MOLOI GA A NA MMALA (A WITCH HAS NO COLOUR): A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDY OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY in the subject RELIGIOUS STUDIES at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 2000
KEY WORDS IN THE THESIS

DECLARATION

Student number: 297-414-2

I declare that *MOLOI GA A NA MMALA (A WITCH HAS NO COLOUR)* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DR. S T KGATLA

DATE

24 NOVEMBER 2000
SUMMARY

Witchcraft discourse in South Africa has increasingly permeated all social structures, thereby becoming a real threat to the process of reconstruction and development. The neglect of witchcraft accusations and their resultant consequences can cause the country to lose all it gained as a result of the liberation struggle. In this study I examine the historical developments of witchcraft accusations around the world in general, and in South Africa in particular as well as the threats they pose to society. I analyse five broad areas:

1) The inborn tendency to scapegoat; jealousy; and the role religion plays in the escalation of these problems;
2) The African worldview and its consequences on interpersonal relationships;
3) Colonial and missionary attempts to suppress the African worldview;
4) Ways and means of containing the conflicts arising from the witchcraft problem; and
5) Summary of findings.

The research was occasioned by the untold suffering victims of witchcraft accusations have to undergo in the three Northern Provinces of South Africa. Because of the cruelty and misery such accusations cause the poor people of these rural provinces urgent attention is needed to contain them, especially since such accusations have not diminished despite all governmental efforts to curtail them. At the centre of witchcraft accusations there are stress, hatred, vindictiveness, and aspirations to become famous. The fear that one may be victimised by either being accused of witchcraft or being bewitched is very real even today. The relevance of the study is apparent when one considers the feelings of helplessness that paralyses the opponent of this carnage, such as government and the churches.
A number of resources should thus be employed to counter would be put into it. This threat which is aggravated by the abject poverty prevalent in the rural communities of the three Provinces. The prevailing conditions of abject poverty play a definite role in the creation, promotion and escalation of the scourge. Policy makers should therefore have clear grasp of the extent to which poverty has influence on society in any effort to contain witchcraft accusations.

I conclude the study by recommending transformational paths to the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and other Community Leaders to follow in attending to improve the lot of the poor. This is done by highlighting ten findings that emerged during the study. The findings were the result of analyses of archival records, literature and case studies on witchcraft accusations.

Because the subject of witchcraft is so wide and emotive I have employed several sociological and anthropological theories to cover as wide a field as possible. The incorporation of so many theoretical approaches into the study presents on interpretive and analytical explanation of the causes, effects and containment of witchcraft accusations. The overall conclusion is encapsulated by the title of the study Moloi ga a na mmala (A witch has no colour). A witch remains unidentifiable, but witch-hunters and sniffers know how to identify their witches. Although the process remains paradoxical, it is practised on a daily basis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for the role they played in the conception and production of this work. The list is inexhaustible, but I have to single out The South African-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) who gave a grant for the study of witchcraft accusations in South Africa. This grant by the Dutch Ministry of Education benefited me as well as a number of students from the Departments of Psychology, Religious Studies and Sociology at the University of the North.

During my sabbatical in 1997 some curiosity nudged me to have a closer look at how social conflicts like witchcraft accusations develop and are applied to their victims. In the same year I visited the Netherlands for the official joint launch of the South African-Netherlands Project (SANPAD). At this meeting in The Hague I met academics such as Prof Gerrie ter Haar, Dr Wouter van Beek and Dr Jan de Wolf from the Departments of Religious Studies and Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University. My idea of building a joint research project under the auspices of SANPAD was met with enthusiasm. I thus express my sincere gratitude to these colleagues, especially to Prof ter Haar who later became the coordinator of the project at Utrecht University. It is through her dedication and encouragement that this study developed to where it is today.

Other people who need mention within the project include the administrators of SANPAD Trudy Kragtwijk (The Netherlands) and Dr Freda Rossouw (South Africa). Among the South African researchers I salute Prof K Peltzer, Dr RM Raphesu, Rev BM Rathete, all from the University of the North, and Prof JS Kruger and G Lubbe, of the University of South Africa. Prof Kruger and Lubbe read the manuscript and gave incisive comments. As such, they played a crucial part in the fruition of this work. They deserve my sincere gratitude. A special word of thanks goes to two other people. First, Ms AM Herholdt who
typed, retyped and again typed this manuscript. She was not only bothered by having had to retype the work so often but was unfairly blamed for my mistakes as well. Prof MJ Cloete from the Department of English Studies edited the work. I salute her too.

The list of acknowledgements would be incomplete without mentioning my students. They had to spend their holidays in cold weather doing field research. More importantly, they frequently engaged in debate with me, thereby deepening my arguments. I undeniably benefited from their dialogue in my classes. The fulfilled the Northern Sotho expression La-hlogo-tšhweu le rutwa ke la hlogo-ntsho maano (an old person learns from the wisdom of the young person).

My family played a crucial role in the study by loyally supporting me throughout the study. They had to content with my books which were spilling from my study into the living room. My wife, Totone, and four daughters deserve my sincere appreciation for work well done.

Above all, when all is said and done, I must acknowledge the grace of God shown unto me. I can testify that thus far God has been with me and provided in all my needs. Glory to His Name.

SELAELO THIAS KGATLA
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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

Kgomo e swarwa ka dinaka, motho o swarwa ka leleme (A beast is held by horns but a person is held by his tongue)

(Northern Sotho idiomatic expression)

1.1 Background

This study is, in one sense, the fruit of my childhood thoughts and recollections. Had I not spent the formative years of my life in the Blouberg Mountains of the Northern Province, I might not have written this work. In those days, witchcraft accusations were rampant in my area and many people were killed as a result of them. When I was ten years of age I sat with my grandparents around the fire at night and they related witchcraft stories to us. My thoughts were saturated with stories of witchcraft beliefs from a tender age.

I first came across a serious case of witchcraft accusation in 1964 when I was fourteen years old. Lightning had struck a girl in the neighbourhood. One of my close relatives was accused of being responsible for the incident. At the time of the incident, the relative was with us, skinning a beast in the kraal. At the divination ceremony, which was convened a week later, diviners were divided on who was responsible. Some diviners implicated a man with a warthog totem but others identified other totems. Members of the community who were present, however, interpreted the identified totem as that of my relative although some of the diviners held a different opinion. Personal preference prevailed to the verdict of the divination. This incident undeniably reveals that a witch is often conceived as such before
the divination process is started and that the process is often deliberately hijacked to suit community preferences. As such, divination merely serves to legitimise the views already held. Although diviners are frequently led to their verdict by the preferences of the majority, this does not always constitute a creditable process.

Young as I was, I saw how the incident utterly destroyed the image of the members of the family. The children in the family were reduced to mockery and became the laughing stock at school, while the whole clan was indelibly stigmatised. This incident marked a turning-point in my life. At that tender age, I already felt compelled that the truth about the existence or otherwise of witchcraft should be determined. When incidents of witchcraft accusations increasingly made the headlines in the 1980s, I knew how those who were affected felt. Among Africans, witchcraft accusation is the worst form of humiliation society can inflict on a person. It is a lethal weapon, which once held against someone, forever leaves that person at the mercy of his/her enemies. Because a witchcraft accusation is usually a well-contemplated and planned effort victims are normally never shown any mercy.

As Westerlund (1991:20) cautions that all scholars are, in a sense, ‘outsiders’ to what they study, I concede that I am also an ‘outsider’ in my present study. My ‘outsidedness’ is constituted by the fact that I have been influenced by the Christian religion in my orientation while the subjective experiences I encountered in my early days further alienated me from my Africanness. But I am also an ‘insider’. I know how people in the Northern Province feel about the belief in witchcraft and can understand the symbolic meaning they attach to it. However, I can also understand the anguish and feelings of helplessness of those directly affected by such accusations. Their language, as well as the words they do not utter, is comprehended by me. According to Kruger (1995:91), ‘insider (participant) understanding’ occurs when the interpreter has sufficient knowledge of the general set-up of a group to which he/she belongs. I am convinced that I have this kind of knowledge. Although I am
more of an ‘insider’ than an ‘outsider’ to African Traditional Religion(s), I still need certain tools to help me monitor my subjectivity. It is not possible to be fully insider even of your own religion since religious beliefs are never static but dynamic. I, therefore, first have to look at the new South Africa, a country that is still struggling to get rid of its apartheid legacy, but that is simultaneously deeply entangled in witchcraft beliefs. Although one of the major challenges now facing the country is economic development, this kind of development is seriously hampered by witchcraft beliefs. This aspect will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters of this study.

1.1.1 Approach to the Study

In this study I have tried to draw the attention of all South Africans and other literate communities to the misery that some South Africans are experiencing. I tried to trace the historical root causes of witchcraft accusations in Africa and drew on witchcraft experiences in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe as well. The unhappy and unparalleled experiences of belief, social crisis and maintenance of social equilibrium must be lucidly assessed and constructed so that South Africans may own their history with dignity. I do, however, not consider the contributions and suggestions I have given as escapist but rather think that I have laid a sound foundation for further research so that we may eventually transcend the evils that still exist in our society.

In addition, my purpose in writing this study is neither to bemoan African religion and heritage, nor to condemn African people and their ways of managing their social problems. My purpose with this work is to demonstrate that despair does not constitute the basis for reconstructing and building post-apartheid South Africa. My intention is to imbue South Africans with courage and commitment to utilise our resources to construct a better life for all in the country. The solutions I have suggested towards the end of the book as ways of
containing witchcraft accusations are far from being simplistic optimism. Rather, they are a hope based on realism.

1.2 Compilation of the Study

I began gathering information for this work in the autumn of 1997. My sources included more than fifty interviews with members of rural communities in the Northern Province. I also consulted more than a hundred articles, books and reports on the phenomenon. At all the stages of my research, I was more concerned with the quality and completeness of my research than with the speed with which I tackled it. Thus, it has taken me a long time to complete the study. During this period some things have changed as I went along, and I had to go back and alter my manuscript to make it reflect the current state of affairs. Even as I complete this work, social changes continue to evolve, and my readers would have to understand that culture is never static but dynamic and what I have presented here are up-to-date facts as of October 2000.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

It is my hope that several groups might benefit from reading this work. First, I believe politicians, policy makers, community leaders, public servants, educationists, and academics would read the documentation which, I believe, will challenge many to take witchcraft accusations very seriously. My belief is that many people involved in community development will find this work useful for what they are doing and be challenged to enter into dialogue with me. I hope a new movement to search for remedies for witchcraft problems in the Province and elsewhere will start immediately and in earnest before it is too late.
Second, scholars of social sciences, particularly those working from religious inquiry, will find my story interesting, while simultaneously providing new opportunities for further research and the generation of new hypnoses and social theories to explain the phenomenon of witchcraft. Finally, I hope that all South Africans will join the social transformational process of reconstructuring a society that is self-caring and prosperous.

1.3.1 The New South Africa

South Africa is the latest country on the African continent that has ‘miraculously’ gained its democratically elected government through a process of negotiation. Both members of the freedom movements and their white counterparts are still puzzled by this miracle. After having gained its freedom, the country and its people set themselves on the road to reconstruction, development and reconciliation (ANC 1994: 1). The country was divided into nine Provinces. But before the country could start the process of removing one layer of apartheid after the other, it turned into a painful scenario of violence. The legacy of colonial and missionary systems manifested themselves in political, economic, cultural, and religious oppression, as well as in the denial of the African world. The consequences of these systems are the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal, squatting and crime in Gauteng Province, and a resurgence of African traditional beliefs blended with witchcraft-hunting, killings and ‘necklacing’ in the Northern Province. Conflicts and violence abound among all racial groups, especially political and religious protest in South Africa. Taxi ‘wars’ among taxi-lords, car hijacking, rape and child-abuse are reported daily in the media. Economic deprivation, racial subjugation and socio-religious stereotypes are at the centre of all conflicts in the country. The legacy of self-hate and destruction is manifested on all societal levels. The country has established itself as the crime capital of the world (The Star 1999/12/21), while the Northern Province is the seat of a unique forum of crime, namely witchcraft killings.
The Northern Province - an area stretching from Hammanskraal (north of Pretoria) in the south to Messina in the north - comprises the poorest and most illiterate part of the population of the nine Provinces. The effect of this dire poverty is an abundance of societal conflicts. As the dust from the apartheid struggle is settling down and people are trying to reconstruct their lives, witchcraft beliefs and their related killings are on the increase. After the demise of apartheid the main causes of violence among the predominantly rural people of the Province are social tensions orchestrated by utter poverty, a sense of hopelessness and despair, and conflicting belief systems. As a result, taxi-wars have become an economic problem while witchcraft and witchcraft violence have emerged as serious religious problems in the Province. Taxi-wars are the results of feelings of unsafety about economic survival, frustration, social crises fuelled by supernatural beliefs, and the fear of death. It can be assumed that witchcraft and taxi-wars have escalated to the point where they have become of national concern in the Province. For the sake of this study, however, I intend limiting my discussion to witchcraft. This problem is vividly captured by Wroughton of Citizen News (28 February 1995):

When thunderstorms roll around the normally-parched hills and dusty valleys of the Northern Transvaal, the witch-hunters emerge. The urges to search for those who are skilful enough to manipulate natural forces continue to escalate, despite the formation of police units especially established to combat it.

People mostly affected by this carnage are the poor, the illiterate, women, the elderly, and outcasts of the society. If it, for instance, thunders these categories of people live in fear of being pointed out for being responsible for the lightning. If a mysterious death occurs, this group of people hide in their huts in fear of being sneaked out by diviners. For those who belong to these categories, it is indeed a prestige - and favour - not to be labelled as witches by those who point out witches - especially if belonging to the poor, elderly, unemployed, weak, and defenceless groups. As a result of the escalation in witchcraft accusations and
killings, violence has become a concern in the Northern Province. In 1995 the Province in more than 500 people was tried in Kangaroo courts and hacked or burnt to death as a result of witch-hunting (Kgatla 1995:1). In the same year more than 4 500 people (Kgatla 1995:54) were left destitute and homeless as their traditional huts were set alight. According to police records of 1998, 694 cases of pointing out a person as a witch were reported in the Province. The causes of witchcraft killings are partly political and partly religious. The killings are political in the sense that the necklace method used against the first political victim, Maki Sekhosana in Duduza, near Nigel in 1985, is being re-employed. Like many witchcraft victims, Maki Sekhosana was suspected of being a police informer after a mysterious death in the township (The Sowetan, 22 February 1997). These killings are also religious because witchcraft is part of a religious quest for transformation, so these killings serve as direct warnings to those who supposedly ‘practise’ magical power against innocent people. Moreover, ‘comrades’ are trying to warn the ‘supposed witches’ that street justice will take its course if they do not desist from their evil practices. The people know that the wages of the practice of witchcraft is death.

