁷ Kohnert and Ashforth write on the increase of witchcraft accusations within kinship orders stating that as more blacks obtain affluence and are seen to be veering from traditional customs, there is an increase of suspicion and animosity by those who see themselves as paying the price for this new affluence (2002b; 2005). The social and economic differentiations apparent in South Africa today are a prime and fertile ground for suspicion and accusations of witchery (Ainslie, 1999). Niehaus explains this phenomenon by pointing to the migrant system. According to him, before the system of migrancy, the interpersonal relationships within kinship networks were strong and durable and provided dissuasion from too many witchcraft accusations. However, with the introduction of migrant labour, which dismantled kinship networks and broke up family units, it became less risky to accuse a person of witchcraft (Niehaus, 2001b). In other words, without the protection of family and kin, and with the increasing precarious environment, accusations could be rife and unlikely to be challenged.

conflicts within the post Colonial economy (Geschiere 1998; Fisiy and Geschiere, 1990).³⁸ Because the primary focus of witchcraft is on explanation and not temporal categorization, it transcends distinctions between modernity and traditionalism (Bond, 2001). The notion that there is a single hegemonic modernity of Western origin is rejected by Fischer and Englund who maintain that there is no single trajectory of modernity. They instead suggest the existence of multiple global realities with plural manifestations within local realities (Fischer, 1999; Englund, 1996). Similarly, Geschiere, Kohnert and Van Binsbergen argue that witchcraft has changed *with* modern times either despite, or because of, modern processes of change (1997; 2003; 2001). They are thus dissatisfied with discussions perpetuated by scholars like Giddens (1994) and Voyé (1999) which present witchcraft as a binary opposition between modernity and tradition.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Because the topic of witchcraft can not be addressed in absolute terms, efforts to create a comprehensive policy approach are stalled as scholars, policy makers and civil society members continue to debate the meaning and dynamics of witchcraft which, as expressed, is in constant flux. Clearly from the above, there are a variety of views on how to approach witchcraft discourses and complexes which range from attributing socio-cultural change to human systems of thought, to locating this change within material conditions. Typically, solutions have ordinarily been engineered from premises of the former in that people's belief in witchcraft has historically been the

³⁸ In pointing to various aspects of modernity and the link to witchcraft complexes, Véronique Fauvre writes of the correlation between a decline in social values and violence. According to Faure, the decline of social values which led to VIW was preceded by people's insecurities (2003). In this particular case, Faure notes that the increased incidences of witchcraft murders of the 1980s in South Africa were largely ignited by political instability (2003). Fauvre notes further how at the start of democracy, when hopes for socio-economic and political change were high, youth groups known as "comrades" began a process of cleansing the communities of perceived witches or "undesirable" persons (2003:147). And, when the rate of unemployment began to increase, groups used witch-hunts to unleash their frustrations (Faure 2003).

³⁹ Giddens and Voyé correlate the existence or prevalence of witchcraft with the existence or prevalence of traditional and modern elements and assume a direct conflict between witchcraft and modernity, when in fact witchcraft merges traditionalism and modernity into a relationship which although not always harmonious is, nonetheless, interlinked (Comaroff, 1987; Richards, 1996; Kurkiala, 1997). Moreover, the metamorphosis of witchcraft has extended beyond what were typically the domains of witchcraft – namely small scale village communities– into the urban environment (Nyamnjoh 2001; Geschiere, 1997)

target of state and church institutions through interventions of policy implementation and “civilization/Christianisation” campaigns spearheaded by Christian missionaries (Niehaus, 2001b). The failure to achieve success sees contemporary attempts focus on how material conditions play a role in the perpetuation of particular elements of witchcraft.

The current attempts to isolate witchcraft from local systems of indigenous knowledge and to eliminate it altogether are based on arguments that it is an impediment to development and progress. However, studies fail to conclusively establish witchcraft as the primary and main source of instability and underdevelopment. But irrespective of whether witchcraft is or is not responsible for many instabilities within society, it still commands authority in the lives of many Africans both during times of prosperity and times of instability. What is also clear is that witchcraft complexes mirror the state of socio-economic and political conditions at any given time (De Wet, 1995, Delius, 1996; Geschiere, 1997; Ainslie, 1999; Niehaus, 2001b; Kohnert, 2003;). However, if this pattern could be empirically measured, then, in compliance with the cultural materialism perspective, more viable solutions may be produced because future incidences could be anticipated and therefore curtailed. It therefore stands to reason that studying these socio-economic and political circumstances, unpacking them, and using them as initial points of entry in addressing complexes such as VIW is imperative.

Following in the footsteps of those authors who look to elements within society which influence witchcraft complexes like VIW, chapter five demonstrates the role that human agency has in perpetuating this practice. The assumption is that less is gained in attempting to understand the psychology of witchcraft than in paying attention to the factors that drive certain aspects of witchcraft, like VIW. First, however, chapter four shall provide an overview of South Africa’s journey to cultural transformation and discuss how and why VIW becomes embroiled in this process.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's diverse population reflects contrasting and contending worldviews; not all can be accommodated in the process of legislative reform. In South Africa's democratic era, practices like witchcraft are often viewed as illegitimate topics of discussion and as counter-productive to modernity and development initiatives (Faure, 2003; Fisiy, 1998). According to Faure, not only is the South African ideological context very dichotomous, but any reference to the occult produces anxiety (2003).

Witchcraft, according to Bond and Ciekawy, "is often viewed as fitting into the repertory of negative images of Africans representing a perverse concern with the exotic that belittles the capacities of the human intellect to approach problems through reason" (2001:2). Occult crimes indicate the inability to develop and become civilized – ideas that are dear and central to the Colonial and Christian ethos and which, when ignored, or not adhered to, render a government ineffective (Faure, 2003). Thus, for many who see South Africa as an advanced and modern democracy, the idea of acknowledging witchcraft beliefs within the indigenous knowledge systems program is nothing short of embarrassing (Faure, 2003).

It is important to note, however, that it is only in recent years (1980s) that witchcraft began to be seen as a major problem (Hund, 2003; Kohnert, 2003) particularly in areas of the Northern Provinces like Venda, Lebowa and Gazankulu (Minnaar et al, 1998). It became particularly pronounced during the wide political unrest which was rife in this region in the latter years leading up to the establishment of constitutional democracy (Carsten, 2003). Otherwise, there are rare recorded cases, from the past, where people took matters into their own hands; they were instead guided by the rules of the traditional courts (Hund, 2003). In trying to understand the root cause of the change in justice management, scholars have traced back to early attempts, by white governing structures, to stamp out witchcraft by eradicating or diminishing traditional structures of authority.

Because traditional measures of protection from witchcraft practices were outlawed, witchcraft survived by going underground and becoming covert. Persisting virtually unmanaged by the necessary local authorities, it remained elusive to formal authorities (Nthai, 2003) and resurfaced at times when South Africa was experiencing socio-political volatility like during the 1980s and 1990s (Kohnert, 2003). Very often, the role and face that it assumed changed to suit the circumstances of the time.⁴⁰

The beginning of the new democratic era did not witness the cessation of witchcraft elements like VIW. In fact, it saw an increase of incidences of VIW (Faure, 2003). As socio-economic political circumstances remained precarious, VIW remained a community tool to address changing dynamics to restore some semblance of order. It began to severely undermine the legitimacy of the new government which responded, at first, with brute force towards those seen to be instigating the violence (Delius, 1996), to later establishing a commission of inquiry into the violence and promoting a space for discussion on the issue.

Chapter three explored how witchcraft belief and practices, as elements of cultural knowledge are used to explain modern realities in a time of change. This chapter addresses why witchcraft surfaces as an issue of concern in the first place and how it has come to complicate transformation incentives. In order to frame the discussions of VIW around the broader discussion of cultural transformation, it is first necessary to map these transformative endeavors in order to illustrate how an issue like VIW features.

BACKGROUND

Cultural transformation: a historical review

The South African journey to majority rule is not unlike that of many countries in Africa in that the thirst for self-determination and majority rule was the driving force behind many, if not all, struggles. However South Africa is unique for a number of reasons. First, although it was one of the first countries on the continent to obtain

⁴⁰ In discussing the fluidity of witchcraft, Crick explains that witchcraft definitions and accusations are determined by the social conditions that are prevalent at the time (1970).

independence, in 1910, it was the last to obtain majority rule. Second, it was privileged with a sophisticated economic infrastructure – an advantage which helped it assume the position as Africa’s economic giant and powerhouse. Lastly, the efforts that the ANC government undertook to ensure that the country underwent a peaceful transition served to highlight the country as a global inspiration offering not only Africans but the world at large hope in the areas of conflict management resolution and constitutional reform.

In truth, however, South Africa’s “successful” economy was riddled with contradictions; the government may have inherited a prosperous infrastructure but it was an infrastructure marred by gross human rights violations and extreme socio-economic disparities. As discussed in chapter one, institutionalized racist policies had served to perpetuate divisions by securing the wealth of a privileged few at the expense of an exploited majority. Conditions such as these could not escape the repercussions which are now apparent in the new democracy. South Africa continues to portray dramatic juxtapositions of extreme privilege and abject poverty coexisting side by side; and violence persists as a “ghost” which continues to haunt most South Africans (Vogelman and Simpson, 1990:9).

