

THE WITCH, THE ZOMBIE AND THE POWER OF JESUS A TRINITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN TANZANIAN PENTECOSTALISM

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ABSTRACT

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The report discusses neo-Pentecostal gospel, demonology and deliverance in the context of social transformations and economic reforms in Tanzania, via a detailed case-study of a single church in Dar es Salaam—the Glory of Christ Tanzania Church—which displays the conjuncture of a global religion with elements of local ontology such as witchcraft and zombies. It is proposed that the Pentecostal-Charismatic gospel provides the interpretative frame to explain experience of social and economic affliction that is deeply gendered. Further, the deliverance practices are suggested to free the individual believer from the occult forces associated with kinship relations.
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*Introduction*¹

Contemporary anthropological studies have associated discourses about witches and zombies in Africa with production, consumption and new forms of wealth (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997). Witchcraft has frequently been accounted for in terms of moral economy; as a levelling force opposing new material inequalities, and as a force in the accumulation of wealth and power (Geschiere 1997: 5). Alongside the increased attention to witchcraft since the 1990s in African studies, and following the remarkable global growth of Pentecostal churches, another body of research has been preoccupied with tracing the relationships between Pentecostalism, modernity, neo-liberalism and globalization (Meyer 1999; Maxwell 1998, 2005; Gifford 2004; Robbins 2004). A further overlapping theme in studies of witchcraft and Pentecostalism has been their associations with social transformations and kinship, individualist ideologies of modernity and the social obligations of kinship. Witchcraft is a way of conceptualizing tensions between individual agency and accumulation, and the social obligations of reciprocity. On the other hand, Pentecostalism addresses new inequalities in wealth through its prosperity gospel² but also through its ideas of demonic agency (Maxwell 1998; Newell 2007: 463). Both witchcraft and Pentecostal discourses generate social strains and transformations and are generated by such forces.

This report situates the gospel and individual experiences of an independent Tanzanian Pentecostal-Charismatic³ church within the framework of witchcraft discourses, economic transformations and tensions of kinship. It offers the case-study of an independent church where elaborate ideas are presented both by the pastor and the church-goers in their

testimonies of witches that capture people as zombies (*msukule* sg./*misukule* pl.)⁴ in order to use them as their nocturnal labour force. However, the congregation together with its pastor is able to outdo the witches through prayer and deliverance, the power of which brings the zombies back into the world of the living. The returning of the zombies is interpreted in terms of biblical notions of rising from the dead. Although many scholars have discussed the occult in Pentecostalism in general, and although both zombification and Pentecostalism are well documented and discussed in South Africa, the zombie type of witchcraft has so far not featured in studies of Pentecostal-Charismatic demonology and deliverance.

Recent research on the occult in general has related imageries of witchcraft and zombies to historical processes and forms of globalization. Stories of zombies have been seen as imaginative, moral frameworks for making sense of the incomprehensible logic of global economy, of consumption, migration, structural adjustment programmes and of the functioning of the markets (Moore and Sanders 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 2002). In southern Africa, where zombies frequently appear in popular discourse, the phenomenon has been related to the exploitation of wage labour and the encounter between the local and the global, of rural South Africa with the culture of global capitalism. In Central and West Africa connections have been made to the slave trade (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 2002; MacGaffey 1986; Shaw 1997; Austen 1993). Van Binsbergen (2001) has suggested that references to earlier forms of globalization, such as the slave trade or labour, are now used in the idiom of witchcraft to express and contest newer forms of globalization. In Tanzania, witchcraft discourses and the Pentecostal gospel with its demonology and subjective testimonies of witchcraft take place in the context and consequences of structural adjustment to neo-liberal economy, growing inequality, poverty, rural and urban unemployment and the collapse of health care system (also Dilger 2007: 62; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2002: 797). In fact, Sanders has argued that “structural adjustment has provided the necessary and sufficient conditions for the rapid proliferation of occult discourses in Tanzania” (Sanders 2001: 162). In Tanzania, the impact of these structural adjustments is mediated by gender, as the social costs of neo-liberal reforms have often fallen on poor, vulnerable and marginalized people such as women and the elderly through reduced access to money and affordable food, land, education and health services (Kamat 2008; Pfeiffer et al 2007). Furthermore, the economic activities and livelihoods that used to provide subsistence in rural areas now fail to do so, fostering youthful urban migration (Barker 2007: 417).