This study was occasioned by the social crisis which witchcraft-killings and the banishment of people from their homes had caused by the 1990s. The phenomenon is disastrous to any form of economic development of the region. In addition, the labour pains of the political transition from the apartheid rule to a democratic order in South Africa and the expectations aroused by politicians are partly responsible for the carnage. The quest for freedom was laborious and bewildering. Expectations, anxieties, contradictions, frustrations, and nostalgia for traditional religious beliefs soon gave birth to aggression which found expression in religio-political violence which manifested itself in a stereotypical scapegoat. Despite these obstacles, the South African society will have to reconcile the past with the present to create a secure future for all its people. In the process of shaping the future, social crises that have developed and occasioned mysterious persecutions, such as witchcraft-
hunting in the Northern Province, need to be analysed and unravelled because a future characterised by prosperity, an abundance of food and security, is dependent on a society free from pseudo beliefs and their resultant injustices.

The relevance of this study is situated in the ambiguous socio-political epoch through which the country is passing. The MEC for Security and Safety of the Northern Province, Advocate Seth Nthai called upon the churches to help contain witchcraft-killings, while the Northern Province Council of Churches' programmes to address the crisis and the keen interest of the Institute for Contextual Theology in this subject, underline the relevance of the study.

Addressing a rally arranged to combat witchcraft persecutions in the Province, the MEC for Safety and Security said:

We are convinced, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the church in our Province has failed to decisively play its role in rooting out the killings related to the belief in witchcraft ... We would like to take this opportunity, to challenge the church to make efforts to fulfil its historic mission, and embark on vigorous programmes aimed at educating our people and saving them from the belief in witchcraft which belongs to the dark ages. If the churches can join hands together with the aim of eradicating witchcraft killings, in no time at all, these killings would disappear from the face of our Province [sic] (MEC:1994).

Statements from government officials, such as this by the MEC of Safety and Security, cause serious concern. It would appear that the Provincial government does not have any tangible approach to the occult except the traditional colonial and missionary approach of negation of the African belief system. To the colonial and missionary establishment the appropriate way to deal with witchcraft beliefs was to suppress them by ruthlessly punishing those expressing such views. These are evidenced by the plethora of Witchcraft Suppression Acts of 1886, 1891, 1895, 1904, and 1957. It is clear that the present government, however keenly it may desire to repeal these seemingly oppressive laws, cannot do so because the
carnage cannot be contained, not even by employing such oppressive laws. To repeal them will mean opening the gates of hell on the community.

The church in the Province is equally confused. Political rhetoric denouncing and condemning the belief seems the only source from which churches get a sense of how to respond to the carnage (Kgatla 1996:1). Churches, on the whole, are for the first time confronted by the African religious belief system that engaged the colonial authority and missionary Christianity. Traditionally, the only way they had to respond to the belief was to negate the belief.

All the factors mentioned above, serve to underline the relevance and urgency of this study. New ways of responding to and containing the carnage should be explored and found. The study aims at not being merely another academic exercise, but a study that will recommend concrete steps to create a society free from violence, a society geared towards the process of self-sustenance and freedom.

Currently, both community leaders and traditional healers are entrapped in a state of uncertainty since existing witchcraft acts in the country are perceived as preventing them from doing anything about the problem and yet the communities are expecting them to do something. At present comrades take the law into their own hands and apply street justice to their victims, thereby deliberately and maliciously hurting innocent people.

1.4 Problem Statement - “Moloi ga a na mmala”

“Moloi ga a na mmala” is a Northern Sotho proverb which literally means “A witch has no colour” (Rakoma 1978:201). In other dialects of the Province, like those spoken in Mapulaneng and Phalaborwa, the idiomatic expression used is “Moloi ga a na lenaka” which
literally means: “A witch has no horn” (Niehaus 1995:14-15). These two idiomatic expressions have the same meaning: “A witch is unidentifiable”. The symbolic meaning is embedded in the way people identify their animals. One group identify their beasts by their colour, horns or by marks made on their ears. But because a ‘moloi’ is a person, he/she does not have a colour or horns by which he/she can be identified. Natural signs, like the colour or horns, are thus employed metaphorically. Similar expressions, such as the one used in the opening sentence to this study: “Kgomo e swarwa ka dinaka, motho o swarwa ka leleme” (“A beast is held by horns but a human being is held by his/her tongue”), here mean that a person is identified by what he/she says and not by external features. People can only determine whether a person is guilty or not by the evidence he/she has led. But the image of a beast is used to reveal the hidden meaning.

It thus seems appropriate to explain the implication of this Northern Sotho expression from the onset. Our understanding of this expression will eventually help us demarcate an area within which witchcraft accusations are made and determine whether the new wave of killings of the 1990s fell within the traditional African practice. “Moloi ga na mmala” means a witch or an evil person is unknown until discovered after he/she has committed a crime. This implies that one may live with a witch for many years without realising it because a witch is not like an animal which is identified by its horns or colour. In the case of identifying a witch one needs a witchcraft incident and an expert to sniff out the witch. The implied meaning here is that a person is not guilty until proven otherwise and a person with evil intentions is not discovered until he/she has committed a crime. Another idiomatic expression used to denote the same meaning is: “Mariri a tau a ka ntle a motho a ka gare”. (“A lion’s hairs are visible but a human’s hairs are inside his body”). One may identify a lion by its hair and become aware of the danger facing one well in advance but that cannot be said about an evil person.
Some of the witchcraft identification processes and killings taking place in the Northern Province violate this norm. Witchcraft beliefs are held by almost all African people - Christian or not. Traditionally witches were identified through divination methods, tried, expelled or even killed for more serious offences. Efforts were made not to kill people at random as is now the case with the Kangaroo courts used by the 'comrades'. At present anyone accused of witchcraft is summarily tried and killed without observing any extenuating circumstances. The unfairness of this practice constitutes one of the reasons that make this study imperative. The witch is no longer identified by his/her 'colour' or 'horn', but by other unconventional means such as jealousy, hatred and pointing. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

In this study I have distinguished three types of witchcraft accusations in the Province: the lightning type which is prominent in the high-lying savanna-plains of the former Lebowa homeland; the ritual/muti murders occurring in the forests of the former Venda homeland; and the myriad of witchcraft accusations in all three homelands including Gazankulu (Commission 1996). The focus of this study is on the two types occurring in all three former homelands which can be said to be witchcraft proper. Since ritual murder is a straightforward murder, although motivated by a belief in the magical power derived from human parts, which is punishable by law so that perpetrators can successfully be prosecuted in terms of Western laws, I am not paying attention to it in this study.

The study is limited to the Northern Province and its main focus is witchcraft beliefs. Attention is also given to what had happened in the neighbouring states (Zimbabwe and Namibia) regarding this belief immediately after independence in these two states. The purpose of this limited survey is to ascertain whether emancipation from a colonial yoke has an influence on the resurgence of African beliefs previously suppressed.
Assertions by political leaders that 'killings of people suspected of practising witchcraft in the Province are still backwards and trapped in beliefs belonging to the dark ages' (The Star, 7 March 1995) do not make any impression on the people who believe in the phenomenon of witchcraft and those who have obtained facts about it from elsewhere. People who believe in witchcraft question the intelligence of black leaders who deny its existence, wondering how educated blacks can expect them to tolerate outcasts of the community who are bent on killing innocent people for the pleasure of it. The logical consequence, accordingly, is that evildoers should be eradicated from the society so that the society may experience 'salvation' and tranquillity.

It is thus regarded as sheer foolishness and irresponsible behaviour that ordinary persons who have been influenced by Western education would refuse to understand how notorious witches are to the community, especially to those members of the society who believe that they are being threatened by occult practices. Communities plagued by witches regard as the only solution to stop the practice steps to deter witches from their practice by putting them to death. These people believe that witches are spurned on by malevolent motives to indulge in practices that are detrimental and destructive to their fellow human beings. Witches are thus declared the worst enemies and as such to be hunted out wherever they might be hiding and be brought to justice. In the eyes of many black people in the Northern Province witchcraft is a reality rather than a superstition. Despite rigorous provincial and church campaigns against witchcraft it has remained a persistent reality and threat in the minds of many black people, so that many people are prepared to die for their belief in witchcraft. Even those who are suspected of witchcraft do believe in its existence although they cannot understand why they are suspected of witchcraft instead of their enemies.
1.4.1 Delineating the Problem

This study follows a qualitative approach, an approach which attempts to generate an explanatory theory of causative factors of witchcraft accusations. I have, therefore, ventured to undertake an exploratory study aiming at investigating and explicating the central concepts of the phenomenon of witchcraft in the Northern Province. The following two indicants serve as illustrations of the occurrence of witchcraft beliefs in the Northern Province.

The two cases are taken from the report of the Commission appointed by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Safety and Security for the Northern Province, Advocate Seth Nthai. On 17 March 1995 the MEC for Safety and Security for the Northern Province appointed a Commission of Enquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murder. The Commission submitted its findings to the MEC in July 1996. Some of the most gruesome witchcraft cases reported in it are HA-MPOFU WITCHCRAFT-HUNT: STATE v BOBBY MPILO & OTHERS. VENDA SUPREME COURT CASE NO CC23/91 and the still pending WITCHCRAFT CASE AT THE PIETERSBURG MAGISTRATE’S COURT (COMMISSION REPORT 1996:121). In order to give an idea of the nature of the problem, I provide the following brief summary of the main events of the two cases:

\[ a) \quad \text{Main events of the first case} \]

On the afternoon of 20 March 1990, a group of young men gathered at the Mpofu sport-field where what started out as a soccer practice session turned into a big gathering. It evolved into a meeting to speak about witches and their trade in the community. A list of suspected witches was subsequently compiled and the names of MN Munyai (old-age pensioner), M Mulaudzi (old woman) and M Mufamadi (elderly woman) were among those identified as witches in the village. The mob fortified itself by singing comrades’ ‘freedom’ songs which
served as a warning to other young people to join the gathering to avoid the consequences of not partaking in a 'just' struggle.

The resolution taken at the meeting was to kill the three persons mentioned above. The group, consisting of approximately one hundred young men, proceeded to the house of the first suspect. As the victim was not at home, they set all his huts alight before proceeding to the next victim, M Mulaudzi, who was at home. Before she could say anything, she was 'greeted with hails of stones' and her huts were set alight. She died of the wounds caused by the stones and the blaze from her burning huts. Her remains were reduced to ashes.

As the last victim was not at home, both her huts were set alight and destroyed completely. At the time the Commission compiled its report nine of those young men were serving jail sentences ranging from five to fifteen years. In the eyes of their peers they were, however, regarded as heroes who were jailed for having executed a successful mission.

b) Main events of the second case

On March 1994, at a certain village called Dibeng in the former Lebowa homelands, a certain Marara Mabuela, aged 70, was struck by lightning. The incident led to the villagers taking a decision to gather and discuss the way forward. On the afternoon of the meeting eight traditional healers were summoned to identify the culprit. The diviners were called in one by one to sniff out the responsible witch so that they could not influence one another. The civic leaders made this arrangement without giving reasons for their decision. The civic leaders also appointed a secretary who recorded what each diviner said. At the end of the process the results were recorded as follows:

- Three of the diviners said that their bones did not see anything;
- four said that their bones showed a Lemba woman from the Venda tribe; while
the last diviner, Ms Kgosiyaka Mohlake, said her bones revealed as the culprit one of the traditional healers on the panel, Mr Johanes Mpai.

Without taking the other predictions into consideration the group stoned Mr Mpai, set him alight and burnt him to death. After this incident, the Commission stated that in this case the divining bones were unreliable because they were not unanimous. Second, the principle of democracy was not observed when it came to the divination. The majority opinion was completely overruled by the outcome of one ‘female’ diviner. The rivalry between Ms Kgosiyaka Mohlake and Mr Johannes Mpai seemed to be the ruling motive behind Ms Mohlake’s prediction. Moreover, Ms Mohlake was a foreigner (a Tswana woman). Her role and the outcome of her divination further suggested that she herself was susceptible and that she had merely used the opportunity to exonerate herself.

1.4.2 The Provincial Government

Like its predecessor, the new government had been caught unprepared for effectively dealing with witchcraft killings and cannot at present contain this form of violence from spreading. The present government is as ignorant about handling the killings as was the previous one. This inability to deal with the carnage underlines the extent to which Africans have been westernised and robbed of their own effective methods of dealing with community violence.

The churches in the Province are equally flabbergasted and as such cannot take a lead in addressing the problem. The problem is further compounded by the fact that virtually all black Christians believe in the existence of witchcraft or are too scared to denounce the belief for fear of victimization by witch-hunters. The only alternative for those mostly affected by the belief is to keep quiet or pretend to be in accord with the horrendous methods of dealing with those accused of witchcraft. Silence has become a safe way of avoiding
incrimination. As such, both Christians and believers in African Traditional Religions are not free but are imprisoned by fear. The vocation of traditional healers is no longer credible because of the level of intimidation of the youth. Many traditional healers are approached with predetermined lists of suspected witches for mere confirmation. If they refuse to confirm the predetermined list they may be accused of protecting witches. Because of the prevailing poor economic situation in the country and the over-saturated market of divination, many traditional healers are no longer adhering to their code of conduct. In the traditional profession suspected witches were never mentioned by name. Today the sneaking out of witches is done by mentioning the names of the supposed witches. This practice may be ascribed to the level of intimidation of the youth as well as to economic expediency. According to traditional customs, diviners were prohibited from mentioning the names of suspects because that could cause enmity between the suspects and their accusers. This in itself was an indirect admission that witchcraft accusations were often the results of strained family relations and jealousy. The fact that the mentioning of the names would spark off conflict, confirms that there has probably been tension, merely waiting for the correct moment to explode.

The suppression of the belief in witchcraft by colonial and missionary powers caused a large number of distortions in the role of traditional healers. Currently, both traditional healers and traditional leaders have lost the support of the youth because they are believed to have abrogated their authority by collaborating with the system. The role of traditional leaders in matters of religion and guidance has also been corroded by the previous apartheid government. Chiefs and ‘indunas’ lost their credibility in the eyes of the youth as they succumbed to the apartheid rule either by way of co-option or subjugation. In matters of religious and social concern many youths regarded themselves as leaderless because many of the leaders, like Mandela and Sisulu, were imprisoned. Consequently, many parents lost
control over their children who perceived them as conformist and having been blinded by the apartheid system.

This study, therefore, aims, among others, at investigating the causative factors of witchcraft accusations and the extent to which these factors lead to the killing of suspects. Views have been expressed that failed interpersonal relationships, scapegoating, jealousy, and rumours play an important role in fuelling witchcraft suspicions. According to Krige (1937:263), the most prolific single source of witchcraft accusation among the Balobedu is social conflicts. The relationship of co-wives in the polygamous family also frequently gives rise to witchcraft accusations while poverty and illiteracy can be regarded as important causes of witchcraft suspicions as well. This agrees with the theory of the sociologists, Haralambos and Holborn (1990:191) who argue that conflicts are bound to occur in every society where inequalities and poverty exist.

