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CAPTURING THE GLOBAL: IDENTITIES, KINSHIP, AND WITCHCRAFT TRIALS IN BOKI SOCIETY, NIGERIA

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Introduction

'GLOBALIZATION' presumes the homogenization of industrial and pre-industrial societies by post-industrial life-styles, values, and commodities (Waters 1995; cf. Said 1978). Crumbling before consumerism's symbolic and material power, indigenous identities fade: in various locales in Africa and Asia 'custom man' gives way to 'development man', a proponent of Western life-styles, values, and commodities. Liberated from encompassing ascriptive kinship networks, and inserted with others as separate actors into forward-investment-driven global networks of production for profit, African people sell their labour, accumulate money, and consume products imbued with universal (Westernizing) meanings of self-gratification. Representations of the individual as consumer thus symbolically detach the person from the social relations of kinship (Simmel 1978).[1]

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Some theorists envisage custom acceding to a globalizing culture of triumphalist individualism that evolved in Western society's successive ages of mercantile, entrepreneurial, and industrial international capitalism (Robertson 1992). At the macro-level, individuals everywhere find reference-points in supranational networks through the consumption of goods produced across the globe (Friedman 1994). At the micro-level, in African locales, entrepreneurial capitalism connects local identities and kinship networks into regional and national markets, where 'custom man' sells farm and forest produce in exchange for manufactured goods produced by 'development man'. At points, and in markets, where 'custom man' and 'development man' intersect, they may encounter the structuring power of post-industrial global networks of multinational corporations, financial institutions, and non-government organizations. A new global cultural economy seemingly encompasses the local (Apter 1987).

Cultural Diversity

Yet historical and ethnographic research in African settings demonstrates the diversity, long duration, and multi-directionality of 'indigenous' responses to Westernizing representations of the individual purveyed by mission Christianity, the nation-state, and commodity production (Vansina 1985, Peel 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Interactions between expatriate trader and chief/big man/military ruler, supplying slaves, palm oil, and oil in exchange for manufactured goods, reproduced, and continue to reproduce, the local and national entrepreneurial economy in subordination to international networks of accumulation. In kin-based contexts persons are constructed, that is, others impose social identities—i.e. gender-specific moral values, jural norms, and action typifications—on individuals as objects (Fortes 1973). These define the individual's social persona. The individual as an object of others' definitions and scrutinizing gaze is the recipient of social identities. The individual as a bearer of social identities is also the 'me' of the 'authorial' sentient, experiencing self (Mauss 1970, Ifeka 1982, Cohen 1994).

Individuals are culturally constructed as persons and thus representations and practices differ between societies in time and space (see MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Strathern 1988, Carrithers *et al.* 1985, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). Differences in social identities also reflect differences in the social structures in which they are embedded. 'Development man' (teacher, catechist, civil servant, conservation agency manager) is constituted by the achieved criteria of profit-driven society in the form of education level, cash income and consumption patterns. In comparison, 'custom man' (chief, elder, youth) is constituted by the ascribed criteria of kin-based society in the form of seniority of descent, birth order, age, and gender. These representations map the person on to the hierarchy of ancestral authority, so that he or she is constrained from exercising the personal authority of individuals in market-integrated systems and remains in general within

a group project (Friedman 1994). Consider how the hierarchy of ancestral authority, kinship relations, and common descent from a founding ancestor (the genealogical charter) frame the terrain of sociality and supply a cultural map on which individuals locate themselves as socially interdependent persons. Persons are differentiated within this terrain according to kin-based criteria. For example, social differentiation by age separates youth from elders in the hierarchy of ancestral authority; differentiation by gender separates men and women into kin-based roles of fathering and mothering; differentiation by descent and birth order separates patrikinsmen. These differentiations order individuals according to their social identities or respective positions relative to one another in the order of kinship.

Persons are differentiated rather differently at points where local kin-based relations intersect with global representations of value, for example, land. Possessors of private rights in (socially exclusive) land contest with, and are separated from, claimants to the same land by virtue of the genealogical charter of common descent and (socially inclusive) ancestral authority over all descendants' land for the common good. Through contested relations with land, 'custom man' stands in opposition to 'development man'. These differentiations contain the potential to terminate the kin-based social order by detaching individuals from the socially inclusive obligations of the moral economy of kinship. In so far as individuals define themselves as politically unequal in relation to ownership or non-ownership of land, they are defining customary and development identities in conflict. Private property relations reproduce 'development' identities in the local, but contrary to some globalization theorists do not necessarily encompass the local. Rather, through pathways described below, customary identities and the kin-based criteria they encode may 'capture' development identities (Gluckman 1958, Balandier 1955, Ifeka 1993, Kopytoff 1987).

Structuring and Tactical Power

In the Boki villages where we worked, we observed how struggles for dominance in decision-making between bearers of customary and development identities are framed in terms of inequalities of social age between men (youth/elder) that genealogical charters authorize (Gluckman 1958, Bayart 1993, Ifeka 1993, Reno 1995). We address masculine identities because these were our principal source-material.

Social differentiation by age and kin status is reflected in everyday political relations. On the one hand, men addressed as chief, elder or 'family' priest still dominate polity decision-making, though they are periodically checkmated by 'activist' (rebellious) youth who claim traditional authority for their actions. On the other hand, men may achieve considerable informal influence because they make money in the commodity economy as traders, contractors, wage-earners, or salaried civil servants. These men then seek to acquire formal positions of authority so they can integrate themselves in village decision-making, negotiating for and

being rewarded with chiefship titles, pre-eminent identities in the kin-based social order. The politics of negotiating contested identities is thus pivotal to individuals' interactions with others in the moral economy of collective exchange and the intersecting commodity economy. A politically centred analysis is required that highlights the respective power of indigenous and Westernizing practices to shape the contemporary construction of persons.

Wolf and others highlight the need to centre analyses of conflict in relation to the power that controls the settings in which people interact with others, for example, the power of kinship norms to structure the political domain of power divisions in village society (Wolf 1990; see also Gluckman 1958; Arendt 1970; Weber 1978; Foucault 1977, 1984). He explains this kind of power as equivalent to the Marxian concept of the power of capital to harness and allocate labour power. This also informs Foucault's notion of power as the ability 'to structure the possible field of action of others' in various modalities, including the structuring of social identities carried by gendered individuals (Foucault 1984: 428). Wolf also calls attention to power as tactics, as organizational, for example, youth's capacity in village settings to interact with their status seniors, the elders, so as to uphold or change criteria of authority based on kinship (ascribed) compared to the market (achieved). Power is therefore integral to analyses of conflicts at points of intersection between local and global structures and identities.

Power, in the sense of the capacity to affect others in thought, word, and deed, has shaped continuities and changes in social identities at points where the local and global intersect. Power is therefore pivotal to understanding social identities as dynamic processes in interaction with pre-industrial social structures and post-industrial international profit networks.

We ground our analysis of the politics of contested identities in a witchcraft trial that one of us (Flower) observed in a Boki village where we were working in late 1996. Youth accused certain elders of 'killing', by witchcraft, a popular age-mate to whom they were closely related. We shall argue that the discourse of witchcraft structured the onset, development, and resolution of the conflict between youth and elders. At the same time, youth displayed their command of tactical power, as they played with the semantically powerful word 'witch', convincing the village that they spoke the 'truth' in accusing certain elders of 'killing' a youth who could bring more money. For youth and others, these elders were 'holding back' development. We conclude that conflict over the distribution of resources among older patrikinsmen, and between older and younger kin, simultaneously critiqued the elders' greater authority while also reaffirming their social significance. Equally ambiguously, youth deployed representations of 'selfish' customary man with which to open up a space so as to argue subsequently for the 'promotion' of a few older youths into the category of elder. We suggest that youth 'entrapped' identities of 'development' in those of 'custom' and so upheld the kin-based hierarchy for the time being.