From the start, it was clear that the new government would have to aggressively pursue policies aimed at revisiting its history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) emerged as one way of addressing grievances and initiating a process of healing;⁴¹ the formal recognition of indigenous systems of life and knowledge was another. The latter is part of a major initiative gaining momentum throughout the African continent which emphasizes the importance of African culture

⁴¹ The establishment of the TRC was a result of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995. It was mandated to bear witness to, and record the crimes against humanity committed during the period of Apartheid. It was meant as an act of healing for a nation which had been brutalized and to provide answers for those who needed to come to terms with this history of abuse. Most of all, it was to provide a peaceful outlet for sentiments of pain and anger as an alternative path to reconciliation. It was hoped that it would help close a chapter to a very morbid past. The TRC was also used to address crimes committed within communities. In May of 1998, the TRC began its hearings on witchcraft violence in the Northern Province. ANC supporters who were convicted of crimes committed in 1990 admitted to the murders of twenty-six villagers in the former Bantustan of Venda between 1989 and 1993 (Kohnert, 2003). The accused perceived their victims as witches collaborating with traditional chiefs and politicians of the hated “homeland government” of Venda (Kohnert, 2003:234).

within the world order. It is a benchmark for achieving African development and presents the African socio-cultural paradigm as central to the endeavor to advance the continent (Bongmba, 2004). It is the concept of African Renaissance.

One of the many aims of African Renaissance is to restore the peoples' cultures, encourage artistic creativity and support popular involvement in science and technology (Mbeki, 1999). In supporting Mbeki's vision for Africa, and in focusing on imperatives geared towards addressing the cultural history and representation of South Africa, the ANC has embraced and promoted the concept (Bongmba, 2004). Along these lines, one of the many steps that the government has undertaken has been to officially recognize eleven languages⁴² thereby recognizing the need to uphold and respect the cultural integrity and diversity of its population. Another step has been the renaming of towns and geographic locations in attempts to exhume, reflect and acknowledge the South African history that was previously suppressed and disregarded (Department of Arts and Culture, 2006).⁴³ Lastly, in recognizing the potential that indigenous knowledge offers a society in respect to its cultural identity (Vorster, 2001), the government formulated an indigenous knowledge policy.

Integrating Indigenous systems of knowledge

In the late 1990s, the HSRC launched an Indigenous Knowledge Systems program meant to promote sustainable human development and facilitate national socio-economic development. The idea was to link the country's development strategies with the local knowledge, expertise and capacities of the rural communities (HSRC,

⁴² These languages are: Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, English, Sotho (Northern and Southern), Tswana, Sipeedi, Venda, Ndebele, Swati, Tsonga.

⁴³ The process of standardizing geographical names in the country was regarded by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a symbolic reparatory process to address South Africa's past and promote a climate of healing and reconciliation (Department of Arts and Culture, 2006). After wide public consultation, consensus was reached to change town and geographical names which posed a linguistic and associational offence or needed to be restored to original meanings. Upon the recommendations of a White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage of 1996, a Working Forum on Geographical Names was established to advise the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology on policies and principles concerning renaming geographical features (Department of Arts and Culture, 2006). However, certain groups, like the Afrikaners, view this policy as exclusive and isolating. (See interview with Tim du Plessis, editor of the Afrikaans Newspaper, Rapport, by BBC News correspondent, Peter Biles for an example of such sentiments at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6089028.stm>).

2001). Given South Africa's long history of cultural subjugation, the establishment of this program was a long awaited and welcomed initiative for many like the Minister of Health, Manto Tshabalabala-Msimang. The minister has often been critical of the previous neglect and marginalization of cultural elements of knowledge like those of traditional medicine. Under the previous dispensation of formal medical and health structures traditional medical practitioners were not recognized. This, she believes, has been to the detriment of medicine, health and science in the country. In substantiating her claims, Tim Hart, senior research manager in the Integrated Rural and Regional Development Research Program at the HSRC, notes that much of the interaction between Indigenous knowledge and the dominant Western scientific knowledge, "has been far from friendly, or even mutually beneficial for the local population" (HSRC Review, 2005: 11).

The implementation of an IKS directly addresses the fact that indigenous elements remain an imperative part of the lives of the majority of South Africans. However, it is for this reason that its establishment has not only been met with enthusiasm but also apprehension and criticism. There are those who feel that various elements, promoted by such an endeavour, hamper the broader objectives of democracy and modernity. Of particular concern are those elements which have been linked to violence in the country.

Because violence is particularly rife in South Africa and thus a major area of concern, any perpetuation of it is increasingly being met with calls for extreme and punitive measures against it.⁴⁴ The elements associated with violence within the IKS are particularly pronounced in the area of public health, but have come to affect broader issues and policies within the justice system and gender equality advocacy program. Within these contexts, witchcraft is seen both as an instrument of destruction as well as an instrument of cultural revelation and engagement because of its pertinence to African psychology, science and culture.

⁴⁴ Ironically, as much as violence is a major preoccupation and concern of most South Africans, more people are demanding that measures to combat violence be enforced more severely. This is true, for instance, with the situation involving out-of-control learners where many people are calling for a reinstatement of corporal punishment. Similarly, support for the return of the death penalty is on the rise (Harris, 2001).

HOW WITCHCRAFT IMPACTS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Public Health

The post Apartheid era has offered an opportunity for the government to reinforce its commitment to support and harness the potential input of indigenous knowledge. It has been able to foster cohesion between the local and formal categories of healthcare by integrating traditional medicine into the broader modern health care infrastructure in order to have benefits from both worlds (Pefile 2005). However, this issue is particularly delicate due to criticisms directed towards South Africa's health sector regarding many of its medical policies, particularly in respect to HIV/AIDS.

A re-examination of the two-tiered health structures left by Apartheid is in large part due to the increase in the national rate of HIV/AIDS infection and the need for the government to sufficiently address the issue. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 75% of people affected with HIV/AIDS in South African rely on the use of traditional medicine (n.d.). On the one hand, traditional healers play an essential role in the lives of most South Africans, 80 percent of whom rely on them as their primary healthcare providers (Select Committee on Social Services, 1998) and getting them onboard is essential. On the other hand, there is difficulty in producing a comprehensive plan of action in respect to HIV/AIDS as each system of knowledge contains its own medical histories, theories and formulations, and demands respect and recognition as an authentic entity in its own right.

On the part of Western-based practitioners, there is growing anxiety that their lack of knowledge of the customs and methods employed by traditional healers may lead to actions which are considered unorthodox.⁴⁵ Further, many feel that supporting a system which incorporates sinister acts which are under scrutiny, and are seen to violate human right laws will be protected by this Bill (e.g. ritual murders and some practices entailed in initiation rites of passage which have seen the deaths of some young boys). On the part of traditional healers, the question of protecting and

⁴⁵ The role of a Sangoma is a natural calling by ancestors and a privilege that not everyone is given. For that matter many secrets to their art are highly guarded. According to Harnischfeger, some elements of indigenous knowledge are meant to be obscured and can not for ritual purposes be exposed (2003, 63).

safeguarding their knowledge, and practises within these knowledge systems, and ensuring that they are not undermined is a poignant and pertinent one.⁴⁶

As the government continues to grapple with reconciling the health systems, while it works to increase access (for previously disenfranchised populations) to Western-based healthcare, it is also aware that traditional methods of healthcare are revered and traditional healers widely respected in their communities (NPPHCN, 1997). The prevailing circumstances have generated the need for dialogue aimed at fostering cooperation between the various categories of health practitioners, in order to enable a more integrated understanding and application of both local and Western-based knowledge structures within the larger framework of public health. Engaging traditional healers in this dialogue is crucial given the fact that: a) within the majority black population, in particular, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has taken the greatest toll, and approximately 30 million people rely on the services of 200,000 traditional healers (Pefile, 2005); and b) some of the methods of healthcare applied by traditional healers have been seen to counteract efforts of conventional healthcare practices to eradicate HIV/AIDS (Ashforth, 2001).

What is evident is that the fight against HIV/AIDS will require a multi-faceted strategy of approach which takes into account both knowledge paradigms in order to maximize the benefits of these systems in a joint effort to tackle epidemics like HIV/AIDS. The challenge, however, is in finding the space in which these two systems of knowledge can engage and be beneficial to the health of *all* South Africans.

Traditional Health Practitioner's Bill

As part of the broader effort to consolidate formal and local public health (knowledge) systems, Parliament approved the Traditional Health Practitioner's Act, in 2005. This bill acknowledged the medical capabilities of traditional healers and put

⁴⁶ There are ongoing debates in respect to patenting issues of indigenous knowledge. Many international conferences have been held to discuss the protection of indigenous intellectual and environmental property rights. Refer to UNESCO's website for more information. http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2187&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

them on equal footing with mainstream doctors. Through the Act, a regulatory framework was set up to ensure the “efficacy, safety and quality of traditional health care services” (Department of Health, 2003:5). However, the passing of this bill has been met with strong resistance within the medical establishment by many reluctant to accept what they perceive as unconventional and illegitimate practices which are dangerous, and ill-suited for the larger society. Besides ritual murders, another concern is that practices considered questionable and detrimental by the medical community, like the prescribing of untested medication to patients, are now protected by the bill, and that this legislation protects traditional healers from being held accountable for their actions. In many cases, traditional healers have been seen to be conduits to securing wealth and health through nefarious methods and practices (Ralushai, 1996; Carstens, 2003).⁴⁷ The existence of occult elements, such as witchcraft, which are perceived to be unorthodox as far as formal medical practitioners are concerned, and believed to be implicit in methods of traditional healing, has created an atmosphere of apprehension among many in the medical community who continue to challenge this Bill.

The Traditional Health Practitioners Act has attempted to address these concerns by providing mechanisms for control, regulation and management, through a process of registration that incorporates a training program for traditional health practitioners (Department of Health, 2003). The various benefits of registration serve as incentives for traditional healers; it entitles healers to “receive the benefits of being associated with a recognized professional traditional healer's body” (Pefile, 2005:4). However, this process has done little to convince organizations like Doctors for Life who continue to challenge the Bill even after its inception.