In this kind of a situation, it has been argued, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity embeds neo-liberalism particularly well as there is certain degree of congruence between Pentecostalism and the requirements of neo-liberalism. As a matter of fact, in Tanzania, economic reform and the proliferation of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have been taking place simultaneously since about the mid 1980s. In the neo-liberal era, the need to operate as an individual in social and economic terms becomes vital and Pentecostalism is said to foster individualism, particularly by encouraging a complete break with the past (Meyer 1998b; Maxwell 2005: 28). This contributes to the creation of free subjects by freeing the believer from the demands of extended kin, thereby facilitating personal accumulation. Pentecostal communities also idealize a version of the nuclear family model that can accommodate a number of the social reproductive demands passed on by neo-

liberal state (Barker 2007: 419; also Maxwell 2005, 2006). But as Barker has argued, this view appears to ignore the increased demands on women that neo-liberal restructuring entails (2007: 419). While many of the features outlined above are often associated with prosperity thinking, idealized family values are not a reality among many of the Glory Christians whose testimonies regularly report witchcraft suspicions of family members along with perceived failures of the family to provide social and material support.

In a recent article, Sasha Newell (2007) discussed the connections between Pentecostalism and witchcraft, arguing that Ivorian Pentecostal churches unintentionally participate in witchcraft discourses. Newell's ultimate argument is that Ivorian Pentecostalism is incapable of severing itself from the witchcraft cosmology that it seeks to transcend and has itself become a form of witchcraft (2007: 464) but in this claim Newell does not adequately appreciate a fundamentally important feature of Pentecostalism, namely its dualist theology (see also Robbins 2004). In this Tanzanian case, I would argue, witchcraft is, first of all, partially constitutive of the charismatic church in question both in terms of its gospel and its ritual practices. Further, following from its theological dualism, relationships to the occult are both *mediated*—through the incorporation of local ontological categories such as witches and zombies under the Christian category of the Satan, and through the idea of continuous spiritual warfare—and *direct*, in that the church openly employs traditional witchcraft cleansing rituals known from occult contexts that are thought to be effective.

The four months of fieldwork on which this research is based took place in 2007–2008. The data consists of participant observation conducted at the services and week-day consultations of the Glory of Christ Tanzania Church, audio visual materials such as DVDs produced by the church itself of its services and recorded and fully transcribed discussions with adherents. To be 'saved' or 'born again' is a transformative experience that structures the life of an individual into periods of 'before' and 'after' the decision to accept Jesus as personal saviour. Furthermore, it is the duty of born again Christians to spread the gospel by offering testimonies of the experience of being saved and of the miracles performed by God in their lives. These factors were the starting point and most discussions were initiated with a rather simple question about what had happened or how the informant's life had changed after being saved. The testimony-type interviews varied in length between half an hour and over two hours and often turned into life histories. As many of them perceive a high degree of secularization in Europe, with the pastor sometimes suggesting Satan's residence in Europe either as the cause or the consequence of the broadly spread Western secularization, many of the people I spoke with saw our conversation as an opportunity to evangelize, 'to plant the seed', and to tell me about the miracles and wonders that God is bringing about in Africa. At Glory, persons claiming to have zombie experiences are also regularly interviewed by the pastor during the Sunday services, with a habitual focus on their experiences in the hands of the witches and on the return back to this world. This public recounting tends to reproduce paradigmatic elements in the narratives and, consequently, many testimonies bear similar elements.

In the sections to follow, I present the key contents of the gospel of Glory Church that comprises the interpretative framework for individual Christians in their understandings of their personal fate in life and that of the world around them. The purpose is to exemplify in concrete ethnographic terms how global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity becomes so effectively localized through incorporating local ontological categories under the Christian

notion of the satanic. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the local manifestations of the unintelligible global economy become interpreted in terms of the occult and strained kinship relations.