Were youth, then, continuing a well-established tradition in the area whereby 'boys' rebellions' end up affirming, rather than destroying, the power of social

identities associated, on the one hand, with the moral economy of collective exchange, and on the other with the commodity economy of private gain, to structure the articulation of conflict (Rowlands and Warnier 1988)? But why has this 'tradition' continued or been 'reinvented' in association with persisting kin-based criteria of social differentiation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983)? What factors might account for the continuing power of these kin-based social identities—chief, elder, and youth—to structure the positioning of individuals with regard to the distribution of economic and cultural resources within and between the local (pre-industrial) and globalizing post-industrial economies? Why do customary, kin-based identities not only persist but on occasion 'capture' and thus subordinate development identities?

'Development' and Witchcraft

The many meanings social scientists attribute to 'development' may be said to boil down to positive economic and social change, that is, progress towards the kinds of life-style and economy exemplified by Northern post-industrial market economies. However, post-modern theorists stress the relativity of 'truth values' and local inequalities of wealth, power, and cultural control. In their view—*pace* Foucault (1977)—'development' is a series of events, actions, and discourses structured through power relationships between local, national, and international élites and subaltern classes (Gardner and Lewis 1996). However, local people interpret 'development' somewhat differently.

'Development'

In the Boki villages where we worked, men frequently use this English word in everyday speech. They do so because Boki have a keen sense of the need to 'develop' themselves and others around them. They attribute this to their earlier conversion to Christianity, so they are bound by God to set a perfect example for their less-advanced neighbours. However, they are also, of course, motivated by prospects for economic advancement within the mixed economy of entrepreneurial capitalism and agricultural production for subsistence and exchange.

Youth and elders interpret 'development' as it was practised in Europe in the post-Second-World-War era of economic reconstruction and legitimized in modernization theory (Rostow 1960). By 'development', they mean, most importantly, the construction of fine (two-storey and higher) concrete buildings, tarred roads, factories, schools, health centres, and the accoutrements of urban settlements. They mean connection to the national electric power company and piped, clean water for household use. Thus, most people interpret 'development' to be provision of physical infrastructure, widely perceived in contemporary rural Nigeria to

be lacking in the extreme, and to be the pathway out of poverty and into a world of plentiful goods (Francis 1996). Teachers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and civil servants employed by the state or engaged in the private sector represent 'development' identities and life-styles to educated Boki youth. Local emphasis upon 'development' as physical infrastructure reflects relative disadvantage, the identification of state-funded 'top-down' initiatives with 'development', and dependence on access to markets in which villagers sell their own produce and buy manufactured goods such as clothes, torch batteries, cigarettes, and shoes. Most youth, educated or uneducated in English, as well as elders, espouse modernization in the Euro-American sense of the 1960s.

Educated youth, however, discuss 'development' among themselves and with interested outsiders such as fieldworkers. They are searching for new meanings of 'development' that seemingly echo post-modern notions of an improved quality of life—for example, greater social equality between all categories, especially women and men, justice before the law, accountability, and transparency. In this emerging sense, some youth are identifying 'development' with the satisfaction of 'social needs'.

Older-style (modernization), 'development' identities are represented in Boki-land by teachers, civil servants, police officers and state security agents, conservation and rural development agency managers, logging company operators, and contractors. All are associated with state-funded livelihoods, not with the agricultural economy of subsistence production and sale of limited surpluses, and are connected with the national/international economy of accumulation. These men and their associates intervene in the local economy on behalf of outside interests and exploit its natural resources for profit, principally hardwood trees for furniture, construction, and fencing. At the same time, the Cross River National Park conservation agency recently imposed village decision-making committees on the area which challenged the authority of the clan head to determine, with his chiefs and elders, representation on village committees which manage land disputes, marital conflicts, and community banking. Village decision-makers handled the intervention astutely. They retained control of their most important committees (land, works, community council, community bank), which generate money through contracts, 'commissions', and fees levied on petitioners. They 'allowed' the new committees to merge with less-important village health, education, and church committees. In this way influential elders protected their control over key decision-making committees, income-generation, and their economic dominance of youth and junior kinsmen.

Witchcraft

Witchcraft accusations in small-scale societies have been interpreted in terms of the individual's need to explain misfortune (Evans-Pritchard 1937). In West-Central African coastal and forest zones, a leading concern is the seemingly

inexplicable nature of wealth, unexpected illness, and death (Ardener 1996, Poole 1994). Many people, including Christians, find that unexpected events are most satisfactorily explained in terms of traditional belief systems that invoke the witch as a causal agent in death or wealth. At the same time, most villagers work hard to explain the predominance of a few men over the rest. A 'big man' has more sway over others and must therefore possess the mystical powers with which to accumulate the means of trouncing his enemies. Villagers believe that an elder accused of trying to 'kill' his paternal half-brother is challenging him to share his property, including farm land: the witch challenges authorized power relations between kinsmen in the world of the spirits as well as in the everyday visible world (Jackson and Karp 1990, Kapferer n.d.).[1]

African representations of the individual as a witch portray the latter as suffering from a surfeit of individualism and self-love, 'killing' kin, and 'destroying' the extended family from within rather than respecting social obligations to 'share' wealth and assist kinsmen. This identity is a mirror image of globalizing representations that value the individual as a consumer of commodities whose price (worth) reflects supply in relation to demand and whose availability enables individuals to define themselves as consumers in world market networks.

Concepts of the witch, the witch's 'world', the powers attributed to them, and the identities they support supply insight into popular notions of the person and

1. There are several analytical traditions distinguishing the social anthropology of witchcraft. An older British paradigm 'explains' witchcraft in terms of the 'need' for societal release of 'structural tensions' between close patri- or matrikin (Marwick 1952). Others adopt a structuralist approach (Douglas 1970). These and other structural-functionalist analyses usually situate witchcraft accusations in a descent-group context or portray the state as a repressor of subjectivities (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990, Middleton and Winter 1963). Contemporary ontological analyses in America and Europe reflect post-modern concerns with the subjectivity of 'realities' (Berger and Luckman 1966, Jackson and Karp 1990) and investigate witchcraft beliefs as texts to be decoded to reveal the self's experience of misfortune (Hutini and Roberts 1993, Poole 1994, Baeke 1995, De Latour 1995, Kamo n.d.). In parts of Highland New Guinea and West Africa, local communities still map agnation and masculine social identity on to the male body through representations of blood shed in initiation, homicide, and inter-village 'warfare' (Ruel 1969, Meggitt 1977, Knauft 1985, Harrison 1993). A man's personhood or social (public) identity is represented in terms of moral and jural rights (La Fontaine 1985: 124–6). For example, rituals of initiation mark the commencement of youth's transition into manhood through blood shed (scarification, circumcision) and the first acts which publicly honour the patrilineal (family) name as legitimate procreation—the power of the right hand to kill enemies and large animals, and the capacity to accumulate wealth in the form of prestige goods and cash. Blood inscribes a man's public identity or persona in terms of the desired capacity to influence, direct, and control the field of action of others in the residential or patrilineal extended family group (Lukes 1990, Wolf 1990). In these villages, blood lost and subsequently regained in rituals of regeneration is the substance of mature men's identities as procreators who are born into the same extended patrilineal family or descent group, who share the same public name, whose male children reproduce the memory and name of the ancestors, and whose killing (right) arm invokes the ancestral name as it takes the life of enemies in neighbouring villages (Ifeka 1993, Offiong 1982).

social identities in village societies of the forest-edge, where genealogies of descent still constitute charters for authorizing social inequality based on differences of age, gender, and birth. The witchcraft trials and confessions one of us observed in late 1996–7 demonstrate youth's tactical skill in securing support for their campaign against elders whom they accused of witchcraft. Youth mobilized representations of anti-kin ('bad') individualism that signify non-development in local discourse and enhance their reputation for being progressive, for espousing 'good' 'development' within the context of the kin-based moral economy of collective exchange that the chiefs and elders seek to control.