⁴⁷ Some of the measures that have been taken - such as the form of muti murder for the purposes of acquiring power and strength of victims, children in particular - have been extremely violent and caused equally violent methods of retaliation. The newspapers are full of stories of people who have been accused of muti murder who have either been chased out of their communities or physically attacked. Necklacing is still a common mode of punishment for those accused of witchcraft and associated with muti murders. Although, many traditional healers deny indulging in muti murder rituals the Ralushai Commission Report interviews revealed that there are cases, in the Northern Province where a person's bone was used to repair a fracture (Ralushai, 1996). Additionally, a BBC article that addressed the sinister side of traditional healing practices, cites allegations of the involvement of healers in advising prompting the “virgin myth” which has led to a spate of child-rapes in South Africa which also has one of the highest numbers of HIV-positive people in the world (BBC, 2004).

By incorporating traditional systems into the national health care system, the government has tackled two issues. First, in seeing indigenous knowledge as something that offers scientific solutions and as crucial to the fight against HIV/AIDS, the government recognizes that the value and capacity of IKS stretches beyond the communities and populations to which they have historically been confined. IKS in these new times, thus, emerges as one of the mechanisms to address issues within the health structure and within overall development. Second, the government has observed the principles of its new Constitution and democracy by promoting an environment of citizen participation. In recognizing indigenous, local-based culture, the government can be seen to be working together with traditional healers to create a comprehensive plan of action on how to combat health challenges like HIV/AIDS. However, in legitimising traditional healthcare structures, the government has had to perform a balancing act in supporting practices which, on the one hand, are seen to be detrimental to the well-being of society but which are, on the other hand, defended as integral parts of African culture and psychology (Ralushai, 1996; CGE, 1999).

What is disturbing is that witchcraft concerns are not limited to public healthcare but find themselves located in areas to which government has allocated both attention and resources such as the program of female empowerment and redress. An issue which the HIV/AIDS epidemic highlights is that of gender violence which many feel is supported and exacerbated by witchcraft complexes.

Gender Relations: Empowerment initiatives

South African society is traditionally a male dominated and patriarchal society (Robertson, 1998). Violence is rife throughout the country, and women are specific targets in many communities. This is true of accusations of witchcraft. Several authors see a correlation between gender violence and witchcraft accusations (which materialise into witch-hunts) and democratic initiatives that address female empowerment.

According to Delius, political liberalisation in the early 1990s was accompanied by an intensification of attacks on “witches” (2001:429) many of whom were women. In fact, VIW towards women, in current times is higher than ever before (Delius, 2001) and statistics continue to alarm women’s groups, civil society and government. Although there is common perception that women are typically and historically prone to witchcraft (Ralushai, 1996), many accounts challenge this view (Delius, 2001).⁴⁸ Rather, the incidences of (witchcraft) violence towards women arise from “the processes of social change which were set in motion in the latter part of the century” (Delius, 2001:429). Within this process, two root causes have been highlighted: the prevailing democratic efforts which focus on empowerment initiatives for women and have contributed to exacerbating already volatile gender relations; and, the disruption of rural households due to the system of migrant labour (Delius, 1996; Hunter-Wilson, 1970; Ritchken, 1989). In both cases, witchcraft complexes, such as witch-hunts, emerge as one of many mechanisms employed by both men and women to manage changing dynamics.

In offering a more in-depth take on the situation, Shireen Hassim (2002) and Charm Govender, (2005) explain that as the new democratic era saw gender equality programs inserted into the heart of democratic debates, many sectors were hard-pressed to promote and support the rights of women in light of prevalent disproportionate gender rights and inequities which were impacting on issues like HIV/AIDS. These initiatives resulted in some men feeling that their masculinity, which many felt translated into roles of dominance over women (Sideris, 2005), was being challenged by women. Furthermore, high expectations of social and economic reform were met with high levels of competition in the job markets along with the reality of a 45% unemployment rate for black youth (Fauvre, 2003). Men had to get used to the idea of competing with women for the same resources – a reality to which the former were unaccustomed and which, more than likely, fuelled many of their frustrations. Sentiments of animosity have increasingly manifested in violence of varied sorts towards women (e.g. domestic abuse and rape); witchcraft accusations and the hunts they incite, are included in these manifestations.

⁴⁸ According to Delius, mid-nineteenth century missionary accounts for the Northern Province recorded men as being primarily accused of witchcraft over women (Delius 2001).

Current times undoubtedly reflect women as the more common victims of VIW and mob justice (Hund, 2004);⁴⁹ moreover, spearheading many of these lynch mobs are young males (Delius, 1996).⁵⁰ In closer analysis, the current relationship between males and females can not solely be attributed to new democratic initiatives to empower women. It accompanied, and was ignited by, the series of changes experienced within the socio-economic environment which traces back to the migrant labour years. The way of life which grew out of the migrant labour system put an end to old systems of organization and community life in South Africa (Delius, 1996; Niehaus, 2001a, 2001b). It shattered family units and created a system of mistrust and abuse between males and females, parents and youth, and between the community and law-enforcers. It upset the social fabric of kinships networks which historically and traditionally defined roles for males and females, youth and authority figures. This past has subsequently influenced current gender relationships which are disturbingly unhealthy and unequal and have left groups like the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) intent on demanding reforms in justice systems if women, and their rights, are to be protected.

Justice System

The long history of neglect and abuse of systems of law and order had the inevitable effect of producing repercussions whereby communities saw fit to enact their own form of justice in hopes of maintaining law and order. In as much as the post Apartheid era marked the beginning of new hopes of change, it was also seen as an opportunity for the purification of all dissonance (Harnischfeger, 2003). Witches represented all that was wrong in society; they were created, sought after and destroyed by youth mobs attempting to create a “new South Africa” (Delius,

⁴⁹ The government has been forced to set up several villages of protection to house women who have fled for their lives under the pursuit of mobs.

⁵⁰ The most widely reported single episode of VIW which highlighted the severity of female victimization took place in 1986 in the village of Nkwana in Sekhukhuneland during which 32 people were burned to death over a two-month period. While the executioners were young men with an average age of 19 years, most of the victims were over 60 and 21 of the 31 victims were female (Delius, 1996). Presently, women still remain the common victims of VIW (CGE, 2000).

1996:211). This haphazard form of justice-enactment not only jeopardized the state's administration of justice, it also served to illuminate the persistent tensions not only between the genders, but also between communities and law enforcement agencies. Violence, which had been employed by the Apartheid state to maintain order, was now being used by community members in pursuit of social stability. Relying on cultural elements, which were understood as standard punishing devices for deviants and criminals, witchcraft accusations, and the punishment they incited, became "catalysts to acts of vigilantism" (Harris, 2001) as part of a popular form of mobilizing the community to execute justice.

VIW highlighted the instability of the Apartheid regime's system of local government and the distrust that people felt towards it. The implementation of laws meant to outlaw witchcraft heightened people's anxieties of being deprived of a workable system of justice (Minnaar, 2003). These sentiments have prevailed in current times and have expressed themselves through the community violence which has become the norm in many areas. Thus, the tendency to self-impose justice has now become a common feature within South African society, and the law has yet to live up to its name and fulfil its obligations to provide communities the security and peace that they came to expect in the new democracy (Minnaar, 2003). For this reason, South Africa remains a country where strained relationships and issues of distrust between the community and law enforcement persist (Harris, 2001).

The system of labour which arose out of the previously enacted land laws, created social conflicts which were intergenerational (Niehaus, 1998) and across gender lines. It led to the change of roles between men and women, adults and youth and manifested as violent relationships in the form of witchcraft accusations and subsequent witch-hunts.

THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

One of the main criticisms of the manner in which VIW was handled by the government throughout affected regions in South Africa was that a "culture of silence" persisted (Peires, 2003:217) at the provincial and national level. The official reaction to the wave of VIW in the early 1990s was lukewarm and uncoordinated (Kohnert, 2003). Hopes that the witchcraft violence would vanish were dashed. Soon

after the release and election to the Presidency of Nelson Mandela, rural areas in the Northern Province experienced an escalation of VIW (Minnaar, 1992; Kohnert, 2003). Professional jealousies, due to what some believe was a result of the widening economic gap,⁵¹ particularly between certain close-linked brackets of society such as within kinship networks (Kohnert, 2001c), arose from this situation and supplied “the witchcraft market with clients” (Fauvre, 2003).

The violence involved in witchcraft practices has resulted in many unfortunate consequences which have come to affect three areas of priority of government. The next Chapter explores two of these areas – justice-structures and gender-relations. The chapter describes the impact of VIW in South Africa’s most affected area - the Northern Province – a region where indigenous beliefs have historically been the target of control by Colonial powers and manipulation (Delius, 2001). Here, most Colonial officers and European missionaries rejected the validity of indigenous esoteric practices and beliefs and categorized witchcraft as superstitious and primitive. They were unable and unwilling to distinguish between certain traditional practices. Instead they created laws which forbade the practice of witchcraft and which aimed to root it out (Minnaar, 2003). These laws were not only enacted by racist administrations with inclinations towards Western perspectives and values (Minnaar, 2003), but they also criminalized traditional judicial remedies for witchcraft.⁵² In doing so, they sowed the “seeds of the lawlessness” witnessed in South Africa today (Hund, 2004:82).

In examining how VIW impacted on, and was affected by, both the system of justice and gender relations in the region of the Northern Province, the chapter explores how the failings of a justice system with a history of mismanagement and brutal authority,

⁵¹ Statistics for this time indicate that the socio-economic gap increased steadily in the black population (Whiteford and van Seventer, 1999). However, VIW due to economic disparities is not a new phenomenon. Monika Hunter Wilson observes in 1951 how accusations during this period reflected “patterns of residence and animosities stemming from the exercise of power and differential distributions of benefits from property and labour” (1951:163).