Glory of Christ Tanzania Church

The Glory of Christ Church, also identified as the Church of Resurrection and Life, is one of the newer independent Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the Tanzanian capital. It was founded by Pastor Gwajima, a Sukuma who was spiritually brought up in the Assemblies of God Church before making the decision to leave it. As with many other religious entrepreneurs, Gwajima became discontented with the authority structures of his mother church and developed a vision of an independent church of his own making under his leadership. Furthermore, his Sukuma background appears to have a bearing on his ideas about witchcraft. Gwajima studied at a Bible school in Nairobi during the 1990s and later started churches in Musoma and Mwanza but was called by God to Dar es Salaam in 1997.

Compared to many other new Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Dar es Salaam such as Efatha (led by Apostle and Prophet Josephat Mwingira), the Full Gospel Bible Fellowship (led by Bishop Zacharia Kakobe) and the Assemblies of God Mikochei B (led by a member of parliament, Dr. Gertrude Rwakatare), Glory Church receives many of its adherents from among relatively poorly-educated people with low socio-economic standing. Gwajima describes his congregants as 'sick people' and those with problems. The assessment of the low income level of the adherents is further supported by the small number and the poor quality of the vehicles parked outside the church during Sunday services. The church is growing very fast, with an estimated Sunday service attendance of several thousand people; in 2008 the church counted 8,000 adherents, with a goal of 20,000 people by the end of the year. Despite the growing numbers of adherents, the church building has remained unfinished with earth floor, missing walls and in need of extension.

The church has a well developed system of leadership where pastors and shepherds are placed on six different ranks. Gwajima believes that expansion of the church is based on extensive and broad leadership and he has developed a system of training for lower level leaders which is appreciated by many of his followers as an egalitarian gesture and an avenue to social status and rank within the spiritual community. A further feature of the organizational structure of the church is its division into more than twenty ministries (*buduma*) that have specific spiritual, administrative, technical and other such service functions. One of the more important ministries with regards spiritual services is called Talitha Kumi⁵, created to care for delivered zombies by offering weekly nocturnal prayer vigils and spiritual guidance.

Apart from the several-hour long Sunday sessions, services are held also on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Saturdays are reserved for the seminars of the growing number of pastors, shepherds and others taking part in leadership training. Spiritual consultation and prayers are offered during the weekdays by pastors and shepherds on duty. Sunday services start at around 9 a.m. with two hours of praise and worship during which various bands and choirs perform gospel music in order to raise the spiritual sensitivity of the congregants. This is followed by a simple collection of the tithes accompanied by biblical interpretation

of the importance of giving God his due share which, however, never reaches the same magnitude as in churches more inclined towards the message of the importance of giving in order to receive. Pastor Gwajima usually starts his three or even four hour sermon and prayer at 11 a.m. An important part of the service are the testimonies of former zombies that are presented via interviews performed by the pastor. When he has finished teaching he goes among the congregants reading prayers, calling back zombies and casting out spirits from his people. These Sunday services can last up to 4 or 5 p.m.

At Glory, not much emphasis is placed on speaking in tongues or the prayer of repentance; rather, the heart and the foundation of the gospel is delivering people from the powers of darkness in general and bringing back zombies in particular. In their subjective testimonies the church-goers appear to emphasise their deliverance from being a zombie rather than the turning point of having been saved as such. At this church, the prosperity gospel has no significant role apart from rather standard biblical references to the importance of giving the tithes (cf. Hasu 2006, 2007). Here the gospel focuses on the agency of, and destruction caused by, satanic forces and on deliverance practices. As in so many other Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, witches, witchcraft and various categories of spirits represent the satanic as opposed to the power of the Holy Spirit and the name and the blood of Jesus, and are the object of continuous spiritual warfare. At Glory, however, the “complete break with the past” reported in a few studies on Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (e.g. Meyer 1998b) is here only partial as the church has ambiguous relations with the powers of occult.

Dualist theology and the local and the global of Pentecostalism

Dualist theology is characteristic to modern African Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Daily life is seen to be dominated by an ongoing struggle and spiritual warfare between God and the demonic powers. This entails that the success of a Christian can be blocked by demons that maintain some power over the person and prevent advancement. An important feature in understanding affliction, misfortune and poverty is therefore the emphasis on the existence and activity of demons. Deliverance by prayer is designed to rid believers of this demonic influence.