Some globalization theorists contend that incorporation in international networks of accumulation is homogenizing local identities, as if people in peripheral societies are passive objects of capital's encompassing movements and as if they have no history of resistance, negotiation, compromise, and dispute among and between themselves and agents of change such as missionaries, the state, and multinational companies (Friedman 1994). Individuals in interaction with the structures of kin-based society and the economy of accumulation identify with the elders and their ancestors ('the past'), in doing so highlighting the opposed category youth ('development'). Interactional processes 'bring forward' into the present identities associated with the past, which therefore continue to be reproduced. In the villages where we worked, interaction between the bearers of contested identities associated respectively with 'custom' and 'development'—elders and youth—continue to structure power relations and shape the construction of the social person (MacGaffey 1970).

We know little about how this happens. Identity trajectories sketched by anthropologists with a broad brush need to be deconstructed, so we can begin to disentangle particular moments in the reproduction of identities and the social structures with which they are associated. We build our argument on a situational analysis of one such moment, a witchcraft trial. We tell the story of conflict between the bearers of a traditionally subordinate identity (youth) and a new identity (development), and traditionally dominant elders. The conflict contains a twist: 'customary' social identities of kin-based society 'capture' those of 'development' and thus guarantee their historical continuity in the shorter term. In the longer term these identities may be distanced from the present and inserted into the 'past', where they represent village society's remembered points of departure or beginnings.

Setting the Scene

Beri, the eastern Boki village in Cross River State where we carried out field enquiries, is situated on the edge of damp forest. Agriculture is the predominant means of livelihood. Smallholders, men and women, produce staple food crops

(cassava, cocoyams, rice, vegetables) and cash crops (cocoa, bananas). Surpluses are traded in local markets. Land is the pivotal productive resource, the principal source of subsistence goods and cash, and is in short supply on account of population growth on a finite land base and rising prices for cash and good crops.

Land is highly contested between elders and senior youth (Ifeka 1997). It is less usual for a young man to quarrel about land or to challenge an older man because he would be left standing alone before the assembly of respected older men. (Young youth are aged 15–25, senior youth are 25–35 or 40 years, and elders are 35 years old and upwards.) Men are allocated to these social categories on the basis of physical age, reliable performance of duties on family and village committees, being married and having children, and a reputation for being a solid provider. Paternal half-brothers of the same age category (elder/senior youth), for example, will often clash over whether a disputed plot is 'general' or family land (*si kiku bene*) held under customary law, or whether it is 'personal' land (*esi yi*) inherited from a father or father's brother and owned exclusively by the claimant as private property. Men struggling to snatch a plot from an incumbent farmer argue that the land in question is held under customary (socially inclusive) law and that all 'brothers' are entitled to its use for their families' subsistence and benefit. On the other hand, men seeking to hold on to a plot argue that they own it under the Western (socially exclusive) law of private property; no other 'brother' is entitled to its use without their agreement. Whether they claim to be closely or distantly related, contestants frame conflict between customary inclusive and Western exclusive land rights through the social relations of patrilineal kinship and common descent from an eponymous founding ancestor. There are two reasons for this. First, most farmers are smallholders exploiting land located on village territory defined in Beri's genealogical charter as owned by all male descendants of the common eponymous ancestor. Men rely on patrikin and age-mates for labour assistance (only the largest cocoa farmers can afford to hire wage labour). Men claim with pride that 'Beri is one', cultivating its own land on cleared land bounded on all sides by five neighbouring villages. Understandably, land disputes are articulated in terms of social relations between patrikinsmen. Secondly, smallholders rely on their own labour and that of their patrikinsmen and age-mates, dependence on the former being reflected in the reality that patrikin contest land. Though youth seldom publicly clash with an older kinsman over farm or bush land, this is because they know they would alienate elders who—in the longer run, when they are older and have to be accorded greater respect—could approve a claim against a relative.

Men contest land by invoking one tenure regime or the other. Some land disputes continue for two generations, but these days men and their households refrain from dividing into as many villages as there are extended families because 'we share one blood' and 'are as one'. Public views thus situate intersecting tenure regimes and associated political economies and social identities (i.e. elder and young civil servant) in relation to the customary authority of Beri's family elders and spiritual/clan head. Consequently, the scene is set for laying the blame

for continuing conflict over land and inexplicable deaths at the feet of family elders who reportedly misuse their mystical powers.

Beri's genealogical charter presents the village as comprising the male descendants in the patriline of an eponymous ancestor five generations or more removed from the present generation of young youth. Beri men classify themselves into three patrilineally related groupings they call 'families' through patrilineal descent from an eponymous ancestor. These families are called Batia, Baka, and Bawe, each containing three or four patrilineal groups that our English-speaking informants called 'sub-families'. Though male members by birth of a patrilineal grouping ('of one blood') no longer reside in the same 'quarter' or 'ward', they still cling to the genealogical notion that their village is a united group of kinsmen. Patrilineal values inform continuing social identities as family elder/father or youth/son.[2]

The Batia extended family comprises three sub-families called Ebupe, Ebuba, and Ebuko. Members say 'we are of one blood' (*bi fobo beloh nanke*): some told us, 'we are of the same "inborn blood"', others said that it was 'the red blood inside you that makes you one with the father' (*rifeh nanke*, close relations) and 'brothers' (*ebuauni*). Most sub-families in Beri village proscribe sub-family endogamy and prescribe sub-family exogamy within the village, or wife-taking from nearby villages with whom Beri traditionally encouraged alliances for defensive and commercial purposes. Batia means 'owners of land'. Despite a reputation for suffering the most from family witches and for being the most litigious family in the village, they are fond of saying that they are the most united and progressive family, with the largest number of educated sons working 'out'. This claim is supported by our socio-economic data, as is the popular view that Batia has the largest population, is the least well-endowed in land per head, and has more land cases in court.[3] In the 1990s, informants told us that Batia men and women have been involved in more witchcraft accusations and trials than members of the other two extended families. Youth and elders attribute the contentious nature of

2. Bawe comprises three sub-families, namely Ebua, Ario, and Beguor. The latter are described in legends of origin as the first settlers in Bateriko. Baka comprises four sub-families, namely Kinie, Ono, Begi, Ebuatuo.