⁵² At a certain point in time, traditional systems of social control regulated witchcraft accusations by providing barriers against public accusations of witchcraft; African customary courts were responsible for managing public disputes (Hund, 2004).

coupled with conditions in rural households (which manifested as imbalances in gender relations), provided the ideal breeding ground for VIW. It will attempt to give substance to how the youth, who were largely responsible for VIW, became a coherent social force of agency. This coherence was due to a common material position and experience which arose out of the economic hardships in the region and continues to date (Ritchken, 1989). In examining this material base, one can better comprehend how it was that witchcraft complexes are employed under particular material conditions. In order to comprehend the patterns of violence in South Africa, it is necessary to understand how people are marginalized. To address the issue of VIW – why, where, when, how it happens and more importantly by whom – one must take into consideration the socio-economic and cultural environments and conditions from which the violence materializes.

University of Cape Town

CASE STUDY:

THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCTION

The imposition of external laws, such as the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957, impacted on traditional structures and systems, such as the system of arbitration in the Northern Province, and resulted in the breakdown of law and order. It set the stage for the violence that later occurred. The turn of events which transpired spiralled out of control and left the region uncontrollable by both Apartheid and traditional administrators. As youth between the ages of 14-38 years of age (Carstens, 2003) assumed central roles in the struggle for liberation against Apartheid (Niehaus, 1998), these events were manifested as destructive relations against both the community and authority structures. Affected by changes in the socio-economic and political environment, many youth became increasingly unruly (Delius, 1996). In defiance of all authority structures, including those within their own communities (i.e. parents, teachers and traditional leaders), they were determined to get what they wanted by any means necessary (Ritchken, 1989). This philosophy was to follow them into South Africa's democratic era.

The events which occurred in this region were first influenced by a series of socio-economic changes which led to an alteration of the traditional way of life of people in the region and resulted in the dissolution of legitimacy of traditional structures and systems. The issue of legitimacy is particularly important in the Northern Province (Kohnert, 2003) where the local population refused to recognize the Colonial and Apartheid state and their policing structures as legitimate entities. Similarly the adult population was also rendered illegitimate by the youth population who felt that adults were neglecting to address and rectify a social situation which they considered to be dire (Delius, 1996). They also saw their own leaders as equally illegitimate and perceived them to be colluding with an Apartheid system which did little to deliver services (Ralushai, 1996). Lastly, young men did not consider legitimate the position of women as the official bread winners of the household, since this countered their

Fig. 1. Map of the Northern Province



concepts of masculinity and challenged the social system of patriarchy with which they were familiar (Ritchken, 1989).

This network of “illegitimate” social relational structures created major lines of conflict and fractures within, between and amongst community members. Witchcraft discourses, which were strongly influenced by the nationwide discourse of the anti-Apartheid struggle became the ideal tool for mass action (Delius, 1996). VIW was used to mobilize the masses against a common enemy and to effect immediate change. As the urgency of political liberation became more pronounced, so too did the intensification of VIW (Delius, 2001). Witch-hunts and accusations were mechanisms which could, in no uncertain terms, be unleashed to handle illegitimate threats and unwanted problems within communities. The violence which ensued in the Northern Province was mainly hinged on this understanding.

BACKGROUND

The Northern Province

The Northern Province was renamed Limpopo in February 2002. It is the northernmost province in South Africa. Originally known as the Northern Transvaal, it was part of the Boer Republic until 1900. One of the poorest regions in South Africa, it currently comprises the former homelands of Gazankulu and Venda and part of Lebowa. The region also has a long history of political revolt against Apartheid structures (Delius, 1996) and a history of economic and social destabilization. It is plagued by high levels of unemployment and poor literacy rates (Kohnert, 2003). It is also heavily steeped in witchcraft complexes.

Colonialism in this region saw a marked increase in Africans turning to witchcraft as a means to explain and control the new and changing dynamics of social life (Wilson, 1936). In the views of the Colonial administration (and local Christian missionaries), witchcraft was disruptive and obstructed efforts at civilization (Niehaus, 2001a). Laws were created to outlaw the practice and belief but were often implemented

inconsistently (Niehaus, 2003b).⁵³ When the Apartheid government came into power, these laws culminated in the creation of a single national law in the form of the Witchcraft Suppression Act in 1957 (Niehaus, 2003b).

WITCHCRAFT SUPPRESSION ACT OF 1957

Before the implementation of the Witchcraft Suppression Act, traditional authorities, such as healers and chiefs, served as mediators of witchcraft incidences and were primarily responsible for the persecution of witches (Neihaus, 1997; Hund, 2004). Under their jurisdiction, few killings occurred (Niehaus, 1997; Delius, 2001). The implementation of the Witchcraft Suppression Act, however, ended the formal role that traditional authorities played in respect to the management of witchcraft practices. Whereas in former times (pre-1980s) those accused of witchcraft were ordinarily expelled from their homes and their possessions destroyed (Minnaar, 2003), with the new law, people were forced to apply alternative methods to address the issue of witchcraft (Kohnert, 2003; Minnaar, 2003). The method of expulsion and dispossession was replaced with that of execution (Minnaar, 2003).⁵⁴ According to Harnischfeger, the higher levels of VIW in current times can be attributed to this fact alone (2003).

⁵³ Because of the fear that Colonial and Apartheid administrators had of inciting uprisings among the African inhabitants who saw the new law as an imposition on their way of life, in areas like the Northern Province, witchcraft laws were carried out inconsistently and sometimes left to the traditional authorities to manage (Niehaus, 2003; Ralushai, 1996). However, traditional leaders were not given unrestrained liberties to apply traditional solutions to their problems for many of these solutions were frowned upon by European officials (Niehaus, 2003). The inconsistencies of their traditional leadership helped to sow the seeds of discontent among their subjects. The strained relationship between African traditional authorities and their subjects were to become more pronounced and aggressive when the Northern Province began to actively pursue a political agenda (Delius, 1996). When groups like the youth were encouraged by larger political movements – like the ANC and the PAC – to actively pursue a political agenda, the prevailing conditions of extreme socio-economic disparities and illusive political system, provided the perfect impetus for their actions.

⁵⁴ Although killings of witches through burning and various other means was not unheard of and occurred before the implementation of these laws (Delius 1996; Harnischfeger, 2003), the occurrences of murder were not as common as they later became (Hund, 2003, Minnaar, 2003).

REPERCUSSIONS

As communities grew increasingly restless and anxious that a vital component of their traditional system of defence had been eliminated (Delius, 1996), and as they began to feel that their leadership provided scant protection against negative forces, the relationships between them and their leaders deteriorated (Niehaus, 1997). Traditional structures were considered a blatant "creation of Colonial manipulation" (Delius, 1996:26) and seen to be supporting the interests of the Apartheid government (Kohnert, 2003). Witches were identified as the principle impediments to harmony and progress and were subsequently pursued fervently by youth groups known as comrades (Delius, 1996).

The Youth as a force of agency

Peter Delius and Edwin Ritchken both describe the conditions under which witch-hunts ensued stating that the environment the youth inhabited was not conducive to a productive youth population (1996; 1989). The ever-present political instabilities were host to a number of other instabilities. Moreover, poor socio-economic circumstances, which led to an economic recession in 1982, saw an exceptionally high level of youth unemployment and compounded the situation gradually helping to fuel the political activities that were later staged. The following statistics from Lebowa provide a picture of the recession during this time.

Fig. 2. Unemployment figures of registered black migrants in Lebowa

1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
387 103	392 309	432 904	445 816	437 797	272 040	248 959	258 572

Source: South African Labour Statistics, 1986

In conducting a case study on reconstruction and political resistance in Sekhukhuneland (the former "homeland" of Lebowa), Delius found that as socio-economic misfortunes continued to increase, particularly among the youth, levels of frustration among youth who felt desperate to act in order to change their circumstances intensified (Delius, 1996). Gatherings under trees and on soccer fields became outlets for these frustrations as youth shared their experiences and forged alliances; these desperate times bred an antagonistic youth (Ritchken, 1989). Feeling

displaced, the youth generated a culture that was both within and outside society. As faith in traditional councils waned, frustrations continued to mount around what people saw as an absence of legitimate leadership, and young people saw themselves as needing to assume a new role (Delius, 1996; Niehaus, 1997). In attempt to effect change, the youth mobilized themselves around issues they felt had been neglected by adults (such as the relationship between the “puppet” chiefs and their people). They set about their new responsibilities with vigour and enthusiasm. Directives from the ANC leaders, like Chris Hani and Winnie Mandela, to make the region as “ungovernable” as possible gave political legitimacy to their actions (Minnaar et al., 1992:50).

As the political climate became increasingly tense, it provided the youth an opportunity to mobilize themselves around political causes. ANC sympathisers targeted traditional leaders, who they felt were “relics” and “collaborators” of the Apartheid government (Kohnert, 2003:223). Witches who were typically viewed as traitors “within the gates...on the wrong side of the moral line” secretly colluding with the enemy against the interests of society (Mayer, 1970:60-3) became prime scapegoats (Delius, 1996).⁵⁵ The prevailing perception, among youth was that the elimination of witches was tied to the struggle for liberation (Kohnert, 2003).⁵⁶ Since this was a consented view within the communities, most actions against accused witches were initially supported by the community (Delius, 1996). Anyone seen to be colluding with the Apartheid government was singled out and branded a witch (Delius, 1996; Kohnert, 2003). Thus, mounting witchcraft accusations grew out of a context of needing to defend societal core values, and these were linked to an

⁵⁵ Scholars have written that the damage caused to victims of VIW was a form of scapegoating and of veiling other social woes (Fisiy and Geschiere, 1990; Auslander 1993; Geschiere 1994; Meyer 1998). Others have called it a “smoke screen” for inequities of global capitalism saying that it is less to do with African identity than with African’s experiences of marginalisation, illness and poverty (Niehaus, 2001:192).