Easily aggrieved relatives can quickly jump to the conclusion that they are being bewitched if sickness or sudden death occurs when they are still nursing their grievances with their in-laws or relatives. It would, therefore, appear that some witchcraft accusations are the results of tensions existing within the framework of a societal setting. People who are quarrelsome, ambitious, hard working, or competitive and successful are often accused of witchcraft (Tyrrel & Jurgent 1983:61). Extremely poor and helpless people are also susceptible to witchcraft accusations because their condition suggests despair while prosperous situations may in turn cause jealousy as well. Resultantly, conflicts are often inevitable in close families characterised by imbalances and inequalities.

Because witchcraft occurs in almost every society in the world, one cannot discuss all aspects of this phenomenon. I will, therefore, confine myself to the study of witchcraft as it manifests itself in the Northern Province of South Africa. However, a background study
to support the thesis that witchcraft is a global problem is necessary. As a result, I will confine my investigation to the historical question as recorded in the Bible, the Graeco-Roman world and in Europe up to the end of the seventeenth century. Some sporadic references to other places in the world will also be made in an attempt to contextualize this study.

1.4.3 Units of Analysis

The units of analysis are both individuals and groups of people. When studying an elusive phenomenon like witchcraft one cannot rely solely on observation for collating relevant data. The only reliable way of obtaining the necessary information is thus to ask the people concerned by means of interviews and discussions to tell their stories as they experience it, which is not always the form in which the researcher wants it. My pronounced interest is in the individual and group of people accusing and persecuting others they believe are witches as well as in those affected by the beliefs and who are suffering the effects of this form of persecution. In cases of this nature certain individuals are approached for information while collectivities of individuals are also approached to determine the extent to which mob psychology can mobilize people to respond in a particular way. I do not intend endeavouring to contrast individual behaviour with group behaviour because that is not the focus of this study. I thus intend studying witchcraft as it manifests itself as a religious phenomenon both in societies and among individuals.

1.4.4 Methodology

Methodology might be called 'the science of a finding' (Frost et al 1989:1). In this section I, therefore, concern myself with the flow of the study, in other words with finding out more about the social life of black people as this aspect impinges on witchcraft beliefs in the
Northern Province. Method, on the other hand, refers to the strategies or devices that scholars use to comprehend phenomena in the social and other sciences. The term may also refer to the decision we take, at the outset of an analytical undertaking, as to our choice of question and formulation, since that particular choice will be decisive in determining which tools to use (1).

Among the social sciences there are four principal research strategies for understanding the world: experiments, survey, field research, and the use of available data (Singleton et al 1988:7). Every discipline tends to favour one particular method or strategy. For example, physical scientists usually conduct experiments, sociologists most often do survey research, anthropologists normally conduct field research, while historians tend to make use of available data or book research (Gay 1987:1-13). However, all four strategies are important to the world of social research, because any of the four can be used to study most social topics.

Using the aforementioned method criteria, we may derive at different ways in which research studies can be classified. For example, historical research, descriptive research, correlational research, causal-comparative research, experimental research, and exploration research. For the purposes of this study, I have adopted a combination of two distinct but related methods. Although many scholars would adopt one method and use it consistently throughout their research, I prefer to combine the descriptive and exploratory methods. The descriptive method involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject under study. A descriptive research project may involve assessing attitudes or opinions towards individuals, organizations, events, or procedures. Data are usually collected through a questionnaire survey, an interview or observation. Exploratory studies, on the other hand, are undertaken when relatively little is known about something, perhaps because of its ‘deviant’ character or its novelty. Exploratory research includes the category
of research that emphasises observation. When attempting to explore a topic or phenomenon about which relatively little is known, one necessarily begins with a general description of the phenomenon.

The research plan in this study involves qualitative research while analyses of data will be done in the light of historical developments in the belief and practice of the witchcraft phenomenon among African people in the Province. Past witchcraft cases will be attended to in order to shed more light on what is happening at the moment.

1.4.4.1 The Qualitative Research Approach

By qualitative research approach I mean any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). It refers to research about people’s lives, stories, beliefs, behaviour, as well as social relationships and interactions. The requisite advantages for doing qualitative research are to step back and critically analyse situations, to recognise and avoid bias, to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly. Qualitative research allows a researcher to develop theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical and critical distance while at the same time drawing upon past experience, coupled with theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen (Straus & Corbin 1990:18).

1.4.4.2 The Case Study Method

In this study I have employed the case study method as well. This method is not new. The value of the case study method for this study is situated in its discovering the actual situation as observed by adherents to the belief. When using a qualitative research method one is not concerned with the truth and falsehood of a belief, but with what is actually there, whether
it is acceptable or not to the researcher. It would, therefore, be incorrect to conclude that the case studies presented will either prove or deny the existence of witchcraft. On the contrary, the case studies in this study are meant to motivate readers to continue reading further and reflect upon the various aspects of the difficult and ambiguous situations presented and to stimulate them to enter into discussions of those situations.

What then is a case study? Neely (1995:14) defines a case study as a carefully written description of an actual situation or event fraught with ambiguity in which a person must make a decision based upon the information at hand. The most important contribution of a case study is to challenge readers to enter into the experience, face the dilemma, and imagine themselves as the decision-makers but not to theorize or try to divine how the person(s) described in the case decided. The readers are thus called into active reflection of what witchcraft killings do to other people and to seek ways and means of addressing such situations.

1.4.4.3 The Xylophone Model

Explaining how qualitative research works in the study of a human phenomenon like witchcraft calls for careful attention on the part of the student. Chapter Two of this study offers an encompassing description of witchcraft beliefs in various communities of the world. The authentic study of a human phenomenon like witchcraft will undoubtedly fascinate a balanced, careful and reliable observer. He/she will want to be acquainted with the ‘facts’ of the belief around him/her, discover its religious impact on the believers, understand and explain the phenomenon, while also noting provisional patterns of witchcraft beliefs among other the nations worldwide. This framework of understanding can be compared to a xylophone with its five parallel wooden or metal bars.
The first bar can be called facts. The focus of this study is to discover and observe the real world-view in communities consisting of people who believe in and are driven by their belief in witchcraft. People affected by this belief and its resultant killings increasingly want to become acquainted with the ‘facts’ of witchcraft. When and how did the belief originate? Why are people suspecting and killing one another? Even though these questions seem superficial, they are nevertheless of paramount importance since descriptive understanding is crucial in this respect.

To many Westerners the word ‘witchcraft’ may seem to refer to a magical act out there. For example, people who were accused of witchcraft in Europe were suspected of physically performing magical acts. However, this view of witchcraft does not necessarily pertain to Africa, where witchcraft is regarded as a complex phenomenon, by means of which African people link a wide range of other practices and human behaviour. A person may be accused of witchcraft not because he/she was caught while performing a particular act, but because he/she is snobbish, is exhibiting signs of senility or he/she is quarrelsome. To say that witchcraft consists solely of the practice of magic by someone is, therefore, not always correct. For the purpose of this study, witchcraft will be seen as a set of symptoms which people ascribe to others on the basis of relations which have developed over many years and have grown into an interpretative framework. The study thus presupposes wide background knowledge. Therefore, the more we are aware of the framework beforehand, the more we will understand about it (Kruger 1995:81).

The third bar of our xylophone is understanding and explaining. In the phenomenological approach to the study of religious phenomena we are always reminded to appreciate the gaps that exist among those who understand and those who are to be understood. As such, this line of argument emphasises the importance of the awareness that concepts and theories about witchcraft have to be in line with the human reality they are concerned with. The integrity of this approach rests entirely
on the quality of the meeting between religious people on their own ground and terms coupled with the researchers' ability to transcend their conceptual schemes. This kind of understanding is held in tension between the absence of any presupposed sympathy for the people under investigation or any sentimental plea for understanding on the one hand, and the attitude of aggression, debunking, dogmatism, and possessing the truth on the other. Understanding and explaining seek to combine humaneness with an unsentimental insight into human realities in the full realisation that religious people are often extremely arrogant and unjust when studying their own and other religions. We are, therefore, pleading for inherent understanding which should lead to genuine dialogue between the investigator and the people being investigated.

The fourth bar of the xylophone refers to evaluation that surfaces as a result of the discovery or determination of relations between various factors. The observable patterns are seen through the lens of the theoretical framework developed at the beginning of the study. These theories will function at all levels of this study to direct, anticipate and discover facts and their interrelatedness. People's thoughts and actions are parts of the building blocks of their beliefs. This quest for meaning is guided by satisfactory knowledge which is convincing to a forum of researchers by meeting explicitly set criteria (Kruger 1995:95). Witchcraft beliefs may also be seen as embedded in wider sociocultural contexts. A multitude of economic, geographic, socio-political, religious, climatic, cultural, and other factors are at play in developments and expressions of witchcraft beliefs and actions. Questions such as 'Does witchcraft exist?' and 'Who are the witches?' will be analysed and evaluated because witchcraft conflicts are often a matter of failed interpersonal relationships.

The fifth bar is religious thought which serves as overall findings and recommendations to churches and authorities about how witchcraft beliefs could be handled. An insight into the inner workings of religion and its relatedness to the scheme of things will finally be developed.
This xylophone model of explanation and understanding will thus form the theoretical framework upon which this study is resting.

1.4.4.4 Phenomenological and Ethnomethodological Understanding

To understand is to have sufficient knowledge which is convincing to the forum of experts in the field of a study and must meet certain criteria (Kruger 1955:95) while concept 'objectivity' refers to the manner in which any acceptable investigation is conducted. This implies that a researcher of the witchcraft phenomenon should become aware of his/her prejudices. Kruger (1982:36) argues that the researcher of religion should strive after the truth; after valid reliable or adequate knowledge; as well as realism and rationality of faithfulness in regard to his/her knowledge of religion. The ideal is to attain sound knowledge, which is true to its object, able to stand the test of vigorous criteria, and is beyond impressions or mere ignorance (:36). Lastly, phenomenology as a method of knowing refuses to take things for granted but instead insists on penetrating to the core of things. Ethnomethodology complements phenomenology in that it too aims at understanding and interpreting the meaning subjects give to their everyday lives. This is mainly done by means of naturalistic methods of study, by analysing the interactions that the people have between themselves (De Vos 1998:80).

I believe that phenomenology is the most suitable method for the study of witchcraft. This method utilises at least three strategies in its investigative procedures (Thorpe 1993:31). According to the French scholar, Mauric Merleau-Ponty (cited by Cox 1996:15), phenomenology is a 'style of knowing'. It is essentially a method for studying the essence of phenomena. The method has four overlapping characteristics: description, phenomenological reduction, the search for essence, and intentionality (Brooke 1991:31). In this study an effort is made to discover the essence or core of the religious system to
which the belief of witchcraft belongs. Epoche, the second tool, suggests the means whereby an attempt is made to suspend all previous assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation. An important category to recognise is one's own religious persuasion which normally interferes with the necessary grid for understanding another's religious perspective. Phenomenology as a method (if properly understood) has the advantage of enabling the interpreter to leave her/his own world for a moment to cross into the world of the 'other', and return with knowledge made possible by her/his crossing (Brenneman et al 1982:12). This means that the researcher becomes aware of his/her prejudices and takes them into account in his/her research. The ideal in a sound scientific investigation is to suspend one's previous judgments about the phenomenon under investigation in an attempt to see into the very essence of the phenomenon.

In line with phenomenological understanding, Krieger (cf Cox 1993:21) argues that the suspension of one's views is a necessary methodological tool for the achievement of understanding. Understanding here means scaling down one's side of the wall that separates one from the other, to get to know both the other side as well as one's side. The discovery of the two worlds of reality transcends the limitations and obstacles that act as a gulf between one and the other side. This does not mean that one is reduced or converted to the other because that would entail sentimental sympathy, discovering one's involuntarily, unconsciously, inherited stereotypes that interfere with one's perception of the scheme of things.

Krieger (cf Cox 1993:21) clearly illustrates what is meant by 'phenomenological plea of understanding'. He argues that epoche is a necessary methodological tool for the achievement of authentic knowledge of the phenomenon under study. In other words, Krieger states that the phenomenologist must first open himself/herself to what is seen to be able to see what is manifesting itself to the viewer. We can compare the method of
opening up to this special attitude of seeing what happens when two people fall in love (Brenneman et al 1982:41). As the love relationship unfolds, the feeling of bondedness between the lover and the beloved becomes increasingly powerful. The implication here is that this kind of understanding can only be achieved through internalising the viewpoint of the believer so as to make it his/her, thereby allowing it to interact with his/her own original confession (Cox 1993:22). The result of this interaction is that the researcher will hold two confessions at the same time which are in tandem with each other. Methodologically, therefore, he/she is a believer both in his/her confession and a believer in the confession of the other. The final result of this pursuit is that the ‘he’/‘she’ which ultimately reveals itself is no longer the he/she of his/her presuppositions, but a human being able to share in and open up to what is seen, while remaining aware that this seeing is mediated through his/her humanness (Brenneman et al 1982:5).

1.4.4.5 Theory Testing and Eclectic Use of Elements

Both phenomenology and ethnomethodology have inherent weaknesses. Although it is an ideal for the researcher to enter the subjects’ lives and world and place himself/herself in the shoes of the subjects studying a phenomenon - like witchcraft - that causes a fair degree of misery to the subjects involved, it is important for the researcher to work with a kind of theory. Theory testing in social sciences can motivate the researcher and guide him/her to arrive at a valid conclusion. Operating from a theoretical base of a specific interest a perspective researcher can be guided to detect some causative factors of a social phenomenon such as witchcraft accusations. Approaching a study phenomenologically without a theoretical base may prove to be difficult, especially in identifying the causes of that phenomenon. My contestation is that both phenomenology and ethnomethodology are limiting to a researcher, especially in social analyses. A social researcher should be accorded sufficient opportunity to explore his/her subjects from a number of positions, rather than
being confined a particular approach (Rosaldo 1993:169). I believe that it is almost impossible for a social analyst to remove himself/herself from the mutual conditioning of social relations and human knowledge. It is not possible for the researcher to attain value-free inquiry and to clarify the world without changing it. Doing good research requires passion and hard work and not only cool detachment (:171).

1.5 Literature Review

As already mentioned witchcraft, as a religious phenomenon, is being studied by many scholars who identify themselves with a number of study fields and disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. This is to affirm that the existing variety within the academic study of religion derives in part from the fact that anthropologists, historians, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, linguists, theologians, and other scholars all believe that they have a legitimate place and stake in the inquiry of religion, and that they go about their work in varying and distinctive ways (Capps 1995:xii). The nature of the subject religion invites various scholars to study it from multiple vantage points.

Religious Studies as a discipline is concerned with human response to sacred, and unrestricted value (Cox 1996:58), is a centre of its own universe, surrounded by a number of other disciplines that also attend to religion (Kruger 1982:8-9). There is a diversity of theoretical perspectives within Religious Studies. This diversity is characterised by different scholars within the discipline. There are, for instance, those who closely subscribe to the phenomenological approach or the historical approach and yet some subscribe to the sociological or anthropological theoretical framework of functionalism, structuralism, Marxism, and symbolic interactionism. The main goal of Religious Studies thus remains to advance our understanding of the religious world in which we live. Even those operating within sociological theoretical frameworks can do so by using the tools accorded to them by
phenomenology. The only problem in operating from sociological theoretical frameworks is the danger of reductionism. However, if one beware of this limitation one can operate within anthropological sociological traditions without risking one's research findings.