3. We were unable to obtain reliable data on what farm sizes had been thirty years ago, but all informants maintained that they have been increasing. Preliminary analysis of our Beri data suggests an average farm size per household (including women's plots, but excluding bush fallows) of between 2 and 4 hectares. These compare with the following: 2.4 ha per household in Umuahia (Iboland, Nigeria) in 1977 (Lagemann 1977); 1.5 ha per farm (26% of all farms), accounting for nearly 60% of land cultivated in Nsaw, Northwest Province, Cameroon, in 1988 (Goheen 1988); 3.4 ha per household intensively cultivated (home-garden) land, Mbalmayo, Cameroon (Shepherd and Okafor 1992).

The 1978 Land Use Decree, by means of which the Federal Government of Nigeria arrogated all land to itself, and granting authority to the states' military administrators as guardians for the Federal Government, play no part in these conflicts. Bateriko, like many other village societies, behaves as if the Decree were non-existent; see Francis 1984.

sociality in Batia to factors other than population pressure on a finite land base or increasing market demand for staple food and cash crops. They say that the Christian god penetrated Boki ancestral religion and weakened the power of the families' gods to protect them from witchcraft. Since the Church wiped out 'too much' of traditional religion too quickly and introduced too many changes ('development') overnight, 'traditional' individualistic solutions (witchcraft) are gaining ground. Witchcraft keeps on growing as respect fades for traditional cults and the collective moral authority of the elders. However, elders also attribute this decline in their 'traditional' mystical and political powers to an increase in spiritual abominations, by which they mean that two brothers shed the same patrilineal blood by committing homicide or by 'killing' one's son or sons. These spiritual crimes invite collective or familial retribution that many men nowadays publicly represent as coming from the Christian god, but which they privately believe comes from the 'small gods' of the ancestral hearth, family witches, and powerful *ju-ju* hired by youth to punish the perpetrators of such abominations.

Witch Event

In what follows, we analyze a witchcraft trial lasting fourteen days that one of us (Flower) witnessed. It is important to note that some youths' and elders' statements as to what was happening each day changed when we asked them, a few months later, to tell us what had taken place. When in doubt we spoke informally to others and compared these statements with Flower's observations for internal consistency. 'Truth' is contested, especially when an ostensibly non-Christian 'traditional' vehicle of conflict resolution (witchcraft trials) becomes an open forum by which youth 'rise up' against their elders, appealing to 'custom' as their authority to attack elders whom they accuse of 'killing' progressive educated 'sons' so that the village is 'held back' from 'development'.[4]

4. See Bohannon 1958, Ojua 1993. The Boki, like the Tiv to the north, were noted in scanty colonial reports for young men's age-sets' virulent attacks on and killings of elders accused of witchcraft (Bohannon ibid.); 'boys' rebellions' were a feature of district officers' reports on neighbouring peoples in Manyu Division, Cameroon (Rowlands and Warnier 1988). In some villages modern Boki youth, including married women (i.e. daughters and wives), continue to engage in periodic witchcraft trials in which they torture and at times kill, by inhumation and immolation, elders accused of sacrificing the lives of their senior or successful sons or, less often, nephews, because it is their turn to contribute a life to the family witch society. Elders contributing a son do so against their wishes as a father. Though they will feel more freedom in substituting a paternal nephew, popular culture (especially youth) believes witch societies prefer a son. Youth, male and female, assume that elders are often witches who engage in tactics intended to obstruct youth's 'development'.

Inexplicable Death

The first, and in village eyes most successful son of the clan head of Beri, In O, fell very ill in late November 1996. He had been progressing well in his job in the state security services in Calabar. However, he had been sick on and off for two years or so; moreover, his wife had given birth to a son who had died aged one year and to twins who had died at birth.[5] His father, Chief O, was attending the coronation of four chiefs in a neighbouring village, but on receiving a letter from a family member, a woman, that In was ill, left the coronation early to return home to Beri. Subsequently it was thought that the woman's letter was the mystical weapon employed by the family witch society to 'kill' the clan head's son. In O died in Calabar on December 1st before he had reached thirty years of age. His body was kept in a mortuary until Sunday December 15th, when it was escorted home by an entourage of mourners from the state security services, Beri youth living in Calabar, and family members. His inexplicable death sparked a major crisis in the village in which certain youth hired *ju-ju* to flush out witches.

Creating 'Signs'

Upon hearing the news in Beri of In O's untimely demise on December 1st, his age-mates of both sexes began to cry and lament. The next day, young youth called a general meeting of village youth. Young men had strong support from young 'active' women, who teamed up with the boys right from the start in a determined effort to exterminate the witches. Youth were angry because they were losing 'good' talents in the family at the hands of witches, whom they believed to be elders or barren women. As one of us (Flower) wrote at the time: 'The division between youth and elders, and men and women, is clear', and is evident in all families. The day-long meeting found close agnates guilty of witchcraft and of offering the youth as their 'contribution' to the family witch society. They held vigil at the O family house that night. The ring-leaders of the attacks on these elders were a young woman from another Batia sub-family and a few male youth of the 'middling' O family (class 2); one youth was sufficiently prosperous or well connected to a generous patron to own a motorbike.

When the youth met, they thought back to signs that might have predicted In O's death. They found harbingers in the words of Mary A, also of the Ebupe family and a paternal aunt of the dead youth.

5. Middleton and Winter (1963) pointed out long ago that the prevalence of witchcraft accusations may reflect profound concern with mortality and morbidity that local health centres cannot cure. Cross River State is currently experiencing an increase in the reported cases of youth dying from AIDS, some of the deceased youths being personally known to us. In O probably died of AIDS, and his deceased infants may have been HIV-positive. Youth are dying from AIDS in towns and villages across the country.

Mary A fell sick in June 1995 and went to seek spiritual healing from a village Pentecostalist church called Mother Church, led by a woman prophet. The 'Blessed Mother', as she is called, is not approved of by most elders because she 'encourages' women's spiritual and moral independence from their husbands and fathers, and in possessed states women are said to 'abort' pregnancies.

Mary soon confessed her sins before Mother Church so as to obtain spiritual absolution and healing. She revealed that she and six others—all seven were from Batia's Ebupe sub-family—belonged to a family witch society or group that was 'killing' young youth whose education and professional 'development' made them precious and valuable to their family. Mary confessed that these witches were planning to kill another youth soon, but said that she had repented and left them. However, people did not believe Mary, so she gave them up to six months in which to see that her prediction would come true. She warned that her family's witch society had tied some youth in the bush to stick trees, and if the community did not take action to halt their plan a young man would die.

On being informed of Mary A's confession and warnings, Chief A, the Ebupe family head, called a general meeting of the community. The Town Crier summoned everyone in Beri to the 'playground', that is, the market square. Mary was told to sit in front on a long bench. She called out the names of the six other members of the witch society, who were summoned to sit on the bench. They denied that they were witches or members of the society. They were fined N1,000 each and one goat; some refused to pay. Mary said, 'They refuse to pay; another event will come to "call" the person.'

Then a year or so later, in 1996, some months before In's death, a spiritual woman, Elizabeth O—also of the Ebupe family, and active in the ministry of the Blessed Mother—prophesied that 'something dangerous was going to happen in the family'; 'they will bring a corpse from outside to their family'; 'a youth will die within the space of one month'. Then, two or three months later, In O died of 'stomach-ache', meningitis, and pneumonia.