⁵⁶ In addressing this perception, Kohnert comments that these youth were lured by the “jargon of the Marxist ANC” – which called for the elimination of all relicts of backwardness– and misunderstood this to equate with witchcraft (2003:223). The act of doing away with witches was often sanctioned by the greater political agenda (Delius, 1996). Also, there have been claims that many of the cases of VIW had nothing to do with witchcraft but were part of a tactic to destabilize communities (Ralushai, 1996). Minnaar, Niehaus and Bornmann et al attribute the cases of VIW to an exploitation on the part of youth leadership of age-old beliefs for political ends (1998; 2003; 1998).

increasingly aggressive political campaign that was a part of the national democratic struggle (Minnaar 1992) pursued by groups like the ANC, the PAC and the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Initially, the adult population was obliged to let the youth take on this role (Delius, 1996). Witch-hunts had political appeal and there was consensus amongst the population that “witches were the bane of the community” and had to be eradicated (Delius, 1996:194).⁵⁷ In time, however, it became clear that the momentum for what was at first meant to be the assurance of political freedom and protection of social values, codes and conduct was being misdirected and distorted by an increasingly overzealous and out of control youth. People began to question the appropriateness of the role reversal in their communities. The increasing climate of suspicion (and questions of people’s allegiance) was creating deep fractures within communities as people were forced to choose sides (Delius, 1996). As hostilities increased, so too did the accusations of witchcraft towards those who were seen to be obstructing youth efforts (Delius, 1996).

In the years following the end of Apartheid, and following the formation of a new regime, the violent actions of the youth found little support among regional and national ANC leaders. As the pendulum swung from political redress to socio-economic redress, the new democracy offered hopes for better standards of living. However, as socio-economic conditions remained precarious, the youth felt their hopes and dreams for change in the aftermath of Apartheid dashed as unemployment remained prevalent. They reverted to the same old mechanisms of managing their precarious environments (Fauvre, 2003) – witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts.

Having once served to further their cause, VIW now served to discredit the administration of the new government (Niehaus, 1998); the youth, who had led the struggle against Apartheid, now posed a challenge to the new authorities (Niehaus, 1998; Kohnert, 2003). The same ferocity and determination that they had previously

⁵⁷ According to the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry, adults were responsible for manipulating the youth and considered them to be heroes (1996). Because of the leniency of the courts towards juvenile offenders, adults relinquished their authority by delegating the responsibility for punishing witches to the youth (Ralushai, 1996).

exhibited in order to dismantle the system of Apartheid was now directed towards personal motives and aspirations (Minnaar, 2003) thereby jeopardizing government's efforts at democracy. The new government was at first slow to respond but was later forced to move quickly to put an end to the rampages of the youth, but not before a significant amount of damage had been incurred (Delius, 1996).

The youth actions have highlighted the real need to address the issue of reformation of the justice system in all areas including protection of its citizens especially women. But, in order to contextualise the conditions inherited by the youth, it is necessary to examine the systems of migrant labour and household structures during this time. A closer historical look at these structures will help illuminate the imbalances that materialized between gender groups and how, under these conditions, youth became a coherent force of agency.

MIGRANT LABOUR AND HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

Gender roles: witchcraft as a tool

A dominant trait of the post Apartheid violence was its gender bias (Kohnert, 2003). Two thirds of the 228 victims killed in the Northern Province between April 1994 and April 1995 were women (Minnaar, 1999). Monika Hunter-Wilson traces this pattern to the migrant labour period where women were often the target of VIW for several reasons. Hunter-Wilson identifies strong clan and family ties as a major source of witchcraft accusations (1970) particularly with regard to the type of relations experienced by migrant workers vis-à-vis their wives. Hunter-Wilson emphasizes the link between sex antagonisms and accusations of witchcraft (1970) which she believes resulted from deteriorating economic conditions (Hunter-Wilson, 1970). Because young men often had to leave their families and wives behind, they were often faced with fears and allegations that their women were involved in extra-marital relationships (Kohnert, 2003). If these fears were confirmed, punitive measures included calling the perceived adulterous woman a witch (Ritchken, 1989; Human Rights Commission, 1997).

The institutionalisation of migrancy not only affected the relationship between husbands and their wives but also affected how young men grew up to view their own

roles vis-à-vis those of the women around them. This system severely overturned and dismantled the kinship order of the African family structure and household in that household management and resource control was transferred from male to the female precipitating gender conflicts of interest (Redding, 2004). As men went to work and sent money back to their wives women became the heads of household as well as the managers of home affairs and rural resources (Ritchken, 1989). Traditionally, both parties had a responsibility to fulfil their familial obligations. And, in the event that this obligation went unfulfilled, kingship courts stepped in as intermediaries (Ritchken, 1989). With the transformation of household roles and responsibilities and with the abolition of traditional courts of justice, the community was left to devise its own forms of management and justice implementation.

In studying household dynamics in the region of Lebowa, Debra James (1990:159-87) observed that the transformation of the traditional household structure occurred out of economic necessity, rather than traditional necessity. James notes that as a household struggles to survive, it will eventually transform to correspond to the broader conditions of the environment (1990). Likewise, Ritchken discusses how unemployment among men impacted the structure of the family and kinship order in that the status quo, which saw men as the bread winners was challenged (1989). According to Ritchken, the resulting change in the balance of power within the household from male to female was accompanied by conflict (1989: para 2.7). The unemployment created from the economic recession described earlier called into question the role that unemployed males played in households and the power that they wielded (or did not wield) in relation to the role of the woman in her new assumed position as resource manager (Ritchken 1989).

These changing dynamics were challenged by male youth who had traditionally grown up to understand that males wielded power and controlled the resources in households (Delius, 1996). Young men saw their future roles and influence within the household wane with the increasing responsibilities of women and many felt “trapped in a social limbo and unable to assert either male or adult authority” (Delius, 1996:202). Instead, they were dependent on women who “controlled pensions, remittances and households” (Delius, 1996:202-3). The youth not only collided with women but with elders who were critical of their involvement in politics (Delius,

1996). Intergenerational conflict was exacerbated as the youth chose to assert their authority over women and elders by resorting to the last cultural weapon available – witchcraft accusations which precipitated witch-hunts (Delius, 1996).

It is not difficult to see how the effects of both household structures and depressed economic conditions impacted life opportunities for young men and how this situation translated into new modes of justice and gender relational roles. The series of antagonistic relationships and experiences resulting from these conditions are anomalies within a world-view which sanctions harmony (Ritchken, 1989). As pointed out by earlier scholars, witchcraft accusations served to punish a person for any crime deemed unacceptable by society at large, or in this case, by the youth. Like any punishment, it was an example to the rest of society from which to learn (Ritchken, 1989). In demonstrating the measures of their power the youth showed the lengths to which they were prepared to go to in order to quell opposition from women, elders and their leaders in attempts to restore a sense of normalcy and societal harmony.

Bearing in mind the point stressed earlier by Crick – that the definition of a witch depends on the circumstances of a particular time (1970), in the South African case, witchcraft became the explanation for adultery and disloyalty at a historical point in time when these issues were particularly poignant and pertinent. While not punishable under the country's law they easily turned into capital offences (Ritchken, 1989). Eventually, as the situation veered out of control, anything could be achieved with an accusation of witchcraft. It was the most powerful political intervention which could produce anxiety and fear (Ritchken, 1989). In essence, it was, in Ritchken's words, "the imposition of a new discipline in each and every household, a demand for co-operation, in the context of a society competing for scarce resources and riddled with potential points of conflict" (Ritchken, 1989: para.3.12).

RALUSHAI COMMISSION REPORT

Feeling the pressure to look into issues of violence in the Northern region, a provincial commission of inquiry was set up by the Executive Council of the Northern Province in March 1995. The commission, known as the Ralushai Commission, was headed by Professor N.V. Ralushai and comprised eight other members assembled

from the judiciary, church and police force.⁵⁸ Its main purpose was to investigate the killing sprees in the Northern Province and to produce a report on its findings. It was hoped that putting together a diverse team with expertise in the area of African systems and beliefs, and who were mostly black African, would produce tangible solutions.

The final report of the Ralushai Commission was published in 1996. It detailed the plight of many victims of witchcraft and attempted to address the phenomenon from the point of view of those affected by it. It included a review of all criminal cases related to witchcraft and ritual (“medicine”) murder and proposed legislative measures to combat witchcraft killings, as well as recommend educational campaigns (Ralushai, 1996). Although it is criticized for not meeting the requirements of academic research (Dederen, 1996), the Ralushai Report has been hailed as a progressive step towards addressing the issue of African representation because it decisively breaks “from the civilizing mission of Colonialism” (Niehaus, 2003:101). Furthermore, it represents an array of African voices previously excluded from formulating witchcraft laws (Niehaus, 2003). For the first time, Africans were given the opportunity to participate in the process of formulating policies around traditional matters that directly affected them. Ideally their feedback would be useful in informing and formulating laws which would eventually be implemented.⁵⁹

The report has also done the groundwork for more practical solutions to be produced with regard to VIW. Some of these solutions are discussed in the upcoming and final chapter. Mainly, the report has spearheaded an initiative by scholars for a new legal approach (Niehaus, 2003) –a suggestion that proactively supports the idea of Africans being judged by their own accord, customs and traditional systems (Niehaus, 2003). As regards the issue of justice, the report has been influential in recommending that traditional courts and the mechanisms of managing VIW should be

⁵⁸ The other members of this commission were: Pastor M.G. Masingi; M.S. D.M.M. Madiba; Prof. J.A. Van den Heever; Mr. T.J..Mathiba; Mr. M.E. Mphaphuli; Brigadier M.W. Mokwena; Attorney P.N. Vele Ndou; Mr. Matabane.