The dualist theology provides a flexible language that is very sensitive to local social concerns and makes it possible to incorporate indigenous ontological categories under the notion of the satanic (Meyer 2004; Robbins 2004). Through such preservation, neo-Pentecostalism employs locally meaningful idioms in talking about the current social problems—talk of spirits is often a language for talking about broader social concerns. This allows the converts to turn their new religion immediately to addressing local issues in locally comprehensible terms. It is perhaps then for these reasons that Charismatic Christianity so effectively deals with people’s anxieties; it takes local beliefs, perceptions and existential concerns seriously and is able to deal with them. Neo-Pentecostal and other charismatic churches have therefore moved close to the experience of many Africans, closer than the missionary churches ever could with their denial of the existence of such agency (Meyer 1998a). Neo-Pentecostal dualism then leads people to devote much of their energy to struggling against the indigenous spiritual world. This ritual activity has the effect of further proving the existence and demonstrating the relevance of exactly that spiritual world.

Several scholars, Casanova and Robbins among them, have suggested that Pentecostal-Charismatic culture has a unique characteristic of preserving its distinctness from the cultures that it comes in contact with, and yet it engages those cultures on its own terms and has the capacity of being local and global at the same time. Generally, Pentecostalism tends to preserve indigenous spiritual ontology by preserving people's beliefs concerning the reality and power of the spiritual worlds from which it has broken away. It is the very struggle against local culture that proves how locally rooted it is (Casanova 2001; Robbins 2004). It is partly because of the dualist theology then that authors have used Pentecostal-Charismatic culture to support both theories that interpret globalization as a process of homogenization and those that understand it as a process of indigenizing differentiation. The literature shows that, paradoxically, the homogenizing force of neo-Pentecostalism is in large part based on its emphasis on rupture and dualism.

The demonology of Glory Church draws elements from the biblical narratives of Old and New Testament, but it also draws from ethnic Sukuma understandings of witchcraft, the complexities of the occult and the numerous spirit categories (*pepo, jinni*) in the coastal areas of Tanzania (Tanner 1970; Mesaki 1993; Giles 1999). Gwajima's general mission is based on a verse in the book of Matthew 10:8—"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (The Bible, New International Version—NIV). Gwajima draws extensively from the Bible to support his views not only of witches but also of resurrection in particular. One of his favourite phrases comes from the book of Exodus 22:18: "Do not allow a sorceress to live" (NIV), and we should not miss the gendered nature of the issue in the biblical scriptures and in contemporary Tanzanian conceptions and practices. As for the description of zombies, Gwajima finds literal evidence from the Old Testament book of Isaiah 42:22. It echoes African perception of zombies as a form of exploitation:

But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons. They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them; they have been made loot, with no one to say, "Send them back." (NIV)

The return of the zombies

Images of zombies presented by Pastor Gwajima and his congregants reflect not only general African imaginations but, more specifically, they appear to be reproducing conceptions of witches and zombies as are found in Sukumaland where Gwajima grew up (cf. Tanner 1970; Mesaki 1993). The public narration of experiences in front of the congregation tends to create a shared understanding of the details and the nature of zombification. There are two basic categories of zombies: first, those people who are believed to have died in suspicious circumstances, who appear dead but whose souls have in actual fact been taken as zombies. The common understanding is that at the funeral of such a person, the corpse is replaced by a log or a banana stem resembling the body and the appearance of the deceased in such a way that the relatives believe they are burying the deceased person. In actual fact the victim has been hidden mysteriously and is visible only to witches (Mesaki 1993: 161). The second category comprises those 'living' but spiritually dead people whose

souls have been taken and who are perceived to be spiritually lost. In these cases there are no claims of physical death. These are the people who give testimony at the church.

Most people giving testimony about having been *msukule* are young women of rather low socio-economic standing. On the other hand, people suspected of practising witchcraft and taking others *msukule* are often intimately related senior women such as the victim's paternal grandmothers or father's sisters or otherwise people of close proximity such as neighbours. As is known, African witchcraft is explicitly associated with the domestic setting, and it is believed that the most dangerous attacks come from within the family (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998; Geschiere 1997). In South Africa, by contrast, the creators of zombies are often unrelated neighbours and there is little evidence that zombies there are created by the sacrifice of close kin (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 289). Comaroff and Comaroff have described zombification as a tension between generations mediated by gender; elderly women are accused by young men of taking them as zombies thereby destroying their employment opportunities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). At Glory, the victims are most often young women with very few exceptions as regards gender and age.