In this study, I distinguish Religious Studies from other disciplines although I concede that it is related to them. The terrain of Religious Studies is best articulated by Kruger (1982:9) who defines Religious Studies as including two subdivisions, History of Religion and Phenomenology of Religion. History of Religion refers to the rich concrete existence of a particular religion in its real context while Phenomenology of Religion is a method of knowing. The latter differs from the reductionist approach that is limited by the imposition of the discipline to the religious phenomena (Cox 1996:57). As far as this study is concerned, it is situated in the area traditionally occupied by the discipline Religious Studies. I distinguish Theology from Religious Studies because the difference between the two is similar to that between an academic programme that proceeds from axiomatic religious convictions on the one hand, and an academic programme that does not on the other (Kruger 1995:27). The two ends of the space separating the two can be summed up in the following adage: "one who knows one knows none and one who knows too many does not know any" (Sharma 1993:xi). This study thus focuses not on the ends but on the colourful band that lies between the two ends.

In Chapter Two of this study I have argued that the witchcraft phenomenon is as widely spread as is humankind and as old as humankind itself in an effort to remove the notion that witchcraft is solely an African religious problem. This notion rejects possible solutions to witchcraft problems which have been developed elsewhere in the world. Academically, it excludes related research materials that are collateral to the study of witchcraft in Africa.
Conversely, literature on witchcraft stretches as far back as the period in which humankind developed the art of writing. Moreover, as part of this study, we will review some literature spanning history. To avoid the pitfalls of merely repeating what others have said about the subject, I will review material from only five periods in history. This agrees with the Soho proverb: “A young man that does not visit marries his sister”. In academic work one has to demonstrate original investigation into an unexplored problem area. It is only by knowing what others have done that we are prepared to tackle the problem we are investigating with deeper insight and more complete knowledge. The literature review will include the Graeco Roman Age in the medieval period, the sixteenth and seventeenth century European witchcraft craze, witchcraft in the colonial period of Africa, and the Postcolonial Period in South Africa.

The review of related literature aims at providing the study with strategies of dealing with the complex and problematic situation of witchcraft killings in South Africa. It will also assist in the evaluation of the study by comparing it with related efforts by researchers, as well as by locating its historical and associational perspectives.

1.5.1 Religious Studies and Society

The study is viewed from the angle of Religious Studies. Religious Studies can be defined as the systematic and objective study of human religions and their social interaction and impact (Popense 1998:2). The discipline of Religious Studies enables scholars of religions to look beyond their limited view of their own world and society by applying a religious theoretical approach of phenomenology. Scholars with training in Religious Studies approach the phenomena of their studies differently from people without such training. Religious enquiry helps us to understand the many religious forces influencing society and to grasp how the whole system operates and is held together as well.
Two common Religious Studies approaches used in this study are phenomenology and ethnomethodology. These approaches aim to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives. In order to accomplish that the researcher should be able to enter the subject’s life world and place himself/herself in the shoes of the subject (De Vos 1998:80). This was mainly done, in this study, through the method of case study, where I analysed conversations and interactions which I had with my research group.

The main objectives of this study are to assist the private sector in government and non-governmental agencies. As such, the study can be distinguished from basic research where the main objective is to generate knowledge for its own sake, without regard of the uses and applications of that knowledge. In applied research such as this, however, one is obliged to provide answers for the solution of practical problems facing community leaders, in this instance in the Northern Province of South Africa. It is designed to directly address the solution of existing problems facing basic black communities in the Province. One of the fundamental questions to be asked is thus: How can we understand and reduce witchcraft violence and assist the number of displaced families?

1.5.2 The Graeco-Roman Age

The literature from the Graeco-Roman Age, (the period following the Hellenistic Period because of the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 B.C.) exposes a universal mythology and symbolistic religious ceremonial based on various aboriginal beliefs of ancient superstition. According to literature, nature taught humankind the drama of the sacrifice. It was generally held that there were people who were able to acquire, by intensive meditation, the means of exploiting supernatural powers which they could use for good or bad purposes. Significant works on the subject include: The Geography of Witchcraft by Montague Summers (1958),
Baroja (1961:18) argues that during the Graeco-Roman Period magic was used for more obvious reasons: in country areas, for instance, it was used to ruin an enemy's crops or make his cattle sick. In the city it was used to strike down an enemy when he/she was on the point of, for example, making a speech or taking part in some public celebration. During this period, according to Baroja (:18), death was quite frequently considered as to being the result of witchcraft. The important underlying factor of the Graeco-Roman period was that magic was performed for a particular purpose, good or bad. Acts were performed for a purpose and any act which lacked a purpose was invalid. Good acts were for the benefit of society, while bad acts were counter-productive and punishable by law.

1.5.3 Literature on Witchcraft during the Medieval and European Periods

There exist many sources on medieval attitudes to witchcraft, which I will not exhaust. Many of the works are by the Fathers such as St Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe by Valerie I.J. Flint (1991), in particular, sheds light on the period, while simultaneously supplying information that is vital to this study. She reveals that politicians used witchcraft and magic to suppress people, and that during this period magic and witchcraft were believed to serve as tools for the governing classes' delineation and suppression of those who were considered the chief enemies of the people (Flint 1991:16). Such expedients were particularly welcome in times of social and political uncertainty and of governmental instability. From the fourth and fifth centuries we have important works by writers such as Ammianus Marcellinus and compilations such as the Theodosian Code which deal with prohibition by law of practices described as magical, advocating the expulsion or death of those associated with them. Magic was linked to
mystery and secrecy, and thus regarded as dangerous and evil (:17). The Theodosian Code, for instance, prohibits the practice of magic:

No person shall consult a soothsayer, or an astrologer or a diviner [hariolus]. The wicked doctrines of augurs and seers shall become silent. The Chaldeans and wizards [magi] and all the rest whom the common people call magicians [malefici], because of the magnitude of their crimes, shall not attempt anything in this direction. The inquisitiveness of all men for divination shall cease forever. For if any person should deny obedience to these orders, he shall suffer capital punishment, felled by the avenging sword (Flint 1991:16).

Rosen asserts that the very word 'witch' describes a state of mind on the part of the speaker rather than any generally accepted conception of a type. People were tried and executed for all kinds of deeds - good, bad and impossible (Rosen 1969:1). The world of the period was an extremely restricted one, in which any notable skill or achievement was regarded as 'beyond nature' and, therefore, probably dangerous to the people. The Inquisition, or the Holy Office, was a classical example. Rebellion or the mere dissent from the teachings of the Church was seen as a criminal offence. There are striking parallels between what was happening in this period and the current witchcraft craze in the Northern Province. Features such as Middle-Age peasant superstition, with its flying demon-owls who sucked the blood of children, childbirth-magic, ghosts and witches flying on brooms in the night (Gibson 1973:36) provide many points which can be linked to what is currently happening in the Northern Province.

In his Demonology, which first appeared in 1597, King James of Scotland demonstrated the kind of mentality which people of the Northern Province presently have to contend with (Gibson 1973:37):

The fearful abounding at this time and in this country of those detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches and enchanters, hath moved me, beloved
reader, to despatch in post, this following treatise......: Witches ought to be put to death, according to the law of God, the civil and imperial law and the municipal law of all Christian nations; yea, to spare the life and not strike when God bids strike and so severely punish in so odious a treason against God, is not only unlawful, but doubtless as great a sin in the magistrate as was Saul's sparing Agag.

Jeffrey Russell, in his *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (1965), provides us with some interpretations of European witchcraft. He (1969:39) argues that there are at least four major interpretations of European witchcraft: 1) There is the old liberal view that witchcraft never existed at all but was a monstrous invention by the ecclesiastical authorities in order to enhance their powers and enrich their purses. For this view, the history of witchcraft is a chapter in the history of repression and inhumanity. 2) The second view was based on Murray's interpretation of European witchcraft. Murray argue that European witchcraft was an ancient fertility religion based on the worship of the horned god Dianus (:40). The ancient Dianus religion, Murray claims, had survived into the Middle Ages and at least into the Early Modern Period. 3) A third interpretation, according to Russell (1965), locates the origin of witchcraft in social arrangements. Adherents of this view argue that witchcraft never really existed. They blame beliefs in witchcraft on widespread general superstition rather than on the impostures of an evil Church. 4) A fourth group emphasize the history of ideas and argue that witchcraft is a composite of concepts gradually assembled over the centuries. They further claim that Christian heresy and theology are more important contributory factors to it than paganism. It thus transpires that four groups of interpretations of European witchcraft dismiss it as unreal. Since these standpoints are of vital important for this study, these interpretation will be taken into consideration in my conclusion.

Brian Levack's ten volumes on *Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Later Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages*, published between 1951 and 1989, constitute valuable reference
material. Topics such as the intellectual and legal foundations of witchcraft, the impact of the Reformation, as well as the chronology and geography of witch-hunting are elucidated. Furthermore, it provides insight on both the decline and survival of witchcraft in Europe. The discussion of the social context of witchcraft is vital for this study as well.

Trevor Davies’ *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs: with special reference to the Great Rebellion* (1980) presents a detailed survey of the witch-mania which raged in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. Like Russell, Davies argues that factors such as the Inquisition, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation intensified witch-hunting because leading reformers and counter-reformers were witch-hunters themselves. Among the Calvinists Davies cites factors such as the doctrine of the total depravity of man, the belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scripture and theocratic governments as being responsible for witchcraft persecutions. Davies (1980:190) also cites the Methodist movement as another factor that gave impetus to mob violence against supposed witches in the latter part of the eighteenth century. John Wesley repeatedly and emphatically affirmed his belief in the stern reality of witchcraft (:191). The Bible remained a source, at least for these leaders, for the belief in the existence of witchcraft.

### 1.5.4 Some Scholars on European Witchcraft

In addition, other books were published on the topic of witchcraft in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These include books by Dutch scholars, namely Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff’s *Witchcraft in the Netherlands* (1990); the English author Purkiss’s *The Witch in History: Early, Modern and Twentieth Century Representation* (1996); Alan Macfarlane’s *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (1970); Montague Summers’s *Witchcraft and Black Magic* (1974); Geoffrey Scare’s *Witchcraft and Magic in 16th and 17th century Europe* (1987); Charles Alva Hoyt’s *Witchcraft* (1981);
Pennethorne Hughes' *Witchcraft* (1965); Frederick Kaigh's *Witchcraft and magic* (1947); Hance Sebald’s *Witchcraft: the heritage of a heresy* (1978); Eric Maple’s *Witchcraft: the story of man’s search for supernatural power* (1973); Mary Douglas and Edward Evans-Pritchard’s *Witchcraft confessions and accusations* (1970); Charles Williams’ *Witchcraft* (1959); and T.M. Luhrmann’s *Persuasions of Witchcraft* (1989). The works of these authors have a direct bearing on the present study because there is a comparatively high degree of conformity between the incidents they have mentioned in their works and the situation in the Northern Province.

1.5.5 Literature on African Witchcraft in General

Much has been debated and written about African witchcraft beliefs since Western anthropologists and missionaries set foot on the African continent. Most of these writers did not link witchcraft beliefs in Africa to European witchcraft beliefs. Ideologically it was convenient to brush off African beliefs as superstitious and backward, thereby justifying imperial invasion. In *Witch-Bound Africa*, Frank H. Melland (1969) describes witchcraft in Africa as a poisonous creeper that spreads over the whole continent and impedes all forms of progress (:183), while M.G. Marwick in *Sorcery in its social setting* (1965) maintains that witchcraft beliefs among Africans have the function, inter alia, of preventing the undue accumulation of wealth and tempering a too rapid rise in social position. Marwick contests that rapid social changes are likely to cause an increased preoccupation with beliefs in witchcraft because one of the effects of social change is to bring new values and norms into conflict with indigenous ones while another is the creation of new relationships and the fundamental modification of old ones. Jeffrey A. Fadiman in *When We Began There Were Witchmen* (1993) supports Marwick’s belief that every social deviation in African societies spurs on anger. As a measure of regulating conflict, African societies have developed secular, spiritual beliefs and ritual systems (:40).

1.5.6 Literature on South African Witchcraft

Prominent South African scholars who wrote about witchcraft beliefs among black people include Johan Kriel Louw (1941); Henri A. Junod (1927); E. Jensen Krige and J.D. Krige (1940); W.D. Hammond-Tooke (1981); D.R. Hunt (1931); G.M. Pitje (1948); as well as H.O. Mönnig (1967). The following scholars have more recently paid attention to the witchcraft phenomenon: Izak Niehaus (1994); Keresemose Richard Baholo (1994); S.S. Terblanche (1993); Anthony Minnaar, Dirkie Offringa and Catharine Payze (1991); Daniel Offiong (1979); J. Mihalik and Y. Cassim (1993); E. Barendse and L. Best (1992); E. Barendse and G. Dedereen (1993), and Ineke van Kessel (1993 & 1997).

In 1941 a notable South African scholar, Johan Kriel Louw, submitted his doctoral thesis on witchcraft among the South African black people to Yale University. The title of his dissertation was *Witchcraft among the Southern Bantu: Facts Problems Policies*. 

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Louw’s main contribution has been his analysis of the causes of witchcraft accusations, the functions of witchcraft and the effects of Western influence on witchcraft accusations. Louw asserts that, generally, resolving conflicts resulting from failed interpersonal relationships poses the danger of ending in witchcraft accusations (92). Where a diviner is called upon to assist in solving these problems, his function is to confirm the suspicion in the minds of the persecutors rather than to be objective. The diviner’s verdict is normally the confirmation of the persecutor’s suspicion. There often exist jealousies and hatred, sometimes subconsciously, between persons in close contact with one another and these may endanger healthy relationships. They often result in witchcraft accusations. Louw further argues that economic and social changes brought about by the Western mode of living negatively affected tribal life in Africa (104). According to Louw, land shortage, overstocking, resultant poverty, disease, taxation, and migrant labour are some of the factors which often generate witchcraft suspicions. In conclusion, like other Western scholars, Louw recommends education as a solution to the problem. However, he does not specify how it should be done.

Another scholar who undertook an in-depth study of the Tsonga people of the Northern Province is Henri A. Junod with his The Life of a Southern African Tribe Vol II (1927). Junod was a missionary from the Swiss Romande Mission who worked among the Tsonga people. Unfortunately, one cannot ignore the crude language with which he describes his subjects. He projects the Tsonga people as groping in the darkness of the grossest form of superstition (475) and he criticises the diviner (tribe priest) because his diagnosis of any disease does not take physical symptoms in consideration. The primary means of diagnosing a disease is the throwing of the bones. Junod’s study is, nevertheless, important because he discusses a particular tribe in the Northern Province and bases his discussion on empirical observation. His account of the Tsonga view of witches is crucial. Junod regards them as
thieves, killers and those committed to enslave people - three principal crimes that have to do with social relations that can be threatening.