⁵⁹ In explaining the purposes of the report, section 44 (1) (a) of the Ralushai Report, states that it was prepared for the purposes of assisting to formulate a policy or take a decision in the exercise of a power or performance of a duty conferred or imposed by law.

accommodated within the formal justice system. The Department of Justice has been under pressure to produce a white paper reviewing the Suppression of Witchcraft Act No. 3 of 1957 and its amendment of 1970, and to propose new legislation in its place. But this is yet to happen. Where public health is concerned, the report paved the way for re-addressing the roles and rights of the traditional healer and this materialized in the Traditional Health Practitioner's Bill. Lastly, with respect to the issue of gender relations, the investigations and subsequent recommendations in the report have generated awareness of the high level of VIW directed at women victims and mobilized efforts around addressing this issue. The report has become central to discussions by groups like the CGE who are determined to drive a VIW agenda and make it a national priority in order to allocate it both the attention and budget that it needs (Kohnert, 2003).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ On September 7, 1998, the CGE convened a National Conference on Witchcraft Violence in Thohoyandou, in the Northern Province. The conference involved the participation of roughly 200 police and government representatives as well as international stakeholders. It revealed that between April of 1994 and February 1995, 97 women and 46 men in South Africa had been accused of being witches or wizards, and murdered by townspeople or rural individuals. In the 18 months prior to the April 1996 report on witchcraft crime, officials estimated the deaths of 250 people to be related to witchcraft violence. In the first 6 months of 1998 alone, in the Northern Province, 386 crimes had been perpetrated against suspected witches; these included murder, damage to property and assault. The conference stressed that the issue of justice and the law is essential to the eradication of VIW. It hoped to address the scourge of violence associated with witchcraft accusations through the adoption of the Thohoyandou Declaration (Appendix A) on Ending Witchcraft Violence. More importantly, the conference served to highlight the dangers of ignoring life-threatening effects of witchcraft violence on families and communities.

CONCLUSION

The experiences of the Northern Province have served to highlight a number of crucial realities: witchcraft reflects a changing set of notions which are constantly reinterpreted under new and changing circumstances; it is part of a large-scale historical process that continues to be determined and driven by socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances; it plays a crucial role in contemporary relations of power; to come to terms with local manifestations of witchcraft, it is necessary to understand the broader configurations of witchcraft (Geschiere, 1997). The youth response of mob justice set the stage for the type of reactionary system of justice now witnessed in South Africa where communities continue to take matters into their own hands. The witchcraft complexes of the 1980s served to demonstrate one thing – VIW can be used as an effective tool to implement change. Years on in South Africa's democracy, this philosophy remains entrenched in the minds of many, as a viable option in the pursuit of justice. Witch-hunts have remained, albeit to a lesser extent, a community tool of justice enactment (Harris, 2001).

Besides the immense damage that VIW inflicted on the individuals and families, it greatly compromised the state's monopoly on force and threatened to jeopardize the fruits of democracy so long fought for. Although the witchcraft law has been subjected to legislative reform, the fact that it still does not adequately address the issue of VIW threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the new post Apartheid government in the eyes of the local population. But, if anything, VIW has served to highlight issues that are important priorities for the current government and need to be addressed such as the reformation of the justice system, which includes the protection of common victims of VIW like women and the elderly.

As stated profoundly by Niehaus: "there can be no lasting solution to witchcraft-related violence if the predicaments, fears and anxieties of the believers are not addressed" (2003:117). In other words, that people believe in witchcraft is not the issue. As stated earlier, witchcraft itself is not a crime or even a threat. The problem is the manner in which people *choose* to behave; it is these "choices" that need to be addressed for they are fashioned out of the conditions and predicaments that present themselves to members of a society. If people are faced with "insecurities", then the

choices that they have will be equally insecure. These “choices, which are embedded in the socio-political, economic and cultural framework of a society, and in South Africa are framed by a distressful past, will thus need to be actively attended to.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, much of the contemporary violence in South Africa was born out of a disturbing past. It is a past that continues to impose itself on present realities and has come to obstruct current initiatives at transformation. It has been necessary to take into account this history in order to comprehend how it has come to affect contemporary circumstances. As explained, past discourses on Africa have provided little useful data on witchcraft; the perceptions that informed this discourse were inherited from Europe which had undergone its own experience of witch cleansing. The prevalent error on the part of social scientists was to impose the perceptions from these experiences on the African context.⁶¹ But what must be acknowledged is that the African experience is its own experience and must thus be approached with this philosophy in mind in order for solutions to have a substantial and sustainable impact on the continent.

⁶¹ Gordon Chavunduka writes that 18th century Europe had an influence on the formulation of perceptions on witchcraft. He states that “the doctrine of the unreality of witchcraft” started in Europe as a reaction against the inhumane treatment that witches were purported to inflict upon their victims (2003:137-8). And, when the church declared the practice a heresy, the missionaries followed suit and did not want to entertain the idea of its existence (Chavunduka, 2003).

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendation

While witchcraft discourses feature in many aspects and sectors of contemporary society, they have not been adequately engaged by institutions like government, civil society and academia – a fact that has, in many cases, and in many ways, translated into situations of severe conflict and social discord both on the policy as well as community level. Notwithstanding efforts to apply new theoretical analyses that are better aligned to contemporary issues, and despite witchcraft discourses becoming more invigorating and exploratory, on the level of academia, on the policy level there remains a reluctance to discuss this issue publicly. This “bottleneck” has ensured that VIW policies remain significantly underdeveloped. Were witchcraft to resurface with the same ferocity and intensity as it has in the past, it remains to be seen how prepared the government would be in tackling it, for it will likely find itself strapped for solutions.

As expressed throughout this study, the scope of possibilities of indigenous solutions towards indigenous problems of justice implementation and management is tremendous but insufficiently explored particularly by government. A suggestion presented in the Ralushai Report that would serve to outsource this responsibility and decentralize it to the level of the community is the reinstallation of traditional systems of justice which were dismantled by Colonial and Apartheid regimes (Ralushai, 1996). This could serve to deal with indigenous-centred issues that present themselves as “grey areas” and which can not otherwise be properly catered for under Western systems of justice and law. There is a fair amount of validity to this view, in that irreconcilable epistemologies must not automatically result in the annihilation of one world view by the other, as has frequently been the case in Africa, precisely because this would amount to not only cultural, but also other forms of subjugation. The approach recommended here would allow for greater participation of the population and of civil society, and maximize the resources available in respect to indigenous

knowledge uses. However, there are concerns that such a system would perpetuate the same types of structures that existed under Apartheid in that two separate systems of justice would exist (Harnischfeger, 2003). Clearly, not all solutions will accommodate all of South Africa's citizen demands. However, engaging different population groups may help to minimize the complications entailed when attempting to provide for so many different groups.

Although government institutions like the Ralushai Commission and the CGE have a history of conducting their own investigations into VIW with the intent to create relevant policies on VIW based on raw data, many of the propositions in documents produced by both institutions (Ralushai Report and the Thohoyandou Declaration) are yet to be industriously pursued. However, collaborative engagements, which rope in the expertise and experience of civil society organizations and academia, may provide impetus for seriously pursuing these recommendations.

How South African decides to meet the challenges posed by witchcraft complexes will reflect how far it has come post 1994 and how far it is prepared to go in realizing its aspirations. Along this journey there are several tools which it can employ, avenues it can pursue and practices it can adopt. Solutions amount to: engaging civil society organizations in order to promote a climate of constructive dialogue between policy makers and communities; engaging traditional systems and structures more actively in the judicial processes in order to legally cater to a wider range of citizen groups; engaging gender groups in order to bridge the gap between male and females; and lastly, allocating more resources and funding support to research in the area of indigenous knowledge for the purpose of re-evaluating, interrogating, testing, and challenging conceptual notions inherent within indigenous knowledge systems themselves.

Engaging Civil Society Organizations

Although cultural transformation is an organic process, it is still very much influenced, driven and even sometimes determined by government policies and government ambitions. Thus, policies must be very carefully crafted to suit the needs of the population. The population, in turn, must be able to reflect their needs to the government; it is with respect to this process that civil society proves an invaluable

and instrumental institution to engage. Civil society organizations (CSO) are described by the United Nations Development Program, UNDP (2003:21), as “the space between the citizen and the state, where the will of citizens is manifested and mobilized outside official auspices.” Their main aim is to unite people under a common understanding of shared interests that benefit the communities in which they are rooted, and in which they operate, and to advance these agendas (UNDP, 2003).

In South Africa, the lack of fruitful engagement between civil society and government in the past was a major constraint in regard to designing and implementing effective policies towards witchcraft elements. In previous times, civil society and government relations were stunted largely due to the gross distrust that each institution exhibited for the other. Until 1994 civil society institutions were monitored by the state and there was no real system of government accountability (Govender, 2001). Because the volatile political climate disallowed and curtailed the liberty of civil society organizations to tackle social issues freely and independently; efforts to deal with issues associated with witchcraft were mainly driven by the state which already reflected zero tolerance towards matters pertaining to (black) African issues. This meant that there was little opportunity for challenging or even debating the appropriateness and efficacy of policy responses to issues such as VIW.