Accusations in Private

The day-long meeting on December 2nd found the deceased youth's senior agnates guilty of witchcraft and of offering up his life as their 'contribution' to the Ebuakpe family's witch society. They 'held' Mary A and questioned her. In this, her second confession, she agreed that she had been a witch, but maintained that she had left the family witch society. She confirmed that the following people were responsible for In O's death: his paternal uncles Joseph O and Raphael O, his father Julius O, and his paternal aunt Anna A. (Other names, i.e. of his paternal uncle Pi and paternal aunts Alice U and Mama Akobo, were added subsequently by Anna in her confession, but in some versions the names were added to Mary's second confession.

Young youth then decided to send a delegation of two young men and one woman to a village belonging to another ethnic group. The native priest told them that the late In had been killed by a witch society and that the members were from In's own family of Ebupe. He advised them to call the principal accused, namely Anna A of the Ebupe family, to account. They summoned Beri youth living in Calabar, they and the dead youth's state security service sympathizers playing a leading role in shifting accusations of Anna and her co-accused from words to physical violence and torture.

Accusations in Public

'Active' youth did not consult family elders before they acted. They called Anna A to answer what she knew about In's death, and though Anna denied she knew anything, Ebupe youth summoned her and other accused to the 'playground'. Somewhat disconcertingly, the accused, along with many others, just wandered down to the market square, where male youth tied their legs with ropes and sticks (braces). The accused sat on a long bench in front of the community council, senior chiefs and family elders, youth, and, at the back, women.

The youth did not begin with the witches but spent three hours settling old debts, arguing at length about the fines to be imposed on youth who had not paid fines imposed on them previously for various offences. People murmured that youth's insistence on defaulters paying fines was due to the need to 'settle' the community and achieve a moral balance by restitution, but that 'really' the trial was an opportunity for youth to put money into their empty coffers. Youth repeatedly harangued community council elders for allowing In's death to take place and for general inaction reflected in endemic land disputes and witchcraft accusations, especially in Batia.

Confessions in Public

Anna was the principal accused, partly because she had been found guilty in previous trials of being a witch. About forty years of age, she was a staunch follower of the Blessed Mother, childless in this world, and prone to frequent, late miscarriages—'the lamb just disappears'. She was poor, marginal, and ranked low among the family's female agnates.

Male youth tightened the braces so that Anna cried and yelled with pain. She accused six other people of being members of the witch society that had brought about In's death. Of the seven (including herself), three were close relations (half-brothers) and four were distant family relations; together the seven represent all the nuclear families of the Ebupe sub-family and thus 'united' the sub-family in the spirit world. Those named included the clan head's senior paternal half-brother Raphael. The six denied the accusation, but subsequently Raphael confirmed their

names and admitted that they had had their 'family open meeting' (the witch society) in the house of Chief Anthony A, thereby implicating him. Anna was tortured again, thrown on the ground still manacled with hard wooden braces tied very tight with rope around her ankles and wrists. Young women hurled verbal abuse at Anna and the accused: the boys tortured the accused, slapping them and tightening the leg braces until Anna cried with pain. Then she confessed that she and other members had killed In, and that she had been asked by her witch society to give her brother, Chief Anthony A, who was actually her paternal cousin, though he had been brought up by her father and therefore had become of Chief Anthony's 'blood' and was her brother. But she had refused. Instead she would give out his wealth, as she had done four years earlier, according to her confession in that witchcraft trial. She confessed she had sworn not to have any children so she could continue to sacrifice youth, but claimed that she had saved her brother Sebastian from death. She had allegedly given her womb to the family witch society so that any children she conceived would be eaten in the society. This was her 'contribution'. But she admitted that since she had been with the witch society, she had not given them a child or any youth, but instead had given her 'worms' to represent the children or people she should have given to their society.

In the night the witches were tied up in their houses. In's brother took hold of a gun with which to kill Anna, but was restrained. The next morning, at six o'clock, people started moving towards the 'playground'. The witches whose legs had been tied in wooden blocks were released and wandered towards the 'playground'. People ignored them, without any show of anger. Benches were gathered slowly, tables were placed at one end, and the community council was seated. Raphael and another accused sat in the middle, looking blank. No one talked to them. The secretary read out the agenda after the chairman's opening speech. Speeches were made, subject to crowd approvals, rumours, and disapprovals by young and senior youth, male and female, of Ebupe and the other two Batia sub-families. They were anxious to establish who was the leader and which youth would be sacrificed next. The community council secretary recorded the discussion and decisions taken in his minute-book.

Raphael O, the clan head's senior half-brother, admitted that he was the 'commander-in-chief' of the society and confessed his part in his paternal nephew's death. The clan head had kept on telling Raphael that In 'is not around'. Raphael admitted that he had 'stolen' the clan head's 'heart' (*riteh*, mind) to make him useless, so that he could not protect In any longer and would kill his own son under Raphael's 'remote control'. Raphael was then able to trace In to his house in Calabar and kill him there. Raphael also claimed that once he had the clan head's heart in his possession, he was able to make him turn into a snake so that he killed his own son. Rapael said he had called the clan head to give up his son so they could kill someone very close to them for their sacrifice and that In O would be the clan head's 'contribution'; each would enjoy the part of the 'meat' given to him/her. Raphael also confessed that he was also a member of a society of witches who transform themselves into bats for ease of movement at night to

eat human flesh and remove people's lives. He brought the knife the society used in butchering youth they had killed. After full confessions had been obtained from all the seven accused, they were untied.

Remaining in a group, youth then started to negotiate the fines of the accused. The chairman wanted to move on, but the youth insisted that the fines should be agreed (N1,000 each, and a goat) and paid immediately. Thwarted by the chairman and senior elders, active youth went to the community council chairman's house and returned with a brass bed, which they placed in the middle of a shelter in the market square. Then the community council, acting as judges, named the accused, including the clan head: the fines levied on each were recorded by the council secretary. The clan head was told to enter and sit on the bed, from where he protested his innocence, though he admitted he was a member of the family witch society and said that when his turn came to 'contribute', he had refused to donate his son. But Raphael had stolen his heart and controlled his movements, giving the society permission to 'chop' the dead youth. Debate ensued as to how the clan head would receive back his stolen heart.

The move to restore the stolen heart began when Raphael and others confirmed that there were still other youth waiting for their deaths, 'tied' up in trees. The witches were therefore exposed to the sun, blindfolded, and taken to free the spirits which were tied in trees. Male youth felled the branches of trees where the spirits of victims were 'tied' to save their lives. The witches were ignored. Then Raphael went to a tree outside the clan head's house where the witches meet in spirit. He cracked open an egg, thought to contain the clan head's heart, and rubbed the contents over the clan head's chest so as to return his heart to him. A second egg was cracked open beside the tree and thrown into the bush. While cracking open the eggs, Raphael, who is a poor man, expressed his feelings of being unfairly treated by a selfish brother (the clan head) who did not 'share' his wealth. Raphael vowed that he would not carry out witchcraft again if 'my brother looks after me' and 'gives to me as a proper senior should'.

Resolution

Less than two weeks later, on December 15th, In O's body was brought from Calabar escorted by a large entourage. Calabar youth born in Bateriko felt seriously endangered by In O's death at the hands of family witches. They were strongly supported by state security service sympathizers.