The Realm of a Rain-Queen (1940), by E. Jensen and J.D. Krige, is important because it gives an account of a tribe adjacent to the one discussed by Junod. The Balobedu people are a mixture of the BaVenda in the north, the BaTsonga in the east and the Ba-Sotho in the west and south. The book provides the researcher with vital information on family ties, social groupings, village life, and witchcraft beliefs. Offensive elements in the book are situated in the same area as in Junod’s work. The Ba-Bobedu are accused of having no idea of the causes of diseases and as having no clue of the physiological functioning of the human body. Their diagnoses of diseases are thus bound to be false (:242).

The scholar W.D. Hammond-Tooke adds another dimension to the insight into the explanation of misfortune among the Kgaga tribe of the Northern Province. In his study Boundaries and Belief: The Structure of a Sotho World-view (1981), he mentions that Kgaga people seek for an explanation for misfortune in terms of mystical causation (1981:95). Kgaga’s system of explanation does not seek to answer the question of how something has occurred, but why it occurred. Hammond-Tooke (1981:95) observes that there is no concept of falsifying theories through experiment in Sotho systems as this approach forms the essence of the Western scientific approach. Nor do these explanatory systems question their assumptions. The world-view of the inhabitants of the Northern Province is crucial for an analysis of witchcraft accusations and persecutions as the gruesome witchcraft related killings cannot be stopped without background information such as that offered in this study.

The anthropologist H.O. Mönnig classifies witches into two categories in his book, The Pedi (1967). He distinguishes between night-witches and day-witches. The distinction between
night-witchcraft and day-witchcraft is similar to the generally accepted anthropological distinction between witchcraft and sorcery. Mönnig, a professor of Anthropology at the University of South Africa, was occasioned to complete the work started by the Secretary of Bantu Affairs of the then South Africa. The specific purpose of this research into Pedi beliefs was to fill a gap in South Africa’s ethnographic literature - a project which would have benefited the government’s policy of separate development. The book also sheds valuable light on the belief of setholwane (zombies).

Most of the scholars cited in this section discuss witchcraft according to a number of existing theories, such as the tension theory, the conflict theory, the social theory, the projection theory, the political theory, and the moral theory. The general trend is to regard the reasons and motives given for a belief in witchcraft as sociological in that they are usually caused by failed relationships. A large number of these scholars believe in the existence of magic and their beliefs are supported by their religious convictions in the existence of evil. In my evaluation of the literature cited, I intend limiting my analysis to the works that have a direct bearing on my underlying thesis, in which I support results from the tension theory which states that such accusations are based on failed relationships.

Social anthropologists, such as Flint (1991), Baroja (1961), Rosen (1969), and Russell (1965), for example, argue that in small-scale societies there are always tensions and conflicts between different family and kin members, as well as between neighbours. The beliefs and persecutions of witchcraft victims reflect these social tensions. The tension theory explains many conflicts that are taking place in the Northern Province. One should immediately add that scholars working from the prescribed tension theory are often guilty of dismissing all mystery surrounding witchcraft beliefs because they approach the phenomenon from a psychological point of view that denies the existence of witchcraft.
1.6 Clarification of Key Concepts

Anthropologists distinguish between the technical terms ‘witchcraft’ and ‘sorcery’. They regard witchcraft as the supposed power of a person to harm others by occult or supernatural means, without necessarily being aware of it (Hayes 1995:339). Whereas witchcraft is intrinsic, sorcery may be learned or acquired. Anthropologists like Mönnig (1967:67) who were, for example, influenced by this distinction apply the same categorisation to the Pedi people of Sekhukhuneland. Mönnig distinguishes night witches from day witches. However, this typology of witchcraft is not African but Western. Although Africans distinguish night witches from day witches, they have never meant it to be a technical distinction. The distinction merely refers to the intensity of evil rather than being a category. Some witches are so notorious that they cannot wait for the night to come to perform their evil deeds. Although they practise witchcraft whenever they have the opportunity to do so, both groups practise the same harmful kind of magic (Kgatla 1995:60).

Witchcraft is a complex subject, and has evoked complex responses from many disciplines. There are theological, historical, philosophical, anthropological, legal, literary, pharmacological, and psychological theories of witchcraft, to name some of the major ones. That is, according to Hoyt (1981:3), the reason why only a few people currently agree on what witchcraft really is, or was, or what witches really did, or what they do. This failure to encompass these diverse approaches to the study of witchcraft has lead to parochialism and provincialism. In this instance parochialism has caused the study to be undertaken in a limited sense because diverse views are not taken into consideration. The effects of provincialism are that one view is disproportionally highlighted at the expense of other equally important views.
For the general purpose in this investigation, I regard it as a mere waste of time and hair-splitting to attempt to draw and cavil distinctions, to chop up words and subdivide, to argue that technically and etymologically a sorcerer differs from a witch, a witch from a necromancer, a necromancer from a fortune-teller, or a fortune-teller from a Satanist. Thus in this study I intend using the word ‘witchcraft’ to include both night and day witches, witches that are normally classified as sorcerers and those classified as witches. In newspaper reports of a recent witch-hunt in the Province, for example, sensational terms like ‘sorcerer’, ‘witches’ and ‘wizards’ were used to translate the Northern Sotho ‘moloi’. It is clear that this kind of language is used to catch the eye and to generate inquisitiveness, thereby increasing the paper’s circulation figures which ensures a higher profit.

Witchcraft is a historical phenomenon, originating from the earliest periods of human culture (Hoyt 1981:3). It is a very complex subject, which has evoked complex responses from many disciplines. In dealing with an issue as complex as witchcraft, it is important to establish a working definition from which to embark on the study. Since many scholars from different disciplines are interested in the study of witchcraft, and since they have assigned different meanings to the word, while also using other terms as synonyms for ‘witch’ and ‘witchcraft’, it is not a simple task to formulate a working definition. Levack (1987:4) identifies two types of activities in early modern Europe. The first was the practice of harmful, black or maleficent magic, the performance of harmful deeds by means of some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, or supernatural powers. This kind of magic, according to Levack, includes the killing of a person, by employing magic to inflict sickness on a person, for instance, by reciting spells, bringing down hail on crops, starting a fire or setting a house alight, and by causing impotence in a bridegroom. These acts were referred to as malefici (males) or maleficae (females), employing the Latin words commonly used to identify witches during the Medieval Period. In all witch-believing societies witches are generally regarded as individuals who possess some sort of extraordinary or mysterious
power enabling them to perform evil deeds. The first essential characteristic of these deeds is that they are magical and harmful rather than beneficial. This magical power is controlled by a person himself. The witch, therefore, always uses this power in critical situations and he/she usually acts in secret, whether individually or collectively.

The second essential characteristic of *maleficia* is that they are by definition harmful, not beneficial. They are intended to bring about bodily harm, disease, death, poverty, or some other misfortune. They are to be contrasted, therefore, with acts of good magic; the purpose of which is to bring some benefit to oneself or another. White magic (positive magic) can be productive, in the sense of helping crops to grow or women to bear children; it can be curative, in the sense of healing a person who is ill; or it can be productive, in the sense of preventing some misfortune from occurring or warding off evil spirits or a witch. The distinction between white and black magic can indeed be blurred easily, especially if a magician harms someone in order to protect himself/herself, or when he/she cures someone by transferring the disease to another person. Acts of love magic fall in this category, since one person’s gain in love might easily be another’s loss.

There thus exists no universally accepted definition of witchcraft, but in virtually all contexts the word denotes the practice of magic by some sort of mechanical manipulative process. Witchcraft is an acquired or inherited skill. It might involve the destruction of an image of a person in order to bring him/her harm, the pronunciation of a spell, or the use of a potion. In some maleficent acts no particular techniques, substances or paraphernalia are used. Maleficium can be the result of a witch’s general power to inflict harm rather than his/her practice of any particular art (Levack 1918:1). An example of this type of maleficium is the harm done to a person by some completely internal act of the witch, such as wishing that a person was dead.
1.6.1 Religion

Although witchcraft beliefs are religious beliefs one cannot separate religion, for example, from economics, agriculture, politics, social matters, or in fact from the rest of life in basic religious communities like African traditional communities. This line of argument compels me to categorize witchcraft as part of religion. Social conflicts fuelled by suspicions of witchcraft beliefs are thus part and parcel of the religion of basic communities.

Scholars from different disciplines concerned with the study of religion, have over the years formulated different definitions of religion. In his *Religions of the World*, Ferguson (1978:13-17) lists seventeen definitions of religion. He categorises them into the following compartments: theological, moral, philosophical, psychological, and sociological. Observing the diversity of the definitions of religion presented by Ferguson, Cox (1996:8) has concluded that there is no universally held definition of religion. The limitations in the definitions of religion include, according to the American scholars Hall, Pilgrim and Cavanagh (cf Cox 1996:9), vagueness, narrowness, compartmentalization, and prejudice. In this study I will, therefore, merely use a working definition of religion. By working definition I mean a definition which will guide me in identifying data within the field of my enquiry.

Kruger (1995:23) has aided us in developing such a working definition of religion. He argues that religion is similar to aesthetics. This means that ones view of religion is comparable with or related to ones view of beauty. Thus, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Religion is concerned with beauty and the appreciation of beauty (:23). Functionally, religion 'provides' fulfilment to an urgent human need - to make sense out of a world of madness, to see the threatening chaos transformed into a meaningful cosmos (:55). This argument reveals that a basic orientation in any community is to be enabled to live
happily and act within accepted norms in such a manner that an individual’s thoughts, words and deeds fit into a larger scheme, and are meaningful, ‘good’ and right. Thus my revised working definition of religion as originally coined by Cox (1996:15) reads as follows:

Religion is a varied, symbolic expression of that which people (the I-We) appropriately respond to as having unrestricted value for them.

1.7 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis comprises eight chapters. After the introductory chapter, Chapter Two (2) deals with witchcraft as a universal human phenomenon and gives religio-historical overview of the phenomenon of witchcraft. Chapter Three (3) anchors the thesis in a theoretical framework. Several sociological theories are discussed to provide a theoretical base for the description of witchcraft accusations and persecutions. Sociological, psychological, anthropological, and religious theories about the causes of witchcraft are crucial for analysing social phenomenon, such as witchcraft. Chapter Four (4) deals with the African traditional religious setting. Concepts such as African cosmology, illness, death, conflict, evil, ethics and justice, ancestor worship, and the role of traditional healers are dealt with. Chapter Five (5) examines the ways witches were dealt with before colonial and missionary interventions. A critical analysis is made by a discussion and assessment of the ways in which the chiefs and traditional priests dealt with these beliefs. The interventions of the colonial governments, churches and researchers are also analysed. Chapter Six (6) analyses and critiques the weaknesses of these theoretical approaches.

Chapter Seven (7) analyses case studies, witchcraft incidents and stories surrounding witchcraft. Aspects such as political stress, the resurgence of suppressed African beliefs, the vulnerability of women and elderly people, political manipulation, the scramble for authority between elderly people and the youth, and broken judicial relationships are discussed.
Chapter Eight (8) maps out ways forward for the government, churches, schools, and politicians. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter, Chapter Nine (9) which will contain a summary of the preceding chapters, an amplification of other related issues, an indication of questions not yet answered, as well as an invitation for further research on the subject followed by a general conclusion.
ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. In this study I discuss witchcraft as a general phenomenon and witchcraft accusations and persecutions as related aspects of witchcraft. They all received equal attention.

2. The concept ‘new South Africa’ is used here to refer to the South African State after the 1994 democratic election.

3. Lodge in *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983) traces the political struggle waged by Africans since the turn of the century. The South African society developed a seed of violence as soon as Africans were excluded from the main political stream in the years succeeding the Peace of Vereeniging (1902).

4. The Northern Province has a population of 5,397,200 and this forms 13.1% of the total population of the country. It covers a total area of 123,910 km² and its total GGP (1994) was R14,158 m, 3.7% of the total GDP (1994: 10).

5. Witchcraft beliefs are part of a fundamental change from being caught up in the troubles of common existence to living in such a way that the society can cope with problems ascribed to such beliefs (Streng 1985: 2). A common assumption in witchcraft beliefs is that the fullest life calls on the highest price of eliminating those who manipulate supernatural powers to hurt others.

6. The ANC led government in the Province has realised the danger of negating the role and function of traditional healers in finding resolutions of tribal disputes and has thus created a forum of traditional healers. Dr Letsoalo is currently the Provincial President and his organisation is involved in all matters pertaining to crime as well as to security and health.

7. Maki Sekhosana was the first victim of the necklace method in South Africa. She was accused of being a police informer and killed in 1985.

8. During the period up to the 1994 democratic election the concept ‘comrades’ referred to those who were involved in the struggle in all its facets. The word is recently losing its original meaning and is now used to refer to ‘comrades’ as mainly ‘grave-diggers’ and to a lesser extent school children.

9. The expression suggests that there should be ways known to the people on how to investigate and solve problems. Although it may be difficult with human beings because of their complexity, there should be definite procedures for solving mysteries surrounding their lives.

10. Traditionally witchcraft accusations were also a plague and traditional leaders had to contend with them. As jealousy, hatred and tensions occasioned by social crises are and were at the
centre of this problem, traditional leaders knew about effective ways of suppressing them. In some incidences where it was found that a person was responsible for allegations intended to hurt his/her victim he/she would be expelled, according to my 84 year old informant from Dikgale. In some instances a chief would issue and order that no witchcraft case would be tried in his court. This served as a deterrent. Instead, people were encouraged to use magical means to retaliate if they thought they were being bewitched.

11. The word ‘outcast’ is used to indicate that a person accused of being a witch normally bears a stigma - despite being ignorant or negligent. One may succeed to avoid being pointed out as a witch if one manages ones life carefully but it is not always possible. I will come back to this point in my recommendations in Chapters Seven and Eight.

12. Walker (1989:1-11), in his Witchcraft and Sorcery, found a similar situation among the American native peoples. He found that in-group suspicions and accusations often result from displaced tensions stemming form intergroup competition. Much in-group witchcraft suspicion among the Iroquois, Nex Perce, Skokomish, Maphuche, and in Tecospa and Tepepan among the American Indians, stems from the neo-colonial struggles for survival, having to compete with members and groups of the Euroamerican Society.
CHAPTER TWO

2. RELIGIO-HISTORICAL SURVEY OF WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS OVER THE AGES

To read history backwards and see the issues of the present reproduced in the struggles of the past is a temptation that historians have seldom overcome (Davies: Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs 1980).

2.1 Witchcraft is a Universal Human Phenomenon

Witchcraft has occurred in almost every society in the world. It is also the oldest and most profound element in the historical concept of humankind, which is found in ‘primal’ religion, folklore, Christian heresy, and theology (Russel 1980:18). As a human religious phenomenon, witchcraft is, therefore, as old as humanity itself and globally as widespread as human beings themselves. The belief is found among almost all communities inhabiting the earth, although there are some basic communities where the concept of witchcraft does not exist. Mayer (1954:4) maintains that the Australian Aborigines and the Bushmen of South Africa, for instance, do not believe in witchcraft.