The zombies of Glory have many common features with zombies that we hear of from other parts of Africa: *misukule* are zombies who have been taken to act as a nocturnal labour force for their owners and they are said to be located in valleys, caves and pits (*mashimo*). Most often the former zombies report that they have done nocturnal farming work with bare hands using their long finger nails as the only tools, but some also recount digging for gems or working in somebody's business, as a shop assistant for instance. Being *msukule* as an armed robber is also not unheard of. Although the African idea of a zombie often suggests accumulation of wealth by the witch, the accent here seems to be more on the victimization. Furthermore, many people to whom I talked maintained that most witches are not really wealthy. No elaborate ideas are usually presented about the riches of the witches; rather they are portrayed as exploiters of particular talents such as the self-identified business skills of their victims. The victims regularly state in their testimonies that there is no proper food available for the zombies and their diet usually consists of husks and water. Many also report having been cannibalistically fed on human flesh and blood. The origin of this human flesh is—as a rule—said to be babies who died at birth in hospitals where the witches send their recruits. Occult consumption of flesh and blood suggests the destruction of reproductive process as it is the small babies that are consumed. It is also frequently reported that the *misukule* are unable to speak as the tongue has been cut off. They are thereby unable to give voice to their affliction, a feature also reported elsewhere (Mesaki 1993: 161; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 289, 2002: 787).

Pastor Gwajima has a theory of the nature of human being as well as zombification and possession. The former supports his views of zombies and also explains his views on, and practices of, deliverance. However, he is not entirely consistent with his ideas about the components of human being. At times he uses the biblical concept of humans; that is, that they are composed of three elements, the body (*mwili*), the spirit (*roho*) and the soul (*nafsi*). Yet at other times he seems to be suggesting that human beings are composed of the body and the soul. Regardless of the model, the idea is that it is the separation of the body and the soul that makes the emergence of both witches and zombies possible since the soul can reside both inside and outside the body. The separation of the body and the soul applies to both the victims as well as the witches themselves. Gwajima refers, for

instance, to Paul's visions as described in 2 Corinthians 12:2 as literal evidence of the possible separation of the body and the soul. When the witch takes the soul of the human being away from the body the soul is replaced by satanic spirits as the body cannot remain alive without a spirit of some sort. Consequently, deliverance is a two-way process: the soul must be restored to the body and the satanic spirits must be cast out.

Raising people from the dead and delivering *misukule* are the main aspirations of Pastor Gwajima according to my first interview with him, 3rd July 2007: "The Lord started teaching me of how to raise people from the dead in the ministry. There are people whom you think are dead but they are not dead." Gwajima was convinced that, "We will see dead people getting alive and being resurrected. It is not just *misukule* but people who are really dead". Witches do cause deaths and take people as *misukule* but it is possible to return them and raise the dead by repeating the words of Jesus that he pronounced to raise Lazarus from the dead. Ideas of deliverance and resurrection or rising from the dead are therefore intimately connected at Glory Church:

Those who died in the physical and spiritual world will return when I command. Those who died and were buried in the grave will rise from the dead. They come in the name of Jesus. Those who died will be resurrected. Those who were taken *msukule* will return. (Gwajima in a sermon, 29th July 2007)

The pastor also frequently talks about people who "have died in unusual circumstances" (*mazingira ya kutatanisha*). They may look as if they are dead but they have been taken *msukule* and they work somewhere else. Gwajima believes and teaches that:

People can die in circumstances that cannot be agreed about (...) Human beings are born and they die. To die is the way to go to heaven. But some circumstances of death are strange (...) Witches take a person because s/he does not believe in Jesus (...) When you are saved, when you have received Jesus as your personal saviour, you cannot be bewitched. (Gwajima in a sermon, 22nd July 2007)