The Calabar youth summoned the witches, who had to repeat their confessions in full (permission was not sought from the elders and chiefs, who were anyway known to be split and to be acting with 'two faces', 'managing' the trial and yet also soliciting youths' deaths as witches). The Calabar youth asked the accused what part of the body they normally ate in their witch society. They said the person who brings the victim will eat the head; if the father is present he will eat the victim's heart, while the others eat the remaining parts. The youth insisted that

the coffin was opened so that the corpse was fully visible. After doing this they told Raphael to chop off the hand of the corpse and eat it raw, as they would in the spirit world. Raphael took a kitchen knife, but other relatives objected. Instead, the witchés in turn kissed or licked the right thumb and the mouth or tongue of the corpse. This was highly objectionable to the witches but was believed by youth to act as a poison oracle, which would strike the guilty through the corpse's saliva, and it would also represent consuming substances in the spirit world (none of the witches has died as yet).

While the coffin was still open, the spiritually senior of the village chiefs, the 'traditional' chief Emmanuel O, made a sacrifice on the dead youth's body with a dead, uncooked cock struck against the corpse's body, as well as with cola nuts. The Ebupe family were asked to eat and drink the water along with offering prayers. They promised to leave the witch society, but shortly afterwards another Ebupe elder was accused of witchcraft in 'killing' another Batia sub-family (Ebuba) brother on his farm. The sacrifice loosened all the ropes that were tying the remaining victims who were intended for sacrifice in trees.

The following day, Monday, December 16th, without seeking permission from the elders or chiefs, 'active youth' burnt the traditional village *ju-ju* or sacred objects (staff, gongs for contacting the ancestors) kept in the 'power house' of Beri's traditional chief, Emmanuel O. Youth searched for the bowl which contained human blood from youth sacrificed by the family witch society. This may or may not be a 'real' bowl. On the same day, other 'active youth' went back to the village they had visited earlier to purchase a new *ju-ju* for protection against renewed witchcraft in Beri for N1,000 (some said it cost N3,500). It was called 'no name' to protect its power so that no one from within the village could control it. 'No name' was buried in three places: in the market square, on the road close to the health centre and at the entrance to the clan head's compound. Unlike traditional *ju-jus* like Lakumbo or Efor, which have become 'weak,' a strong *ju-ju* like this one works for twenty-four hours 'without a break' and is therefore uncontrollable by witches. Anna was made to bathe in the stream after the trial because she had said she did not bathe in the river, making people assume that bathing in the stream might kill someone like her, who was a witch. Water is the special spiritual responsibility of women. As a woman who is childless and a witch Anna was only half woman: she had rejected her womanly duty of giving birth, so water too would reject and kill her. Bathing was Anna's 'poison' ordeal: if she were not a witch she would survive, which she did, though she was exiled subsequently because the community council and youth had found she was a witch anyway.

'Peace'

Three days after In O's burial, the leading members of the Ebupe family swore a family oath against further witchcraft in their ranks. Yet witchcraft occurred again shortly afterwards in the case of homicide by one 'brother' of another (the elder

man was, or had the status of 'grandfather' to his 'grandson'). The agnates were descendants of a common ancestor, patrikin and brothers, because they did things in common and shared extended family property (i.e. land, blocks of forest, raffia, and bamboo stands). They were 'as one', being by birth of 'the same blood', so their identity was represented as being essentially the same. When one agnate shared the other's blood in a quarrel over ownership of a plot of land and a fruiting oil palm tree, he committed a spiritual abomination that people feared would bring death and spiritual retribution to both men and their families.[6] After

6. This dispute first came to the attention of the village land committee in 1994. It had worked its way upwards from the family meeting to the community land committee to the community council. Witnesses at this time were older men who were familiar with the disputed land. From 1994 to 1996, several appeals were made by Mr Ar and his brothers in order to strengthen their claims to land which Mr An contended was his:

(a) The committee recommended that Ar and his brother should maintain the left side of the disputed plot and An and his brothers should keep working on the right side of the plot. This arrangement would assist both parties in keeping to the original boundary without encroaching on one another. (We note that though the various committees act out the part of impartial arbiters—checking boundary markers etc.—the verdict is really decided by bribes and trade-offs. The stress on markers suggests that the parties to the conflict as well as the arbitrators are aware that markers mean little—otherwise, why do they keep on returning to check them? Privatizing land has meant that individuals who are rich in cash income, animals, economic trees, and land get richer because they can afford to give larger bribes and win cases, thus ensuring that redistribution is made in their favour.)

(b) Ar's brother appealed to the Beri Community Council. He said he was unhappy with the decision. The Council inspected the land and agreed with the land committee's ruling. Both parties were fined in cash and instructed that the land was 'bounded' for one month, i.e. put out of bounds, and they were told to stop going there.

(c) Mr Ar then appealed to the customary court, paying a sum of N500 for a civil summons and notice served on Mr An, who paid the same sum. The customary court visited the land and agreed with previous advice that the land was common property of the Ebupe (An) family, but that a portion had been given to Ar; they confirmed earlier rulings on the boundary between Ar and An, and that they should farm the centre of the disputed land, while three persons farm at the top, above Ar and An, and two farm land below them. The customary court also ruled that the land was placed out of bounds and both parties were to desist from going there.

(d) Mr Ar and his brothers disagreed with the customary court order. Then everyone would soon see what they were going to do, they would never leave the land (was this a threat to use *ju-ju* to 'hold' their rival and make him die? There are many land conflicts between members of the Ebuba family, and between this family and others. Land disputes are a potent source of witchcraft accusations, as we recount below).

The peace group ruled as follows: (i) The Ebupe family (An's) would find a girl from another family—the two families may not intermarry—to send in marriage to Ar's family (Ebuba). They will pay the brideprice for such a girl or swap a marriageable girl with another family. (ii) Restitution should be organized by the third Batia family of Ebunko. (iii) An should leave the village for some time and be made to sacrifice a live black cow before he can re-enter. (iv) He should bring back cola nuts to share with the whole village, showing reconciliation through sharing, to 'heal' the violation of the taboo on one brother shedding another's blood. He should hand over two gallons of palm wine, 27 bags of cola nuts, and a bottle of 'hot'.

several abortive attempts a peace group led and witnessed by elders of Batia's three sub-families persuaded both families to agree in writing that the disputed land and its economic trees should be partitioned. Not all the sons of the two men would be allowed to farm there. The agreement thus sought a compromise between the traditional principle of family property held inclusively, in common, among all shareholders, in favour of the modern principle of individual property owned or leased exclusively by individuals. Once signed, the clan head and priests, accompanied by village chiefs and family heads, carried out customary rituals of cleansing. A goat was dragged around the village and then thrown into the bush with the sins of all on its back. A powerful *ju-ju* was then placed at the four corners of the village to destroy any remaining witches.

Analyzing the Trial

At the outset, youth framed the accusation in terms of their customary 'right' to accuse their seniors of witchcraft and to mobilize anti-witchcraft 'cleansing' *ju-ju*. In adopting the cause-and-effect discourse of kin-based society, they invoked ascribed criteria of social differentiation and political inequality with which to structure the relationship between contestants and the mode of conflict resolution. Beliefs in 'family witchcraft' constructed the discourse of spoken and imagined explanations of the youth's death—the reluctance of some elders to redistribute wealth fairly, perceived economic inequality, and their propensity to indulge collectively in acts of witchcraft against their own 'flesh and blood'. Social differentiation by age and kinship thus supplied the identities with which custom 'captured' development.