In contemporary societies it, for example, exists among the Eskimos in the Aleutian Islands, in Siberia, as well on the shores of Greenland. Beliefs in witchcraft or shamanism are also found among the people of Oceana (the islands of the Pacific Ocean) and the Maoris of New Zealand, the Mongolians, Polynesians, and others (Kgatla 1995:53). American Indians hold similar beliefs. The Australian Aborigines believe in the practice of magical and mythical sanction in their religious and hunting expeditions (Newig 1985:11). The same belief is found among the Aztecs of Mexico (Thorpe 1992:73). Witchcraft is, therefore, not unique to Africa or even South Africa. What is unique about witchcraft in Africa is that very little
has been written about it by Africans themselves. Much of what has been written about
witchcraft in Africa has been done by white anthropologists, historians and missionaries.
Most of these writers have projected the African belief system as ‘pagan’ and backward,
often to conceal their own mysterious beliefs stemming from their own dark past. My
contention here is not whether Christianity is monotheistic and, therefore, civilized and
African Traditional Religions polytheistic and backward, but that in both religious traditions
there are elements of both evil and good and these elements are explained by the figures of
Satan and witches respectively. As such, one of the main functions of religion is to explain
fundamental problems posed by evil and draw the attention of people towards good which
is the opposite of evil.

To conclude, the purpose of this chapter is thus not to give an account of witchcraft beliefs
in all societies of the world because that is impossible within the confines of this study.
Because the focus of the study is witchcraft in the Northern Province of South Africa, I will
confine this historical survey to issues of witchcraft as recorded in ancient sources, the
biblical account, Graeco-Roman materials on witchcraft, the writings of the Christian fathers
about witchcraft, as well as European sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
I will, therefore, borrow extensively from other sources. It should also be borne in mind that
this is not a comparative study of witchcraft among all nations of the world. As such, I will
merely concentrate on how it manifested itself in Europe. This selection of background
information will suffice to put my analysis of witchcraft beliefs in the Northern Province in
perspective.

2.1.1 Witchcraft in the Ancient Times

The most constant problem of humankind has always been to keep alive. Death is the final
enemy, and in an effort to delay it for as long as possible, humankind has had to overcome
famine and disease (Leff 1958:10). Disease is as old as life itself, but humankind has always tried to survive in a world that has been difficult, dangerous and mysterious. How has humankind learnt to defend itself, protect its fragile and weak bodies, and eventually create a world of relative security? To find answers to these questions we must examine the relics that have been left behind, and try to ‘clothe the bare bones with flesh and blood’ (Leff 1958:11).

Among the prehistoric people of the world the only professional class employed in combatting disease and postponing death was the diviner or shaman, who reputedly could kill victims from a distance or bring back a victim from the brink of death by countering the evil efforts of a fellow member of the craft (Gibson 1973:1). Similar powers have been claimed by or ascribed to witches and their kind everywhere and at any time. The scope and complexity of the powers of witches have increased as humankind attained higher levels of civilization.

The earliest history of humankind reveals its involvement in strange practices of witchcraft and demon worship (Philpot 1973:14). Witchcraft and demonology are intrinsically interwoven. Throughout the ages, in almost every nation, the occult has gained a foothold. No culture has progressed to the point of abandoning this practice (Philpot 1973:15). Therefore, characteristics assigned to a demon can also be assigned to a witch. As argued earlier the ancient Near East, Greece and Rome held similar beliefs. Throughout the history there was a blending of witchcraft with demonology. The Sumerians and Babylonians invented an elaborate demonology (Philpot 1973:14). They believed that the world was full of spirits and that most of them were hostile while each person had some tutelary spirits to protect him/her from demonic enemies (Russel 1980:29). Among the most terrible Sumerian demons was Ardat Lili or Lilitu, cousin to the Graeco-Roman Lamia and the prototype of the Hebrew Lilith. Lilitu was a frigid, barren female spirit with wings and taloned hands, who,
accompanied by owls and lions, flew in the night, seducing sleeping men or drinking their
blood (Russel 1980:29). Another female demon, Labartu, went out with a serpent in each
hand and attacked children and their mothers or nurses (:29). It was against these powers
that every kind of magic was needed, including amulets and incantations. Similar beliefs
were found among the Egyptians. Witches were believed to be using their knowledge of
amulets, spells, formulae, and figures to bend the cosmic powers to their or their clients’
purpose. As all spirits were part of the cosmic whole, none was regarded as evil, but witches
could disguise themselves in ways that could harm their adversaries as well as benefiting
themselves (:30).

2.1.2 Greek and Roman Thought

From the earliest times there existed complex Greek systems of universal mythology,
symbolistic religious ceremonal aboriginal beliefs and practices of ancient superstition
which formed an order of magic which has been studied in schools (Summers 1958:1).
Nature taught people the ritual of sacrifice. The Greek sacrifice was always accompanied
by ancillary rites, that aimed at discovering God’s will or placating the divinity (:1). It soon
followed that some humans were able to acquire the means of interpreting the expression of
that will, or recognising that the efforts of the worshipper has been crowned with success
(:1). Accordingly a class developed who made these revelations their principal concern,
consisting of wise people (magicians) and priests who were regarded as partakers of God’s
sanctity, protected by them and inspired by them, their friends and servants.

The priests and diviners who executed the work of the gods among people performed acts
which were later ascribed to witches. They delivered the oracles; chanted incantations as the
smoke of the sacrifice ascended; pretended to be in control of nature by employing their arts;
pretended to be capable of taming wild animals, charming serpents and controlling the winds;
pretended to be able to avert hailstorms; and even to cover the 'smiling' with the menace of
dark clouds and torrential rains (Summers 1958:2).

These priests were believed to possess the power to turn human beings into brute animals.
The class of witches later developed from the cult of the priests. They, however, held a very
low place in public esteem, and were addicted to jugglery. These 'goetes' were the
indigenous witches of Greece and their arts preserved some rude aboriginal superstitions
(Summers 1958:4). St Augustine, De Civitate Dei, VII, 35, quoting Varro, says that various
kinds of divination, used in Greece and Rome, were of Eastern origin. Varro further states
that the divination by Numa and afterwards by Pythagoras, wherein blood was used, came
from Persia (cf Summers 1958:4).

Scholars argue that witchcraft beliefs in Greece and Rome originated from Hebrew
witchcraft which was also influenced by Persian religions - some scholars even assert that
the Hebrews derived their dualistic concept of good and evil from the old Persian religion,
Zoroastrianism (Hopfe 1983:299). The prophet Zarathushtra (the founder of Zoroastrianism)
proclaimed one true god whose name was Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda was the same god
who was worshipped by the Aryan people for centuries as their distant high god. Our
interest in Zarathushtra's contribution to the study of witchcraft is situated in the area of the
problem of evil as already alluded to. His teaching in Iran around 600 BC was that evil was
not a manifestation of the divine at all but proceeded from a wholly different source.
Zoroastrianism, therefore, had an enormous influence on both Greek and Hebrew thought,
and through them on Christianity and all religions influenced by them. Nevertheless, the
problem of evil has been the most difficult aspect of all religions, including Hinduism,
Buddhism and Islam (:300).
Judeaeo-Christian theologians, for example, are still confronted by the question: how is it that God can be almighty and profoundly good and yet create a world in which cancer, famine and torture abound? It is, therefore, understandable that the answer to this question is that evil is partly caused by rebellious evil spirits. The Hebrew named the leader of these spirits Satan, ‘the obstructor’. The Greeks translated Satan into diabolos, from which came the Latin diabolus and the English ‘devil’ (Russel 1980:33). God and the devil are perceived as being in ethical and cosmic opposition. Each has its own kingdom: that of the Lord is light, while that of Satan is darkness. The Devil’s plan is to lure people away from God and use them to obstruct those in God’s Kingdom. The concept of God and Devil thus serves to explain the conception of the nature of witchcraft, as Baroja (1961:18-20) has observed.

Hebrew witchcraft, to which I intend turning when discussing biblical sources, was derived mainly from the Canaanites, Babylonians and Persians and had a profound influence on European witchcraft which I will also discuss in the coming sections (Baroja 1961:20). Under the early Roman emperors ‘malefici’ and ‘mathematici’ were repeatedly banned, and from time to time there were sporadic and severe persecutions, but even the Caesars themselves constantly dabbled in magic. While living in retirement at Apollonian in the company of Agrippa, Emperor Augustus consulted a famous fortune-teller named Theogenes, who upon casting his horoscope, instantly knelt before Augustus and hailed him as emperor (cf Summers 1958:36). Livia (the mother of Emperor Tiberius, who succeeded Augustus) was also largely guided by the advice of astrologers and diviners (:36). Before the birth of her son, Tiberius, she employed every known mode of ascertaining the future of her child, such as taking an egg from a hen that was hatching and in turn warming it in her hands and those of her maids until it hatched. When Tiberius was born, he was at once taken to Scribonius, a famous Chaldean, who prophesied that one day the highest honours would be bestowed upon him (:36).
Emperor Nero also consulted an astrologer, named Babilus, with regard to the appearance of a blazing comet (Summers 1958:36). During his rule the Babylonian, Musonius, was imprisoned on a charge of necromancy, probably because he was suspected of being in the employ of the emperor's enemies (Summers 1958:37). Aurelian (A.D. 270), immediately after his election as emperor by the legions on the Danube, secretly consulted Druidesses to inquire from them whether the throne would remain in his family, to which they replied that in the whole history of Rome there should be no names nobler than those of his house (Summers 1958:47). It is thus clear the witchcraft beliefs are universal and found in all societies on earth. The central concern of humankind, however, is the fear that the influence of other human beings may extend beyond the natural world. The idea has always been that to control events life hinges on supernatural beliefs and powers. We shall now turn to the Bible to see how belief shaped the life of the Israelites.

2.1.3 Biblical and Hebrew Thought

(a) The Arch-Rebel Satan

Any biblical review of the belief in witchcraft cannot be fully appreciated without some understanding of the place occupied and the role played by the figure of Satan. It is, therefore, both appropriate and inevitable that our discussion of the biblical view of witchcraft should start with the supreme enemy of all Christians, Satan, who is acknowledged as the father of all error, the prince of the world's vanities, and arch rebel against God (Hoyt 1981:11). There is in fact no one who has inspired more writing within Christian circles than Satan. Almost every great writer of the Renaissance has at least acknowledged him and his influence on witchcraft: Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Marlow (:11). Satan is generally held responsible for all evil in the world.
Like 'Pharaoh', the name 'Satan' signifies a title, not a person. Any angel in God's court could fill the office of 'Satan', which means 'adversary' (Hoyt 1981:12). In the Old Testament, Satan 'functioned' like a prosecutor, the most classical appearance being that which occurs in the book of Job. There Satan is portrayed as an adversary, but not an adversary of God. He poses as one of the 'sons of God' (angels). As God considers the case of Job, who appears to have no faults, Satan appears as his prosecuting attorney, an officer of the court, not hostile in the least to the judge, but instead hoping to convince the judge of the superiority of his arguments (:13).

In the New Testament, Satan is identified as the personal opponent of Jesus Christ. In the book of Luke, the tenth chapter, Jesus sends forth seventy of His disciples to heal the sick. They return jubilant, saying even the devils were subjected unto them through His name. John (16:1) speaks of 'the prince of this world', apparently referring to Satan.

This leads us to observe that some of the deepest human impulses - to assign responsibility for misfortune, to provide a rational framework for xenophobia and paranoia - are involved with the rise of Satan (Hoyt 1981:24). The very process of rebellion against authority by which weaker members of society carve out for themselves 'a place in the sun', has certainly contributed to the cult of the arch-rebel, Satan. Thus Satan, like his supposed followers (witches), has become less of a presence than an excuse, a rationalization, for the failures of humankind. The belief in the existence of Satan has deluded many minds. To many people Satan remains convenient because he is 'the prince of the world', and all things in it, good and bad. There can never be peace between Satan and those who hate the kingdom of darkness. The belief in witchcraft as well as the fear it induces in the hearts of those who see rebels in their enemies is largely motivated by the belief in Satan as the adage says: 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft' (1 Sam 15:23). We will now examine the biblical view of witchcraft, as portrayed in the Old Testament.
(b) **The Old Testament**

A curious question that has been asked is: Who was the first witch? Abbe Simonnet in *The Reality of Magic*, summarizes St Augustine's views on this issue. According to St Augustine, the whole race of Cain was inherently evil, bloody and murderous, and turned almost instinctively to wickedness (cf Summers 1974:98). Cain, who had gone out from the presence of God, according to St Augustine, sought the aid of demons and, therefore, became the first person to indulge in witchcraft practices. Satan deceived the children of Cain by the glamour of misleading wonders and this may be regarded as the beginning of witchcraft. St Clement, St Augustine, Eusebius, and others, are of the opinion that witchcraft and the worship of the devil were the chief reasons for the Flood. Of the three sons of Noah, Shem and Japheth followed the good example and precepts of their father, while the third, Cham (Ham), it is alleged, fell from grace, received forbidden science and initiated his son, Mizraim, into the horrid mysteries of witchcraft (Summers 1974:98).

(c) **Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (Ex 22:28)**

This Old Testament 'warning' about involvement in witchcraft has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and is probably the key biblical reference to prove the existence of witchcraft and witchcraft killings. It afforded the Israelites, the Church Fathers, many Christians, and even people of other faiths, a perfect proof that the Devil's establishment was not a figment of their imagination, but a real conspiracy known to their ancestors from antiquity. In the Bible God warned people against it. However, the way in which this verse has been translated poses a problem. Many who base their belief in the existence of witchcraft on this verse do not bother about the problem of translation: What did the author of Exodus intend it to mean? The Hebrew word 'Kashaph', which appears in numerous instances in the Old Testament, should be translated as 'poisoner' and not as witch. The
point here is not to deny that witches may use poison to harm people, but that it is specifically poisoners against whom the children of Israel were cautioned in this passage. It is thus clear that prejudices are ideological and may blind people. It must also be borne in mind that the Bible is a product of historical development and many of its texts have been corrupted over the ages.

The Old Testament contains many other references which can be combined under the heading ‘witchcraft’ to make up a formidable list of precedents for witchcraft-hunt. For example, Leviticus 19:26 warns against the practice of augury (a form of fortune telling) and witchcraft. Verse 31 of the same chapter of Leviticus cautions against consulting mediums or wizards, for such contact would cause defilement. Deuteronomy 4:19 warns against the worship of stars - which applies to astronomy, while Chapter 18 of Deuteronomy contains the most complete list of occult practices in the Old Testament:

When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you ... anyone who practises divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord God.