Prayers and exorcism are performed for people who are interpreted to have been taken *misukule*. The gospel at Glory forms the general framework of the cosmological principles according to which interpretations of spiritual conditions are made. As notions of witchcraft and possession are the principle explanatory principles of spiritual affliction these are unsurprisingly also the foundation of the diagnosis. The first judgements of the victim's spiritual condition are made by the pastors but a tacit understanding and consensus prevails afterwards. Deliverance can take place during the services, special consultations or vigils organized at the church. At the service the deliverance takes place during long shared prayers led by Pastor Gwajima. The imagery and the language of deliverance draws from the resurrection of Lazarus as in the book of John where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead by calling to him: "Lazarus, come out!" (*Njoo! Njoo!*). The power of the prayer is embedded in the words of Jesus:

Listen to me attentively. Those people who returned from *misukule*; you just utter the word "return, return" and he will return. Why does she return? Because "return" is the word of the Lord. When Lazarus died, he died and was buried. Jesus went to the grave of Lazarus. Jesus stood outside the grave and said: Lazarus, come out! And Lazarus came. That is why we say "come" when we call people from *misukule*. And they come. (Gwajima in a sermon, 1st July 2007)

Pastor Gwajima claimed that Glory had, by mid 2008, brought back at least 150 people from *msukule*.

The deliverance is completed by shaving off the victim's hair. This severs the person from the powerful reach of the witch. The idea is that the witch can take people's hair, clothing or saliva to use them for witchcraft purposes along the lines of contagious magic. When the person is delivered from being *msukule* the hair is shaved because it is said to function like an antenna connecting the person to the witch. Maia Green has discussed the practice of shaving related to witchcraft among the Pogoro of Tanzania, suggesting that the practice was not only meant to suppress the powers of witches but also to protect potential victims from witchcraft attack (Green 1997: 326). When hair of a returned Glory *msukule* is shaved the person can be, and often is still, possessed by spirits which fight against the hair being cut. The shaving of the hair as an act of combating the demonic spiritual powers activates the spirits into the spiritual warfare but when the hair is finally shaved away the person calms down. Re-naming the person serves the same function of cutting the tie to the witch.

The incorporation of local ontological categories under the category of Satan as opposed to employing traditional African ritual practices at a Pentecostal church are logically of a different order. In the latter, the church draws directly from traditional occult related practices thought to be effective while in the former the relation is mediated. A 'complete break with the past' is not really complete as the church draws from 'traditional' practices. Whereas traditional anti-witchcraft practices restore bonds between people, Pentecostal-Charismatic deliverance unties them; Pentecostal deliverance is conceptualized as releasing the person from binding social bonds (Meyer 1999: 170). Here, shaving of the hair is not really a communal ritual aiming at restoring social relations but rather, at severing the individual from the powers of the witch. The power, the name and the blood of Jesus do not bind together families but transform individuals who are joined with the community of believers instead. Breaking away from the dangerous powers of kinship frees the individual from the afflicting demonic influence.

Testimonies of ex-zombies

The overall gospel preached at this church and the shared world views of the congregants provide the framework within which people interpret and conceptualize their own spiritual and social life. As noted above, personal testimonies are part of the Sunday services during which Pastor Gwajima interviews returned zombies about their experiences. Pastor Gwajima usually interviews the victims about where they were taken, what type of work was done, what the zombies had to eat and finally, how it happened that the zombie was able to escape from the hands of the witches. To a varying degree, the narratives include both fictive elements as well as references to real life experiences. The accounts are often rather challenging to follow since they follow the 'logic' of the spiritual realm where anything is possible, and since they defy rationality and logic in any mundane sense. But in essence, the accounts are narratives of victimization; past life that may be perceived as traumatic, regrettable or shameful is thereby conceptualized as the victimized status of a zombie. Recurrent themes and life events with which *msukule* experiences are associated are poor

school performance and consequent termination of schooling. Reproductive problems such as teenage pregnancies and the death of children are also commonly reported events that are connected with experiences of becoming *msukule*. Poor health and the failure of public health care in diagnosing and curing illnesses are further frequent themes in the life experiences and in the narratives around them. An overarching theme is the problematic and strained kinship relations and the perceived lack of social and material support.