Youth and elders describe witches as social beings whose jealousy of others encourages them to 'sell' a favoured son or nephew to others in their group. In this respect they are assumed to be overly greedy, 'selfish', and individualistic: that is, witches are accused of cutting down talented youth in their prime, of destroying

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On the first day of reconciliation, traditional sacrifices were carried out, four goats being sacrificed over four days, commencing on the first day with a she-goat being dragged alive around the perimeter of the village. Everyone who had touched Ar's corpse had to touch the goat, thus transferring their pollution. The goat was thrown into the river with all its 'bad things' associated with two brothers shedding blood. On the second day, a goat was killed on the playground (market square) and divided into three parts representing each of the three Batia families. The fourth goat was sacrificed to wash away the blood of Ar's death, make up for crying wives, and keep peace in the community. After the fourth sacrifice on the fourth day, everyone in the village could drink water from the same stream without fearing spiritual pollution from Ar's homicide, eat together, greet one another, and sit down together. They tried to establish the 'politics' of the family witch society—who is 'in' and who is 'out' of the society, who is collaborating, what networks exist, and what is the extent of their influence in the Ebua family in particular and Batia in general.

'development' and holding back everyone else while they aggrandize themselves. Their imagined behaviour violates the collective ethos and supportive reciprocal exchange expected of elders. However, they are still social beings, for they partake of illicit flesh as a family society in the spirit world and do not act singly or in a solitary way. In fact it is believed that human flesh is contributed and blood shed in order to produce closer sociality, a common belief among neighbouring peoples.[7] From the majority's viewpoint, witches wield a negative form of power. In forming a 'family witch society' they act socially, but in 'sucking' the blood of close (junior) agnates their sociality becomes perverted, because it destroys some young patrikinsmen for the benefit of a small group of older patrikin (Rosny 1981).

Witch Sociality

Witches' confessions about what they do with blood reconstruct the patrilineal extended family in several images of gendered pseudo-wholeness. In one popular scenario, senior agnates socialize secretly with others and use witchcraft to 'kill' young nephews or sons, 'chopping' young succulent flesh. Youth and elders say members use long teeth to chew flesh ('meat') which more often than not is transformed into 'Christmas goat' (*ebu akanishu*), so that human flesh is 'eaten' indirectly, perhaps rendering 'cannibalism' more culturally acceptable to Westernizing Boki. Some family witch societies possess 'pots' (*kati be ne etse, ntsebe be ne etse*) which drink or 'suck the blood' of human victims for members' protection and enhanced power at the expense of others. 'Pot societies' place agnates imaged as witches at a distance from drinking blood and so may render 'blood sucking' more culturally acceptable. In another popular representation of empowerment through illicit access to spiritual powers, those accused of witchcraft may confess to 'killing' socially excluded family members, that is, richer, more powerful agnate's sons or paternal nephews, whom they subsequently 'incorporate' in the form of 'blood' that 'pots' drink. Wealthier agnates may be obscured from view but reappear as the 'killers' of junior agnates from more affluent lines (see Winter 1963, Geschiere 1982, Ardener 1996), so that the patrilineal family is socially reconstructed. Conflict within a generation of agnates and between generations is then 'resolved' by ritual reparations involving sacrificial goats and the shedding of animal blood in order to 'cleanse' the offending family of witches and of bloodshed and to replace division with unity—reminding us of Fortes's 'axiom of amity' (Fortes 1969). The case of the murder of one 'brother' by another that took place after the witch trial evoked another image of patrilineal unity, this time one that was ruptured violently by the shedding of blood. One man (Mr An) and his victim (Mr Ar) hailed from the same family (Batia): the murderer was 'moved' by a

7. Similar beliefs and practices are also current among the Anyang and Sankwala peoples with whom we are working too.

family witch to kill his 'brother'. Both broke the ultimate taboo because brothers 'saw each other's blood' (*be ri beloh berie*). Genealogies we collected show how the two men reckoned their patrilineal relationship through a common ancestor. According to informants the common ancestor was five generations removed from Mr Ar but only three generations removed from Mr An, making the latter Mr Ar's 'grandfather'. They were patrikinsmen who did things together as 'brothers' and shared extended family property (i.e. land, stands of forest, certain economic trees). They were as 'one', being by birth 'of the same blood', so that their identity as persons was essentially the same, because the same patrilineal substance (blood) flowed in their bodies. When one agnate shed the other's blood he severed the blood uniting them, committing a spiritual abomination that people feared would bring death and spiritual retribution to both men and their families. Having 'strong blood' (*beloh omoh kar-kar*) is a key attribute of men's social identity which highlights the equation of mature manhood with the holding of respected public positions as chief, family head, council chairman, or land committee chairman. Elders and chiefs eat flesh and blood in their witch societies and become 'strong, strong' (*omoh kar-kar*). Strong blood means that a man will acquire riches, not through the hard work acclaimed by development agencies but—as one of our young informants hinted to us discreetly—through 'the sense of management' of public resources in which elders and youth can "share"'. Family witches increase their power to control the fortunes and life chances of others, including talented progressive youth living out of the village.

Youth's Assessment

A major social contradiction between youth and elders is inscribed in the young Boki man's view that the elders are witches who 'kill' progressive youth so as to drink their 'blood' and gain the strength to turn into bush pigs, which invade farms, eat cassava, and grab the wealth of others. The witch person seeks wealth for him- or herself—some is shared with other members of the family witch society (the elders)—at the expense of the wider society, so that 'development' for all is obstructed.

Is the witch acquiring new meanings as a metaphor for the greedy accumulator, the capitalist who exploits labour for personal gain and accumulates the (tactical) power to control the settings in which others operate (see Ardener 1996)?

Destroying life for 'selfish' reasons is attributed to elders' 'bad heart' (*obeh riteh*), which seeks to deny youth their life and struggle to bring 'development' (a fine name, money, and employment to younger youth; see Oshita 1992). An older person increases his wealth at youth's expense, even at the cost of his 'heart', his life. Witchcraft, the capacity to destroy the living so that their blood can be ingested in the spirit world and give 'power' to the drinker, is thought to be purchased, notoriously by offering the life of a favourite child or young adult son to a family society. Witches live off their intimates-by-blood, that is, agnates of

the same sub-family or, less often, the same extended family. The family is depleted. Each member of a family witch society which is believed to eat 'meat' must contribute in turn the flesh of a senior or successful son or—less valued—a paternal nephew who is 'progressing' in the city, in the formal sector. As already mentioned, some family witch societies possess 'pots' with a narrow round opening through which it (the pot) *kati be ne ets, ntsebe be ne etse*, 'sucks' in the human victim's blood (*beluo*). Perhaps the 'pot' 'sucks' in the precious fluid because human blood is too 'strong' for witches to drink directly.

Youth believe family witches decrease other relatives' wealth (life) by 'enjoying' food in the spirit world, giving them the ability to transform themselves into animals (bush pigs) so that they can 'chop' on envied brothers' and neighbours' cassava and cocoyam farms at night. Their activities in the spirit world reduce opportunities and life chances for other family members, especially those of youth. Witch societies practise direct exchange, often referred to in the physical world as 'giving and receiving' (*nki, embua enkwo*). Every member of a family witch society must take turns to give the life of someone close to them. A close relationship means virtue, worth, value; once a sacrifice has been carried out, members take it in turns to share the flesh, dividing it into portions called 'shares'. Politicians and big men in the material world of the village's and nation-state's redistributive economy do the same. Small men (clients) or followers make their *oga* (big man, patron) feel they may have to impugn his reputation for 'unselfishness' and loyalty to his following (network) unless he redistributes to them some of his illicitly obtained gains in the form of 'shares' (i.e., ten to sixty per cent of the takings, depending upon the client's rank in the political network and his utility to the big man).