2 Kings 21 relates the story of Manasseh, one of the most evil of the Judean kings. He was involved in several occult practices (v 6), for which he was severely reprimanded by God. He was involved in soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and wizards that were particularly adept at controlling spirits and spiritual forces (Philpot 1973:50). To the Israelites the Old Testament clearly revealed the existence of witchcraft, while also sounding a stern warning against their involvement in it.
Diviners, soothsayers, mediums, necromancers, and augurers were, therefore, prohibited among the Israelites because they violated two cardinal principles: (1) they desired to control supernatural powers or spirits, and (2) they yearned for knowledge that could be obtained through ordinary means (Philpot 1973:53). Their methods of fortune telling differed, but their desired end was always the same - foretelling or predicting future events and accessing supernatural powers. For instance, Saul, the first king of Israel, desired to obtain knowledge from Samuel concerning a course of action in the war against the Philistines by employing inadmissible means (:53). Although he had commanded that mediums and wizards be expelled from the land, in desperation, however, he later sought out a medium so that he could obtain certain information from her. With the assistance of the medium Saul thus contacted the spirit of the deceased Samuel who supplied him with extraordinary knowledge (:55).

The prophet Isaiah accused the people of Judah of dealing with diviners and soothsayers. He declared that God had rejected them for such deeds. Isaiah believed God wanted His people to seek Him out, to trust and obey Him, and not establish contact with diviners and soothsayers. The following passage reveals Isaiah’s (47:12-14) blaming the attack on the Israelites’ for their indulgence in fortune telling:

Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have laboured from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror. You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons predict what shall befall you. Behold, they are like stubble, the fire consumes them. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before.

In verse 13 of the same chapter, Isaiah ridicules the Babylonian astrologers whose function was to predict coming events. They sought after knowledge - knowledge of the future.
They, therefore, violated two principles: the forbidden desire to control or manipulate spiritual powers, and the equally strongly forbidden desire for knowledge through means beyond normal sensory perception (Philpot 1973:56).

In 2 Kings 9:22 Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, priest-king of Tyre and Sidon, who got married to king Ahab, is called a witch: 'the whoredom of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcraft'. She was probably called a witch because of her attempt to supersede Jehovah with Baal. It was thus inconceivable that her followers would not be called witches (Hoyt 1981:28). Ezekiel 13:17-20 also refers to supernatural powers sought by the sorcerers and necromancers through the use of amulets and charms. These cases all reveal that the desire to control events and to have spiritual powers are the main concern of those who are practising witchcraft.

(d) The New Testament

Over the centuries the witch-finders have relied on both the Old and the New Testaments. In the New Testament we confine ourselves to two Greek words, which are important for our purpose: magos and pharmakos (Douglas 1975:766). Magos is translated as 'sorcerer', 'sorcery'; in Mt 2, 'wise men from the East'. Pharmakos is translated as 'sorcerer', 'sorcery', 'witchcraft' in Rev 9:21, 18:23, 22:15, and in Gal 5:20. Douglas (1975:766) asserts that the root idea behind pharmakos is that of drugs, potions and poisons. As the attention given to witchcraft in the New Testament is not very extensive, we will, devote less time in it than we did to the Old Testament.
2.1.4 The Christian Theological View

(a) Church Fathers

The Church Fathers and their successors, the men who explored Satan's kingdom with such thoroughness, did not hesitate to identify his followers in detail. Many contributed to this work, but two are of crucial importance: St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas who had incorporated into their works the extravagant belief in the invisible world of evil which was the universal heritage of their times (Hoyt 1981:28). Of the two, St Augustine was the more extreme in his analysis of Satan's work among the people. Along with an elaborate and persuasive edge of his Christian conviction, St Augustine revealed an unusual consciousness of the psychological and spiritual mysteries of humankind (:28). He ascribed much of the mysteries in the world to the agency of demons. Thus, the belief in dualistic supernatural forces opposing each other was at the centre of his analysis of witchcraft.

Although St Augustine believed that witches (veneficae) were able to make people fall ill or restore them to health, he did not believe that metamorphoses could really take place. Nor did he believe that it was possible to make spells to summon up the souls of the departed and carry out the various operations they were alleged to be able to do with such souls (Baroja 1961:44). The trance theory of metamorphosis, nevertheless, proved most acceptable to the authorities of the Western Church during the whole period of the early Middle Ages. This theory had a tremendous influence on the European witchcraft craze in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Russel 1980:37). In the early days of Christianity the Church Fathers fought 'pagan' views of reality - including the reality of occurrences like the night-flights and cavalcades of witches, but in the later periods the Church felt itself under no such obligation, and readily accepted what people of other faiths had believed (:37). The factors that
influenced the Church to embrace these views will be discussed when the European witchcraft craze is analysed.

St Augustine and Aquinas were the great architects of the infernal realm as defined by the Church. In *The City of God*, Augustine lists acts that he believed were directly linked to witchcraft practices. These included worship of the devil, trust in 'the quality of airy spirits', 'storm-raising', 'ligature' (the rendering of men and beasts incapable of carnal union), and 'transections' (the flight through the air with demonic aid) (Hoyt 1981:29).

From 1256 Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a Professor of Theology at the University of Paris. He travelled widely between the academic and religious centres of Christendom and completed in his vast works of theology the long process of summarising and explicating in infinite detail the character of the relations between people and God. Aquinas was equally intrigued by the primacy of the powers of darkness. In his elaborately detailed description of the universe and the powers it contains, he dealt with the problem of evil, the demons and demonic intervention in human affairs (Kors & Peters 1973:76) and he explained in detail precisely how it was possible for demons to influence human actions.

Aquinas the Summa even gave witch-hunters all the authority that they could wish to have, as in ST 1.8, 109, 'The Ordering of the Bad Angels', or ST 1.8, 114, 'The assaults of the Demons'. In part 2.11 of the Summa, Aquinas even ordered that heretics should not only be excommunicated notoriously, but 'slain justly out of hand' (cf Hoyt 1982:30). The persecution of people accused of witchcraft will be discussed in more detail in the ensuing sections of the present chapter. For the moment, however, we need to examine legendary theories of the Dark Ages and the early Middle Ages to understand the perverse importance of the belief of witchcraft and its influence on shaping the Church theology of the time.
2.1.5 Legends of Witchcraft in the Dark Ages

While witchcraft was well-known throughout the ancient world, it really manifested itself among the Romans. It is thus from this period that profound knowledge of modern witchcraft may be derived. Gibson (1973:2) cites three outstanding reasons for these developments: first, the Romans inherited a strong brand of witchcraft from the Etruscans, who had inhabited Italy before them. Second, the Romans were great appropriators from other religions. Wherever they conquered a nation, they felt free to take over its gods as well as its government, and that included witchcraft. Finally, as they were a great empire that stretched over a vast area, the Romans superimposed their traditions upon those of other lands (Gibson 1973:3). Peculiar to the Romans were the legends from which witchcraft beliefs originated and were sustained. Because witchcraft beliefs tend to be unsavoury in content, they can influence human behaviour. Legendary concoctions of witchcraft beliefs also rejuvenated supernatural expectations of the human ability to control the environment and strive for more knowledge (:3).

Witchcraft legends show the extent to which witchcraft was acknowledged and esteemed in ancient Rome. An important branch of these legends was devoted to the worship of Diana, goddess of the moon. Diana had her antithesis in Hecate who skulked in the dark while Diana danced in the moonlight. Another concoction was the legendary witch named Medea. Her potion included the dried skin of a water snake, hoar frost gathered by moonlight, the head and wings of an owl, the entrails of a wolf, chunks of tortoise shell, the head and beak of an ancient crow, as well as the liver from a living male deer, and other unpalatable items. Medea stirred the mixture with a dried branch of an olive tree and the potion proved to be capable of restoring youth to human beings (:3).
In A.D. 160, Lucius, wrote a legendary story called ‘The Golden Ass’ which superstitious readers of the period accepted as real (Gibson 1973:4). In the course of his adventures, Apuleius travelled into a region of Greece where witchcraft was rampant. Stopping at the house of a wealthy man named Milo, he fell in love with Fotis, a serving maid, who told him that Milo’s wife, Pamphile, was a witch who frequently changed herself into a bird and took off on nocturnal flights to meet with others of her ilk (:5). Lucius persuaded Fotis to provide him with a hiding place from which he could watch Pamphile undergo such a transformation. Fotis agreed and Lucius watched Pamphile disrobe and cover herself with a special ointment that she took from a jar. As she shook herself, she got feathers, her nose became a beak, her toes turned into claws, and her arms took on the shape of wings. She had changed completely into a huge owl. Moments later, she had flown out of the window (:6).

When Lucius ‘came back to his senses’, he decided to verify the matter. He requested Fotis to bring him the ointment so that he, too, could become an owl and fly off to learn what was happening in the world of the witches. So Lucius shed his clothes and anointed himself lavishly, but when he flapped his arms, he found that his hands, instead of sprouting feathers from their fingertips, were hardening into a solid mass. Fotis had brought the wrong jar (Gibson 1973:5) so that Lucius had become a donkey. The legend of the Golden Ass still stands as a monumental landmark in the history of witchcraft, because Lucius Apulius learned it the hard way. Born in Africa, Lucius Apulius studied law in Rome and religion in Greece, and returned to Libya, where he married a rich widow (:5). Soon the widow’s relatives accused him of having used witchcraft to win her love, and of having poisoned her son in order to take over her estate (:6).

Legends about witchcraft powers abound in the Dark Ages - the period between 500 and 1000 AC 0 as well. It is called the Dark Ages because of the disintegration of the Roman Empire and its culture. The most notable witchcraft legend from this period is that of
King Arthur. The real King Arthur was probably a British commander in the service of the Romans (Gibson 1973: 11). He was worried by a riddle posed by warlord he had once come across: 'What is it that a woman desires most in the world?' Throughout the year, King Arthur pondered the riddle with his knights but none could come up with a satisfactory answer.

One day as the king was on his way he met a weird old witch who not only recognised him, but knew of his problem and the answer to the riddle. That which a woman most desires, the old woman said, is to have her own way. To aid Arthur even further, she revealed the secret of many of the problems he was wrestling with.

This kind of legend and myth has given rise to many stories around witchcraft beliefs and persecutions. In Chapter Six I intend analysing them and giving detailed overviews of how they are cardinal to the propagation of beliefs in witchcraft.

2.1.6 Witchcraft in Europe

Any historical survey of witch-hunting and persecution would be is incomplete without particular reference to the European witchcraft craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An attempt to explain why the great European witch-hunt took place and reached its peak in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, why it was much more severe in some countries than in others, and why it came to an end is of fundamental importance to this study. Since some knowledge of the European witch-hunt will contribute significantly to understanding the phenomenon of witch-hunt and persecution in the Northern Province. Another reason for analysing the European witch-hunt is because witch-hunt is an extremely complex phenomenon as it involves both the educated and uneducated, both Christians and people of other faiths, and reflects both elitist and popular ideas. It has both religious and
social dimensions, and is conditioned by a number of political and legal factors. It is not surprising, therefore, that mono-causal explanations for the witch-hunt have proved to be singularly unconvincing, if not overtly false.

In this section, I intend emphasising both its complexity and diversity, while simultaneously paying attention to the interpretations of the roots of European witchcraft. The role of the Church in fuelling the beliefs and in torturing of the victims will also be analysed while legal intervention and the decline of the witchcraft craze are scrutinized.

2.1.7 Witchcraft Panic in Europe

Rosen (1969:9) asserts that the so-called witchcraft panic manifested itself in Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance rather than in the Medieval Period. He bases his assertion on the fact that the rise of witchcraft persecution was a serious effort to explain in the only terms available, new insights into the nature of belief and the powers of the mind. As the Renaissance and Reformation were rooting themselves in the society a tremendous pressure was exerted on the society to produce mechanisms to cope with new challenges. The Church, for example, was forced into an outright denial of discoveries, or into torture and absurd rationalisation. Like the ignorant, the learned fell back onto magic and demonology as ways of explaining the accumulation of facts and observations that would not fit into the existing structure of things.

Davies (1980:2) traces the European witchcraft beliefs to those from the Graeco-Roman world of the barbarian invaders. At the beginning the Church, as a rule, tended to encourage scepticism about the sensational claims of superstition derived from Graeco-Roman ideas about witchcraft. Thus, for example, the belief in the witch’s Sabbath was already
denounced in the tenth century by the so-called Canon Episcopi (Davies 1980:3). The
scepticism of the Church was formulated as follows:

Some wicked women reverting to Satan, and seduced by the illusions and
phantasms of demons, believe and profess that they ride at night with Diana
on certain beasts with an innumerable multitude of women, passing over
immense distances, obeying her commands as their mistress, and evoked by
her on nights. It were well if they alone perished in their infidelity and did not
draw so many along with them... Therefore priests everywhere should preach
that they know this to be false, and that such phantasms are sent by the Evil
Spirit, who deludes them in dreams. Who is there who is not led out of
himself in dreams, seeing much in sleeping that he never saw in waking? And
who is such a fool that he believes that to happen to the body which is only
done in the spirit? It is to be taught that he who believes such things has lost
his faith, and that he who has not the true faith is not of God, but of the Devil
(cf Davies 1980:2).

Scepticism about witchcraft was further strengthened by the conviction that the Devil, as a
conquered enemy, was powerless to harm the true Christians. Such attitudes and claims
account for the comparative mildness of witchcraft beliefs during the earlier Middle Ages.
Davies (1980:3) further observes that the great law codes of the period - the Establishments
of St Louis, the Assized of Jerusalem and Antioch, the Kayser Riht - did not pay much
attention to witchcraft. This, according to Davies, is another indication that initially the
Church did not take witchcraft very seriously.

But with the weakening of religious belief and the underground rise of heresy at the end of
the period of the crusaders, witchcraft beliefs in Europe advanced with rapid strides. More
and more of the sharpest brains in the Church made out a plausible case for the belief that
witches really did fly through the air to their Sabbaths and could really perform many other
miracles that the earlier generations had believed impossible. A vast number of modern
scholars who have seriously endeavoured to study the European witchcraft panic (Rosen,
Davies, Baroja, Kors, Scarre, Levack, MacFarlane, and many others) have argued that the greatest responsibility for the rising fear of witches in Europe should be laid at the door of the Inquisition.

2.1.8 The Inquisition or the Holy Office

The Inquisition was founded in 1199, at the time when the Roman Catholic Church seemed threatened from within rather than from without. The Inquisition was, therefore, an effort by the Roman Catholic Church to seek out and punish heretics who posed a formidable threat to the teaching of the Church. The Inquisition decided that witchcraft involved a pact with the Devil and was, consequently, heresy. The resulting witch-trials suppressed witch-beliefs with the full force of the power and prestige of the Inquisition (Davies 1980:3).

In Europe the Inquisition operated chiefly in the Roman Catholic Church and in Catholic dominated countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Working in secret, the Inquisitors often abused their powers. Some suspects were tortured, and heretics who refused to change their beliefs were sentenced to die on the stake so that the heresies and their adherents were exterminated with almost inconceivable brutality.