In most cases the victims identify the person who captured them; these were mostly women, often close relatives or neighbours. Although the persons were identified I never came across cases of outright confrontations, probably because the wrongdoers lived and were located long distances from Glory Church, often in the rural areas and were perhaps beyond the reach of this discourse. Accounts of witches draw from grisly images where the witches consume the vital powers of humans but more importantly, those narratives are stories about subjective experience of having become a victim. Young women present themselves ambiguously both as victims and as active agents in possession of intimate knowledge of the macabre occult practices of cannibalism. Narratives tell about their experiences of at once having been captured as zombies and as active cannibalistic agents of reproductive destruction. Witches capturing their young victims are often said to seek riches but on the other hand, almost none of them are reported as having been successful (also Niehaus 2005: 194). By contrast, there are reports from southern Africa where young, poor and disenfranchised women make witchcraft confessions at Pentecostal churches. Those confessional testimonies are ambiguous and risky strategies, and claims to power and knowledge. As Badstuebner suggests, “The world of witchcraft is a dangerous world. It promises an alternative and appealing agency for these young women but its antisocial character means that it is too dangerous a world in which to continue dwelling” (2003: 20). At Glory, the testimonies of the young women from the social margins portray them at once as victims, as potentially dangerous agents in possession of occult knowledge, and as saved, born again Christians. Let Neema speak here for many of them.

On 5th July 2008 I was introduced to two young girls, Neema and Mary, by one of the Glory pastors with the idea that the girls would be able to give testimony of the experience of having been brought back. The girls had both been expelled from home, had consequently sought refuge at the church and were living there at the time. Neema was a seventeen year-old girl from Kilimanjaro. She passed standard seven of primary school but did not manage to continue her schooling. She was taken *msukule* by an elderly clanswoman when she was twelve years old and on standard six. She ended up living at the church where she had been a couple of months at the time of our conversation. She was supported by the pastors who helped her with her daily needs such as food and soap. She slept overnight on the church floor with her friend Mary, also a former zombie, whom she had befriended. The girls were only two of the several people who had nowhere else to stay.

Neema’s narrative combined both fictional and real life experiences. According to her, she lived with several other people “under the waters” as the expression goes. From below the waters the *misukule* used to come to the upper world to perform their deeds. According to Neema, the old woman who took her *msukule* wanted to become rich by using Neema in her sugar cane business. When Neema came up from the underworld she received the canes that had been arranged for her to sell. The woman or her child then came to collect the money. Chopped up pieces of sugar cane were sold for 200–400 sh, a whole cane was

1000 sh (0.6 €). Neema explained that the business was good, they made a lot of money and it was her duty to attract customers by using a special potion prepared of hair. And yet, Neema also suggested that the woman had not become really wealthy.

The circumstances as *msukule* were typically cannibalistic:

We ate blood and human flesh. There was a group that went to places like hospitals. Or to cause accidents. If they went to cause accidents they brought blood. If they went to hospitals they took and brought small babies. And we ate flesh. For example, a certain woman may have felt the contractions but then they finished. And then they went and took the baby and replaced it with a thing like a doll.

Eventually, in her real life, Neema left Moshi and came to live in Dar es Salaam. She said she was ill and not quite herself because she had already been taken (*msukule*): “My soul was ill”. She had head ache and chest pains and she was brought to Dar es Salaam to seek treatment. She was taken to hospitals and given medication without results. Then her brother heard that there was a church where people were raised from the dead and where people returned from *msukule*. Her brother said that they should go there so that she might be prayed for; maybe she would be cured and get well again.

Neema described how, one day in the land of the witches, she heard somebody calling her name from afar. Neema wondered to her friend down there why somebody was calling her. The friend told her to be quiet since they were forbidden to talk; everybody was supposed to remain quiet and do her work. Neema remained quiet but she still heard the voice. She heard the voice calling her: “Neema come, Neema come!” Then she saw a white person resembling Pastor Gwajima. That person came and took her hand and said that it was enough of tormenting for Neema and that it had to stop. She then unexpectedly found herself at Glory Church. At the beginning she was possessed by spirits (*mapepo*), but she was prayed for and since that day she has not had headache any more, neither has she had pains in the chest.

Since Neema’s relatives drove her away she prayed to God that he would show her the way. None of the relatives came to see Neema at the church. She explained that she used to live with her brother in Dar es Salaam but the brother kicked her out after she had been brought back from *msukule*. The brother’s family then started calling her *msukule* with disdain and returned her to Moshi. But she was rejected even in Moshi at her paternal home where the family tried to force her to go to a medicine man (*mganga*). Everybody called Neema *msukule* and her father did not want to see her.