By definition civil society organizations (CSOs) should enter and engage where government fails or can not. However, in Mamdani’s opinion, in South Africa, the legacy of Colonialism and Apartheid has affected how CSOs understand their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis government in that they struggle with engaging government and citizenry (1996). While CSOs have, since 1994, played a more active and liberal role in pursuing solutions to social problems, there is still a lot of ambiguity on their role within the contemporary social framework of development (Mamdani, 1996).

Yet, if properly developed and supported, CSOs can have tremendous impact on policy planning, monitoring and evaluation. By virtue of being closer to the ground to affected communities, CSOs have greater impact in communities, while also having access to government. As such, they are better positioned to take the lead on issues of VIW, since they represent the interests of their constituents/communities and can

relay these to policy makers. Government, in turn, should actively utilize the CSOs and boost their capacity by way of increasing funding and resources towards issues that are aimed at tackling the roots causes of VIW.

Engaging Traditional Systems of Justice

The relationship between government policy and public behaviour is an interesting one. On the one hand, the government is called upon to protect its citizens against crimes like VIW and ensure a peaceful environment. On the other hand, laws which have been put in place in reaction to the high levels of VIW, and which aim to punish those who contribute to, and instigate VIW, have also been considered problematic because they are seen to protect the perpetrators of witchcraft (Fisiy and Geschiere, 1990; Kohnert, 2002a; Ashforth, 2005a).

Several scholars have brought up the dangers of reinforcing a Western worldview in neglect of an African one in certain areas of life, such as those of law and order. The conventions, in this respect, that determine, define and formulate judicial processes within Western and African structures are not always in accordance with one another largely due to difference of cultural perceptions of criminality (Carstens, 2003). And, because the South African judicial system is premised on a Western conception of the law that hardly caters to indigenous beliefs like witchcraft, the question then arises as to how these two systems of justice will be reconciled. Carstens provides an apt example of the incongruences between Western and African judicial ideologies in the following excerpt:

“To be convicted of murder in South Africa, the state has to prove all the elements of the crime beyond reasonable doubt. This implies that for the crime of murder the state has to prove beyond reasonable doubt an unlawful act/or omission by the accused who intentionally caused the death of the deceased. An element of intention (as a form of mens rea) is so called knowledge of unlawfulness. The accused in his/her subjective mind (in South African criminal law the test for intention is purely subjective [in terms of the psychological approach to fault as applied in South African criminal law]) must thus be aware of his or her wrongdoing at the time of the commission of the crime. The argument is often advanced by perpetrators accused of witchcraft murders, that they on account of their belief in witchcraft and the supernatural which formed part of ritual practices for centuries in a community; lacked knowledge of unlawfulness during the commission of the crime. Since South African criminal state courts do not, in principle, accept the defence of belief in witchcraft, the validity of the cultural defence, remains a moot point open to debate.” (2003:7).

As aforementioned, the Ralushai Report suggests ways to mitigate irreconcilable epistemologies by returning to African traditional court systems; and, it is argued here that this may be a viable solution, if it is adequately managed. Given the complex nature of an issue like witchcraft which, as expressed in the study, encompasses metaphysical knowledge as well as what can be described as “empirically ascertainable” knowledge, there may be a need to separate the two, or at least make them distinctly identifiable.⁶² Reinstalling the traditional systems of arbitration, may serve to delegate the responsibility of dealing with metaphysical aspects of witchcraft to the level of those who are seen to be more apt to understand and manage it - traditional healers.⁶³ However, the same process of consultations that traditional health structures underwent before the passing of the Traditional Health Practitioner’s Bill, should be considered. When an agreed upon framework has been established, traditional authorities should thereafter be entrusted to deal with issues like VIW in a manner which is not only compliant with the agreed upon format, but which upholds the principles of democracy to which the country has pledged. As was done with the setting up of the traditional healers system of registration, there should also be an entity created with a “watchdog” function in order to ensure a system of compliance and accountability.

Additionally, because the government does not currently keep records of cases of witchcraft (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2006), it is difficult to document behavioural patterns which may emerge out of this phenomenon and which become visible at particular times of the year. Record keeping in the form of mapping, facilitates the detection of trends in VIW and may be useful in devising better-aligned solutions. For example, the rainy season is commonly known to be the time when VIW is at its highest in certain parts of South Africa like the Northern Province. This knowledge can be transformed into data which can thereafter be used to produce viable solutions which may help to prepare societies for the violence they are likely to experience during this period. Relevant parties, like police units and other such law

⁶² The distinctions referred to here are, for instance, differences between practises with clearly constitutional codes and conduct, like ritual murders, and those that violate perceived cultural codes and conduct like misfortune that accompany illnesses which may result in death.

⁶³ This is the case in Cameroon where the expertise of Traditional healers in this area is greatly relied upon.

enforcers, may be encouraged, through resources and training, to be on the alert and keep records of incidences. Likewise, traditional courts dealing with matters on VIW can serve as an additional agency to supplement and facilitate data collection.

Engaging Gender Groups

The government is faced with promoting an equitable environment with respect to its female population, but it risks antagonizing its male population who feel traditionally entitled to certain privileges and rights. These new democratic initiatives reveal the real challenges of accommodating a society of interest groups that are competing for the same material resources. To people like Mokgethi Tshabalabala, female empowerment must be pursued alongside male empowerment in order to acclimatize males to the new democratic gender initiatives (2006). This would also help them realize the benefits of including the females in all areas of society (Tshabalabala, 2006).⁶⁴ This process could come in the form of male-female workshops and seminars that allow a space to discuss gender-related issues and policies. It can also come by way of formulating curriculum at the level of education that make gender classes mandatory. This may help begin the process of familiarizing youth to the idea of working together and not against their female counterparts. Also, given the particularly high levels of social discord between this group, there needs to be a higher engagement on the policy level, as well as in communities and attention paid to cultural traits that precipitate and exacerbate the antagonistic relationship between males and females in South Africa.

Revisiting Discourse Productions

Western rationalist discourse, which has historically dominated African discourse production, has invariably influenced the way in which African governments structure and implement their development goals. As expressed by various scholars, this Western epistemological import has historically silenced the voice of the indigenous subject. In the final analysis, Africa cannot make any significant progress unless development is predicated on indigenous African cultural values and systems.

⁶⁴ In an October 2006 interview with AllAfrica Magazine, Mokgethi Tshabalabala, who works with men to combat behaviors that destroy families and hasten HIV, stated that African men, in particular, feel threatened by the new empowered status of their women and that efforts to empower women must be pursued with caution (2006).

It must be recognized that these value systems are neither unaffected by the aberrations of Colonialism and Apartheid, nor are they immune from the remnants and reincarnations of these systems (imperialism, neo-imperialism, etc.). They are, thus, prone to reflect and be affected by the injustices of these institutions, aspects of which have been unproductive to the development of Africa and Africans. Therefore, in order to meaningfully consider employing African values and tie the same to African development, there must be a serious quest to investigate the appropriateness of many of the current modes of African discourse production.

In the same way that European social scientists undertook to discuss and interrogate the nature of rationality and objectivity in mainstream science, Africanists must also seek to probe the cultural frameworks and strictures that they have been subjected to, and within which they are forced to operate as they continue to undertake their own research analysis. Although classical European philosophy was motivated to diverge from articulations based on metaphysical postulations (“Natural” or “Divine” law) to forms of knowledge that were scientifically ascertainable – an intellectual impulse embodied in the “Enlightenment” movement – this is not to suggest that Africanists should spend time questioning elements of African rationality. Rather, the proposal is that they learn to distinguish between methodologies and practices that offer little value, in as far as the development of African issues is concerned, and those that offer promise and advancement to contemporary African problematics. It is essential, even imperative, to continue the dissolution of myths that portray Africans as having no viable institutions and as needing to rely on Western conventions in order to establish structures which are considered legitimate.

In the field of IKS, Africanist scholars must, therefore, undertake to reject, accept, modify or adapt the relevant conceptual baggage, in order to customize new and appropriate methodological research paradigms and in order to, in Gloria Emeagwal’s words establish “new constructs of analysis for understanding the phenomenon where necessary” (2003, para.3). Ultimately, they must learn to “grind” Afrocentricity into all dimensions and discussions on Africa and do so in such a way that the African paradigm is not lost or stifled but allowed to thrive and become actively relevant to, and at the forefront of, African development and knowledge production.

Conclusion

As a culture of democracy continues to shape the realities of South Africans, South Africans are charged with re-orienting their value system to reflect the values of *all* citizens. In order to foster and promote national unity, the population is attempting to respond positively to its cultural diversity. As the current government attempts to diverge from past practices of inequality and division and focuses on unifying the nation under the banner of nationalism, there is hope that a reversal of a history of “apartness” will give rise to a nation which will celebrate its diversity and have an equitable (re)distribution of its resources. Finding the most appropriate mechanisms to realize these ambitions is an enduring challenge which the government is vehemently addressing.

The views and findings presented in this study were aimed at highlighting a number of crucial points relating to South Africa’s cultural transformation process. First, culture, which is expressed in how people see and define themselves, is an important tool in South Africa’s unification and transformation process. However, transformation is a fragmented process which can not occur at once or be restricted to a single area. In this study, violence has been highlighted as an area where cultural transformation is an important feature in addressing this issue. Ideally, culture should be a shared general philosophy, which at the *marginal* level, binds all the members of a nation or society. As explained in the first chapter, culture is a blueprint and serves as a set of guidelines which informs the way members of society choose to interact. South Africa’s past, which thrived on and perpetuated a culture of violence and segregation, has had debilitating repercussions on the current society, which is desperately attempting to replace this culture of violence with a culture of restoration and amends. Redefining this blueprint and installing a new set of guidelines is part and parcel of the process of recreating a new identity. However, it is nonetheless a difficult process, and it remains to be seen how South Africa manages to successfully accommodate the identities of all who live in it under the umbrella of a common culture and identity.