Young youth think older men's witchcraft is achieved at the expense of social unity. Accordingly, young 'active' youth believe in the anti-witchcraft detection *ju-ju* they mobilize and that the trials they instigate, which are 'managed' by 'proper' elders, upholders of unity—though behind the scenes some of them are also conniving with senior and young youth—are necessary to 'scatter' family witch societies and restore social amity between poorer, lesser agnates quarrelling with wealthier agnates over the latter's perceived maldistribution of resources. Youth and elders who are not accused of being witches seek to restore unity (*nitsebe ni berie*) between men of the same 'blood'.

Often among the poorest or most marginal members of the village, elders and barren women accused of witchcraft may be 'distant' or 'close' family members. Boki witchcraft is a 'domestic' affair that expresses social tensions between, for example, common and private tenurial regimes, thus tentatively tilting the social identity of fathers towards their moral and jural 'rights' in nuclear family contexts. Constructs of the family witch society re-construct the sub-family in a truncated and socially distorted form. Wealthy elders and influential senior/young youth are almost invariably accusers, so higher status and higher economic-class family members are omitted from the witch 'family'; the latter comprises in the main poor men and marginal (barren) women. In the course of launching accusations of

witchcraft against certain elders, youth puncture the collective silence of authority figures and open up growing economic inequality and the perceived failure of the informal redistributive economy to public debate (*pace* Bohannon's 1958 analysis of similar 'extra-processual' activities in Tiv society).

Contesting Identities

Social identity is highly contested, within and between families, by different groups, notably the politically pivotal categories of youth and elders. Economic inequality is increasing: there is *de facto* privatization of family lands, the emergence of a landless underclass of households, and a class of senior youth who own marginally productive small plots of land. Older men with relatively plentiful land need more labour and so are most committed to the principle of *de jure* common property rights in land and sub-village governance through extended family heads. Married senior youth with non-existent or smaller plots tend to support private property rights and a greater 'share' in contracts, commissions, and the like. They are asserting their right to a greater voice in the 'management' of village affairs so that the community will be protected from witchcraft and obstructions to 'development'. A year later the village spoke of the witchcraft trial as 'the crisis', and to avoid further attacks the elders encouraged the election of several senior youth to positions on the community council and the land committee.

Conflict between Custom and Development

Popular Boki culture interprets the kin-based redistributive polity as dualistic through vivid images of a world divided into the spiritual and physical, but one in which the spiritual penetrates and shapes events in the physical. As we have seen, popular thought images power in a double modality. Power can be achieved licitly or illicitly by obtaining money and flesh or blood, often from closely related agnates in the patrifocal family. Witches—mostly older patrilineally related men, but also a few patrilineally related women—redistribute ('share') illicitly obtained (human) resources through their networks, exchanging family unity for human blood with which to enhance their power to increase their political position at others' expense. Witches use this blood and flesh to give themselves physical strength on the farm at the expense of others and to accumulate wealth by diminishing that of others, that is, by bringing about the deaths of successful youth, the remittance senders, and resource 'gatekeepers' who benefit the village. In this view, some men's and women's access to mystical resources and blood-sucking proclivities diminishes economic opportunities for others in the spiritual and physical worlds.

Conclusion

Globalization theorists contend that local identities and societies are being replaced or homogenized by Westernizing practices of 'consumer man'. However, Robertson (1992) and Friedman (1994), both sensitive to the complexities of world history, deconstruct this broad trajectory. They identify two interpenetrating processes—the universalization of particularism, as in the emergence of the nation-state from ethnic sub-national polities, and the particularization of a universalizing religion, as in Japanese (nationalized) Buddhism (Robertson 1992).

Reflecting on our observations of a witchcraft trial, we argued for a variant of the particularization thesis. Our analysis investigated ways in which customary representations and practices, reproduced by kin-based society and a mixed economy of agricultural production and entrepreneurial capital, 'capture' development identities. We suggested that in the short term, 'capturing' processes sustain 'custom man' and the moral economy of kinship. We proposed a conceptual framework or set of logically related propositions to explain these processes: how may conflict over contested symbolic, political, and economic resources arrest the diffusion of 'development man' at the intersection of the local with the global? A political approach was necessary because struggles for power are integral to conflict between youth (self-proclaimed bearers of development) and elders (guardians of custom) for control over the distribution of resources. Power is pivotal to contesting identities in social contexts shaped by the intersection of pre-industrial social structures and post-industrial international profit networks. Our situational analysis of a witchcraft trial demonstrates the cultural power of kin-based beliefs and practices to structure the discourse of conflict in terms of the 'unity' of Beri men who 'share one blood' and whose elders consented to youth purchasing an anti-witchcraft *ju-ju* with which to torture the accused and cleanse the community of their spiritual pollution. Relations of patrikinship also sustain the discourse of witchcraft which orchestrated the setting so that youth were authorized to hire a powerful *ju-ju* with which to identify and try the accused. Kin-based society still structures men's social identities.

In Beri village, and elsewhere in Bokiland where witchcraft trials erupt periodically at times, with more violence than we witnessed, 'boys' rebellions' shake rather than invert or destroy elders' privileges. Youth know that in the fullness of time they too will achieve a more complete public identity as elders, with the 'right' to command others that a patrilineally based social hierarchy evoking notions of 'one blood' sustains (Rowlands 1986). Covertly, then, even young youth support established hierarchies of social age and descent, upholding their anticipated ascendancy and thus the customary social identities of chief, youth, and priest. In the shorter if not longer term, as MacGaffey (1970) has argued, communities tend to redefine Westernizing (global) identities through local representations and thus enhance 'indigenous' concepts of male personhood as chief, elder, priest, and prophet.

We suggested other reasons why customary identities structure the discourse of conflict so that they 'capture' the values of 'development'. Most smallholders' dependence on Beri village land for farming means that they have to rely on patrikinship in making claims to land. This dependence may also help to account for the popular view that land is the common property of all Beri men but is also owned by individuals—that it is subject to claims under private tenure but is managed on behalf of the village under customary common tenure. Making claims to land through patri-relations may be a factor in sustaining the cultural power of the customary belief in certain men (and women) who live in both the spiritual and physical worlds, and who use these mystical powers to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the wider society. Witches play off one world against the other, engaging in displays of tactical (organizational) power. Youth deploy the discourse of witchcraft as a tactical means of attacking elders for obstructing economic development, and in seeking for themselves a greater 'share' in some elders' contracts, commissions, and business deals. These beliefs and practices, we contend, reproduce the power of kinship to structure conflicts between socially younger and older men in the discourse of witchcraft and illicitly garnered dominance.

The witchcraft trials and confessions one of us observed in late 1996–97 demonstrated youth's tactical skill in mobilizing representations of anti-kin-group ('bad') individualism, as well as their use of these signifiers in enhancing their association as progressive youth with 'good development' within the political framework of the moral economy of collective exchange and reciprocity between kinsmen. But what may kinship, identity, and development also mean? How may representations of 'custom man' and 'development man' achieve new meanings in new locales—ironically, perhaps through association with and subjugation to symbols of non-development, tradition, and the blood of sacrifice?

'We offered a ram for sacrifice yesterday', said one informant. 'What for?', asked one of us. 'For progress, of course. For a blessing of the land.'

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