Neema was ‘saved’ when she was delivered. God saved her from the place where she was suffering by bringing her back to the world. She received Jesus as her personal saviour and wanted to serve God. She saw a clear difference in her life as compared to what it was before. Earlier she was ill all the time and had no direction in her life. Now she had received Jesus and was not ill any more. She had joy in her life as well as direction. She was taken when she was still at school and now she wanted to continue her education.

Neema was somewhat hopeful about her future but the reality was that she was living at the church with very little education, no work at all and no human resources in the shape of functioning support networks formed by the kinsmen

Conclusions

The gospel preached at Glory Church that draws elements from many different sources offers a cosmological framework within which to interpret spiritual, social and economic affliction in a meaningful way. Through its dualism and the idea of spiritual warfare, the Pentecostal-Charismatic gospel is able to integrate the local cosmological principles under the Christian category of the satanic and deal with people's afflictions in a locally meaningful way. Among the young women, narratives of zombification are articulated in circumstances where kinship networks have failed to offer adequate support in making ends meet. In this setting, such accounts are commentaries about the nature of kinship bonds, perceived social obligations and individual aspirations. Zombie imageries are diagnostic of the predicaments of urban life by reference to the exploitation of rural kin in a situation where neither the rural communities nor the urban economy are able to provide the youth with employment, income or visions of future. The testimonies of the poor, uneducated and disenfranchised women are ambiguous strategies as well as claims to status; in the spiritual community of fellow believers they are attempts to transform marginal positions. Pentecostal-Charismatic discourse is a product of strains created in extended family ties by social and economic transformations, while at the same time that discourse and its related practices further contribute to such processes. Whereas traditional anti-witchcraft practises aim at restoring the social bonds and relationships between people, Pentecostal-Charismatic deliverance frees the individual from the dangerous powers of kinship by way of deliverance from the demonic influence and by joining the person to the spiritual community of believers. At Glory, I have suggested, narratives of witchcraft and zombies are gendered commentaries on, and reactions to, the consequences of neo-liberal economic reforms, growing inequality, poverty and unemployment. Both Pentecostalism and witchcraft deal with these; social tensions and pressures caused by economic reforms are expressed in the idioms of Pentecostalism and witchcraft. Witchcraft discourses speak to tensions between individual motivations and social obligations. It is precisely this tension between the individual and the family that is addressed also by Pentecostalism (Meyer 1999: 207).

NOTES

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² For the foundations of prosperity gospel see for example Gifford 2001.

³ The history of Pentecostalism is usually divided into three periods: The first wave, so-called classical Pentecostalism, started at the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of the Pentecostal movement and beginning with the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. The second wave took place during the 1960s as the Charismatic movement spread throughout mainline Protestant denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic Church. The third wave, comprising independent Pentecostal-Charismatic churches like the one featured in this report, started during the mid 1980s and continues until today. I follow here the broad classificatory understanding of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity which suggests that what is shared in the broad variety of churches is the emphasis on the importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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⁴ *Masukule* is the term used in Sumbawanga and Handeni areas. *Ndondocha* is the expression used in coastal areas and *ng'witunga* in Sukumaland (Mesaki 1993: 161). Linguistically speaking, the term *masukule* appears to refer both to the victim and the place itself, that is, the place among the witches where the victims are taken.

⁵ The Talitha Kumi Ministry takes care of the spiritual needs of those who have been returned from the captivity of the witches. *Talitha kumi* means "Arise, little girl" and is a command ascribed to Jesus when he resurrected a child who was thought to be dead by her family—Mark 5:41 (NIV): "He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha koum!' (which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!')"

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NEWS

researchers, including William Twining and John Bowen, as well as practitioners from Finnish Government offices to join discussions. The working group will be an integral part of the CoE's undertakings during its next three-year period of functioning and welcomes input from scholars working in the field globally. It is obvious that normative pluralism poses a significant challenge to globalisation and should be a major concern of any research institution that studies globalisation. Technological and economic unification through globalisation has been coupled with a similarly powerful but opposite move in the cultural side towards normative pluralism: the 'shrinking of the globe' has often generated cultural and normative fragmentation, not unification.

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