Second, the process of cultural transformation has helped to magnify areas of redress that need to be more systematically targeted. South African society, while trying to redefine itself in light of new and progressive initiatives, is still being defined by its

past. The culture of violence which is deeply embedded in its social fabric, and serves as a tool for both victim and perpetrator persists as a prevalent feature and impacts the manner in which people define themselves. In more ways than one, the triumph over Apartheid and its predecessor, Colonialism, remains incomplete to the degree that remnants of these two structures continue to pervade endeavours at progress.⁶⁵ Reversing this trend will entail systematically overhauling many policies and systems that continue to hamper efforts at creating an equitable environment. This translates into addressing the legal and economic frameworks which themselves continue to reflect remnants of past imbalances which continue to aggravate social conditions.

Third, the study highlights the real difficulties, faced by the new government, of adhering to two world views while pursuing cultural transformation. Pressure to perform comes not only from within the country but also from without. South Africa's reputation as a global player and a continental leader has meant that it must lead by example and continue to spearhead African renaissance initiatives. This leadership responsibility has meant that the processes that South Africa undertakes in getting its own house in order are constantly under the spot light. In attempting to strike the balance between two contending world views, the government has to answer, on the one hand, to a Western view to which South Africa must adhere if it is to remain a significant player in the new world order, and on the other to, the pressure to support a Neo-African⁶⁶ view which seeks to re-assert itself, and the rest of Africa, in an environment already dominated by Western socio-economic, political and cultural thought (Mandaza, 2002).

Fourth, the above reality is further compounded by the fact that Western methodologies continue to have a profound influence on the manner in which

⁶⁵ While Colonialism and Apartheid are gone, they've left an enduring legacy of institutional segregation (in the form of a "bifurcated state" which has dual mechanisms – one for enabling whites and other urban types who carry on with their privileges, and another for managing resistance by blacks aimed at overcoming those privileges (Mamdani, 1996:29). Mamdani would argue that Apartheid, in several ways, appears to have taken on a more indirect, but no less insidious, form (Mamdani, 1996).

⁶⁶ The Neo-African in this instance refers to all the "new" African concepts and movements to have emerged out of the post Colonial era such the concept of Negritude, Pan Africanism, African Renaissance and more recently the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

countries like South Africa construct their development policies. This process is not as independent as claimed because it is subject to Western attempts to instil conformity to a universal and Western world view. Although less evident than in the past, these attempts are embedded in the very methodologies which Africans rely on to disengage themselves from Western influences that have proven problematic to the African context. This is particularly noticeable in the area of African witchcraft and discourse production, which albeit undergoing significant changes still has a way to go before it can be sufficiently relevant to the African context. Because African epistemologies have been sidelined; they will need to be actively (re)integrated in order that African issues and studies can graduate from scholarship of analogy to that which is informed by African worldviews and historical processes (Mamdani, 1996) for there to be room for a more diverse and invigorating engagement of systems of knowledge.

Ideas that are articulated on the level of discourse production can likely have a profound influence on the ideas that are articulated at the level of policy which, in effect, are likely to determine the state's response to issues like VIW. If this trickle down effect is left unchecked, the policies which are framed to address issues like VIW shall at best remain inadequate and at worst be detrimental to the larger society. Disassembling this process, with a view to reassemble it through a more meaningful and engaging process, requires a major paradigm shift. However, the very tools and methods that will need to be applied themselves have strong leanings towards Western standards and practises and thus can not fully cater to African epistemologies. But in order for Africans to take ownership of their successes and failures, they must conceptualize, design and implement their own development strategies, and be able to rely on discourses to inform and buttress these strategies. At this stage, advocating an active engagement of processes that are Afro-centred is of high relevance.

This dilemma is particularly noticeable in South Africa's judicial system which is premised on Western philosophies of democracy and as earlier pointed out by Carstens, does not always cater to indigenous philosophies because they appear to counter Western "rational" thought. Some scholars have argued that divergent approaches to Western legislative and governance formations were at first avoided by

the ANC because of what they felt was the need to appease the still influential and powerful white minority population, as well as their external international counterparts, that the basic Western principles (of democracy) would be observed by the new government (Harnischfeger, 2003).

This is not to suggest that the Constitution can not work and does not apply to the South African context. Rather, it is to put into perspective some of the real and sensitive issues that the new government is addressing as it undergoes the process of transforming its new nation. Part of this process requires identifying the boundaries between its own identity and an identity to which it must adhere if it is to be seen as a “credible” and successful government. Also, it is to point out the dangers of assuming that legal and moral principles are universally in sync and applicable across all cultures, without due regard and respect to the individual processes that each culture has undertaken to fashion its own model of legal and moral codes. This process, an embryonic one, is culturally determined, and makes sense to those who must live by it. The imposition of moral codes and conduct, if untimely, may turn into an act of disempowerment upon those who feel imposed upon with standards that they themselves have not shaped. Further, it relinquishes the ability of a society to construct its own codes of conduct, thereby tampering with the very essence and identity of that society. Subsequently, a society may turn to acts of desperation in order defend, by any means, that which they hold dear – their identity.

Fifth, as Ritchken noted, and as Ashforth himself points out in his book on Soweto, witchcraft accusations were used as a tool to deal with the competition for limited resources. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that urban environments, where the socio-economic inequities are particularly noticeable, are as susceptible to witchcraft as are rural domains. It can be said, thus, that material conditions pave the way for VIW; it is, therefore, these conditions that must be directly attended to. If the youth, for instance, are disgruntled with the lack of opportunity and employment and unleash their frustrations in the manner that they have in the past, then the government must actively attempt to remedy this situation by creating jobs or

ensuring there are opportunities that can engage youth energies positively (e.g. Workshops, hobbies, learnerships, sport programs, big-brother/sister programs).⁶⁷

In these times of transition South Africa finds itself struggling to redefine itself socially, politically, economically, and culturally. Witchcraft discourses are part and parcel of the numerous attempts, in this process, at defining and understanding what it means to be South African but also what it means to be South African in these specific times. Witchcraft plays a significant part in facilitating the process of redefining South Africa and South Africans.

Clearly, no one single approach is sufficient to address an issue like VIW or more generally witchcraft. It will take a combination of approaches and multi-pronged strategies to thoroughly engage in witchcraft discourses and the problematics posed by witchcraft like VIW. However, if as Ashforth states, “Witchcraft and healing are endeavors that privilege innovation [and that] the key to both is knowledge” (2005b: 215), then the occult system, under which witchcraft falls, must be considered a knowledge in its own right. Therefore, it must be given a space to be engaged and discussed within the framework policy of IKS. If detrimental elements within this system are to be managed and their impact lessened, then it is necessary to use the very knowledge systems from which they are derived as an antidote to address them.

Indeed, there has been some resistance and fear of an agenda which appears to pursue the interests of the black majority with what some argue is a broad brush action that sweeps all other identities under the carpet. Policies like the afore-highlighted Traditional Healer’s Act have been challenged on Constitutional grounds and legal action taken to repeal the Bill. In the final stages of writing this paper, the Supreme Court ruled that the Bill was to be repealed on the grounds that due process in the public consultations had not been sufficiently followed and that the Bill was thus in violation of the Constitution. The government was given several months to rectify this

⁶⁷ Although these efforts are ongoing, lack of empirical data collection not only makes it difficult to ascertain the level of success of various youth projects, but it is also hard to observe potential patterns and links between youth (un)employment and VIW occurrences.

insufficiency and to (re)conduct a public consultative process that is thorough and in compliance with democratic public consultative proceedings.

Several things remain to be seen. First, it remains to be seen whether conducting new public consultative processes on the grounds that the former process did not allow for an adequate representation of voices and opinions, will necessarily change the fact that 80% of the population relies on the services of traditional healers even at a time when there are other options available to them. Second, it remains to be seen whether the results from these proceedings will reflect the reality of this statistical fact and, as such, be acknowledged as the “majority consensus” as decreed through democratic principles. Lastly, it remains to be seen whether the government will buckle under the pressure to conform to a Western epistemologies which is bent on imposing itself everywhere, or remain resilient in their efforts to pursue initiatives that represent the bulk of its population.

Finally, confronting the past is an ordeal which South Africans must collectively endure in their desire to build a better future. What exactly this means in concrete terms is hard to immediately establish and will take several attempts to fully comprehend. While economic restitution, in terms of equitable structures and programs, and political redress in terms of citizen participation has been actively pursued, there is still the question of how these transformations are articulated on the cultural level and what it means to confront the past on a personal, socio-cultural and psychological level. As the dust continues to settle over South Africa’s post Apartheid society, it is still not entirely clear what it will take to reconcile the past with the present, in order to carve a successful future. In keeping in mind Thabo Mbeki’s idea that African problems should be solved with African solutions a useful place to start is with indigenous knowledge systems.

In ending, Mbeki’s speech to the Second Southern African Dialogue on Smart Partnership for the Generation of Wealth provides a fitting closing:

In the end...one of the issues we must discuss... is: How do we handle the question of national sovereignty in a global world? How does each of us, as individual African countries with small markets, battle to deal with this difficult situation in the world?

Can we succeed without saying we surrender some of that sovereignty to larger entities, which must be democratic, with everyone equal, with no big brothers, and no small brothers, and no big sisters and no small sisters? To achieve an African renewal in politics, in economics, in social life and in culture, we have to act together as Africans. Of this I think none can be in doubt.

The question that remains is: How do we do it? And what arises from this? Are we willing to do it? But clearly, if we are not willing to do it, the citizens of Dead Man's Creak in Mississippi will continue to laugh at these Africans who talk of a vision but who do not have the will to translate that vision into reality.

–Thabo Mbeki (1998c:294-295)

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