It would appear that in times of social disturbance (the shaking of the established order of things), there is always an increase in superstition and unofficial beliefs. The Inquisitors themselves experienced such a kind of turmoil, and resultantly regarded it as a challenge to combat such beliefs in others. Heretics were thus seen as people who aided and gave encouragement to the enemy of the people. It was thought that they were in allegiance with the anti-Church, for ‘he that is not for me is against me’. Everything that was not of God and His Church was regarded as being under the rule of the Devil - a state that could not be tolerated.
Strange views about witchcraft was drawn by writers of the period, provided the inquisitors with ample information about witchcraft evidence. Renaissance writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Marlowe were greatly influenced by existing beliefs in witchcraft. Russel (1980:36), for instance, reflects the dominant picture drawn by sixteenth century writers:

The sun has gone down, and honest people are asleep. The witches, including some men but mostly women, creep silently out of their beds, making sure that they do not disturb their husbands or wives. They are preparing for the Sabbath. Those who live near the meeting ground will go on foot; those who live further away will go to a private place, rub their bodies with an ointment that enables them to levitate, and fly on animals, fence-rails, brooms, or stools. At the meeting, which takes place in a cave, or deserted heath, they meet ten to twenty of their fellow witches ... The novice will be bound to the cult in such a way that he/she will find it difficult to withdraw. Accordingly he/she is obliged to swear to keep the secrets of the cult, and he/she further seals themselves [sic] to the group by promising to kill a young child and bring its body to a subsequent meeting. He/she orally renounces the Christian faith and seals their [sic] apostasy by stamping on, or excreting on, a crucifix or a consecrated host. Next he/she adores the male master of the cult, the Devil or his representative, by offering him the obscene kiss on the buttocks.

Russel (1980:36) argues that such a scene never occurred, but this is what was almost universally believed to happen at a witch’s Sabbath. Nevertheless, what people believe to be true influences their actions more than what is objectively true, so the conviction that this picture was accurate resulted in the execution of large numbers of people. The charges on which these people were put to death were distorted and exaggerated - often mere invention and imposture.

The Bible text in 1 Samuel 15:23 that: ‘Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft’ was viewed as sanctioning the idea to regard witchcraft as something organised and deliberate. It is also well-known that the text: ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’ (Ex 22:18) encouraged this belief. A study of witchcraft beliefs held in Europe may lead to the conclusion that a great
danger inherent in any system of hierarchy under threat is situated in opposition only in terms of itself - as an organised entity, as conspiracy. In a series of papal Bulls witchcraft was gradually identified with heresy (Rosen 1969:10). Moreover witchcraft was believed to entail beliefs that actively aided and encouraged the Enemy of humankind - beliefs that, like heresies, seemed to be in allegiance with the anti-Church.

By the end of the fifteenth century, witchcraft had been assimilated into heresy, pronounced against by the highest and most powerful ecclesiastical authorities, and served as the base of accusation in a large number of political and religious trials. Diabolism, the Sabbath and undeviating hostility towards the Christian society had become the mark of all witches - and all witches were regarded as having become fellow servants of Satan.

William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, wrote in a letter of 22 August 1230, to the Inquisitors of Carcassonne and Toulouse:

Our most holy father and lord, by divine providence Pope John XXII, fervently desires that witches, the infectors of God’s flock, flee from the MD of the House of God. He ordains and commits to you that, by his authority against them who make sacrifice to demons or adore them, or do homage unto them by giving them as a sign a written pact or other token; or who make certain binding pacts with them, or who make or have made for them certain images..., who abuse the sacrament of the Eucharist or the consecrated host and other sacraments of the Church by using them or things like them in their witchcraft and sorcery, you can investigate and otherwise proceed against them by whatever means available, which are canonically assigned to you concerning the proceeding against heretics. Indeed, our same lord amplifies and extends the power given to Inquisitors by law as much as the office of the inquisition against heretics and, by his certain knowledge, likewise the privileges in all and singular cases mentioned above (Rosen 1969:11).

Hysterical and psychosomatic states, encouraged by this atmosphere, were explained by the theories of possession and devil-lore. Even medical doctors, still entrapped in the medieval
view of the ‘natural’, were forced to accept the reality of witchcraft and devil-caused illness as distinct from ordinary maladies. Under the pressure of all these views, new developments confined to metaphysical theory and theology, coupled with fear and bewilderment, exploded into witch panic. It is generally accepted that religious or theological language is by nature highly allusive and metaphorical since it prefers to describe in religious text and analogies the supposed truth of a matter rather than its factual accidents. Unfortunately, the Inquisitors made the same mistake by consuming their own spiritual propaganda without carefully analysing it.

Torture was accepted as a standard procedure in the inquisitorial process. Civil systems used it, so that the most horrible forms of torment for witches were produced by civil authorities. Any lack of success in the escalating measures of torture appeared to prove that more of the same was needed, not less. So the occasional suspect who defied all torture and refused to talk was regarded as a threat to the whole system and was forced by the applications of any means whatsoever to submit (Rosen 1969:13). The inhuman methods required such private self-justification that it became impossible ever to conceive of innocence in those who were tortured. And indeed, many witch confessions resulted from such tortures. The upshot of it was that suspicion was equivalent to proof. The reasoning behind this assumption was that God would not allow the innocent to be wrongly accused.

This process of witch-hunt almost guaranteed that no one who was accused of witchcraft could escape without confession, crippling or death - often death by being burned alive. Both Protestants and Catholics believed that God had let loose the scourge of witches to punish wilful disobedience to ‘The truth’. Each side viewed the world as infected with devils who could change the very appearance of things, so those caught and believed to have allowed themselves to be lured by the devil in practising magic had to be punished.
2.1.9 The Pact with the Devil

The central idea in the cumulative concept of witchcraft in Europe was the belief that witches made pacts with the Devil. They believed that witches made explicit, face-to-face contact with the Devil. This agreement not only gave the witch the power to perform *maleficia* but also initiated him/her into the Devil’s service (Levack 1987:27). It was believed that the conclusion of the pact was a formal ceremony which took place after the Devil had appeared to the witch.

A second witch belief that even the most educated Europeans subscribed to until the late seventeenth century was that the witches, having made a pact with the Devil, gathered periodically with other witches to perform a series of blasphemous, obscene and heinous rites. At these meetings the Devil would appear to them in various forms, together with subordinate demons. The witches would very often sacrifice children to the Devil, feast on the bodies of these infants, while others danced nakedly and flew on dishes. Legends on queer witch activities abound.

Russel (1980:56) asserts that the idea of a pact began to gain currency in the eighth century when Paul the Deacon, one of Charlemagne’s advisers, translated a sixth-century Greek story about a priest, named Theophilus, who had obtained promotion to the episcopate by having solemnly promising the Devil to renounce Christ. The motif of the pact in medieval legend culminated in the story of Dr Faustus, the fictional high magician of the Renaissance who made a pact with the Devil to obtain both wisdom and sensual delight. Levack (1987:35) argues that the belief that human beings could make a pact with the Devil could be traced to the writings of St Augustine of Hippo. In Europe this belief was mainly contained in witchcraft legends. St Augustine believed that in these pacts the human party made an
agreement resembling a legal contract according to which the Devil provided power in exchange for services rendered by the people involved.

2.1.10 The Impact of the Reformation on the Witch-Hunt

The success of the sixteenth century European Protestant Reformation encouraged the growth of a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church. This movement, that scholars refer to as the Counter-Reformation or Catholic Reformation (cf. Levack 1987: 101), caused a crisis in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. Resultantly, a real scramble for power and domination arose. The struggle between the two opposing movements brought about conflict and tension within the two Church movements.

The question which we wish to address in this section is how the Reformation contributed to the growth of witchcraft persecutions in Europe. Our underlying assumption is that existing national crises and tensions exacerbate witchcraft accusations and resultant persecutions. The rise of witchcraft beliefs in any territory is intrinsically connected to religious revivals. Approaching the subject in this way, we will pursue three separate lines of enquiry: (1) we will study those changes in religious attitudes and practices during the Reformation that encouraged the growth and persistence of witchcraft beliefs; (2) we will explore the ways in which religious conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism inspired witchcraft prosecutions and executions; (3) and we will investigate how individual personalities galvanised their beliefs in witchcraft.

(i) Religious Attitudes and Practices

During the tussle for power and control over religious affairs between European Protestants and Catholics, an increased awareness of the Devil’s presence in the world as felt, so
Europeans became more determined to fight him wherever he was hiding. One of the main sources of consciousness of and militancy against Satan’s power was the thinking of great Protestant reformers, like Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox. Since the reformers challenged so many other aspects of medieval Catholicism, they produced their own theology that saw the Devil in whatever their opponents professed.

One of the reformers’ attitudes that had a profound influence was the way in which they viewed demonic powers. Their heightened consciousness of diabolical activity made many communities increasingly eager to prosecute those who were regarded as heretics and witches who were believed as acting as the agents of Satan. Unfortunately, it was not just in Protestant circles that such attitudes existed. To many Catholic reformers the Devil became a living reality in those who were opposed to their Church. Indeed, the rise of Protestantism itself appeared to many Catholics to be the work of Satan, and make them keenly aware of his capacity for bringing all kinds of evil into the world (Levack 1987:105).

In both Catholic and Protestant quarters there arose a zealous commitment to purify the world by declaring war against Satan. Unfortunately, the Devil has his agents among human beings, thus to fight him is to fight people themselves. The tension between the two movements meant soul-searching in choosing between the two. The search for salvation - particularly among Protestants - therefore, led to the development of a new personality type, a highly motivated, driven person whose moral energy could be diverted between political and economic activity (Levack 1987:106).

Unfortunately, the resultant emphasis on personal piety coupled with an intense pursuit of salvation took a heavy psychological toll (Bosch 1991:252-255), for accompanied a deep awareness of sin. Where people were suffering from this type of feelings of guilt, they naturally sought relief in any possible means, and one of the methods employed was to transfer it to another person (Kgatla 1996:7). The relief from guilt through projection onto
another person could easily lead to witchcraft accusations and prosecutions. Witchcraft accusations and prosecutions, as we have already argued in Chapter One, usually take place between people who know each other intimately. It is, therefore, easy to project one's anger, bitterness and jealousy unto a person with whom one has an intimate relationship (MacFarlane 1970: 192-199).

(ii) Religious conflict

The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation not only changed many aspects of the religious outlook of both Protestants and Catholics, but led to bitter conflicts between them as well. Many conflicts ensued as the Protestants tried to establish the reformed religion throughout Europe while the Roman Catholics increasingly such a move and tried to reconvert those who had joined Protestantism. Conflicts also arose between the different Protestant movements, such as the Lutherans and Calvinists. The strife among these confessionals played an important role in fuelling European witchcraft prosecutions (Levack 1987:115).

Moreover, in all areas where there were religious divisions and conflicts there existed political instability and violence as well. Many wars were caused by different religious convictions and beliefs. It is also true that where there were religiously homogeneous or monolithic states, witchcraft strikes were experienced only occasionally. To support this assertion, Levack (1987:116) cites Spain and Italy as classical examples, both of which remained solidly Catholic throughout the Reformation era. Levack (1987:117) argues that both countries experienced large witch-hunts in 1520 but neither country had a series of local panics such as those that afflicted Germany, France and Switzerland in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, primarily because of large numbers of their citizens belonging to both Protestant and Catholic Churches.
It would, therefore, appear that there is always a collaboration between religious conflict on the one hand and intense witch-hunting on the other. Such correlation, however, does not necessarily indicate any causal connection between the two phenomena. The existence of the two merely serves as an enabling factor for conflict which could assume any form—including witchcraft violence. In such circumstances, witches were usually considered heretics, a label that Catholics would just as readily apply to a Protestant in their midst and Protestants might even use to describe Catholics. But the heresy of a witch was something quite different from the heresy of the Catholic or Protestant non-conformist. A witch was a heretic because he/she had abandoned the Christian faith and made a pact with the Devil (Rosen 1969:15), while the religious non-conformist was a heretic because he/she had rejected one or more doctrines of the established religion. The two might, however, be prosecuted by the same authorities, and both could serve as scapegoats for the ills of society, although their crimes would rarely be confused. But when tensions run high in a society the two might be confused as Bishop Palladius of Denmark did (cf Levack 1987:117). In one of his addresses he threatened to prosecute as witches those who were 'backward in religion'. This threat illustrates the close connection that Protestants made between Catholic superstition and magic. It is, however, difficult to attribute an increase in witch-hunting to religious warfare as such.

What effect, then, did religious conflict and division have on witchcraft prosecutions in Europe? We may say, in general terms, that it made communities more fearful of religious and moral subversion, more aware of the presence of Satan in the world, and more eager to rid their communities of the Devil’s influence (Levack 1987:118). The works of Satan had to be eliminated whether their belonged to the categories of religious hereticism or magic and witchcraft. It stands to reason that the fear of moral and religious subversion would be stronger in those areas where the adherents of rival religions lived in close proximity to each other than in those which were religiously homogeneous. The knowledge that a
neighbouring community or territory has been converted or reconverted to a rival faith naturally induces one with fear and tension and makes one feel that one is living in a hostile environment. For one to live in peace, a hostile environment (being religious or subscribing to witchcraft) needs to be eliminated.

(iii) Calvinism Encourages Witchcraft Persecutions

Davies (1980:5) argues that the Protestants were more zealous witch-hunters than the Roman Catholics. This was evidenced by the greater number of witch killings after the great Schism of Reformation. The most zealous of all the Protestant persuasions, according to Davies (1980:5), was Calvinism. In Geneva Calvin and his followers were the most conspicuous for their zeal in witch-hunting. In a letter of 25 April 1545 addressed to Farel, Calvin wrote about the hospital official Rene, who had confessed to having caused the deaths of five persons, while his wife had killed eight. Calvin added, in his letter, that this couple gaily went to their execution after giving moving signs of repentance and conversion (cf Davies 1980:7). During his time many poor people were imprisoned in order to find out whether there were any plague spreaders among them. Some of those detained would not confess under torture even after severe twists of the rope onto which they were hanging; and, as they were under strong suspicion, and suspicion being the same as proof, it was decided to ‘wring’ the truth out of them by more terrible forms of torture (:8).

The city of Basle, in which Calvin finished the first draft of his Institutio, and in which many English Protestants sought refuge during the reign of Mary Tudor (Summers 1958:118), witnessed some of the most amazing witch trails on record in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1550 a woman was sentenced to the stake as a result of her confession that she had kept ‘alive female gnome’ and had visited Venusberg in the company of her husband. Calvin’s influence caused such insidious occurrences to be recorded with
accuracy and a calmness and objectivity appropriate to the most ordinary crime (Davies 1980:9).

The following constituted fundamental reasons for the Calvinist fear of witchcraft:

a) In the first place, Calvinists were the most extreme of all the religious movements of the time, in viewing sin and the power of the Devil as tremendous realities. Calvin’s Christian Institute taught that ‘the Fall of Man’ was an act by which humankind’s innermost nature was utterly corrupted and its original righteousness changed into absolute depravity, so that no person in his natural condition was capable of the performance of any deed that was not evil.

All of us, therefore, descendent from an impure seed, come into the world tainted with the contagion of sin. Nay, before we behold the light of sun we are in God’s sight defiled and polluted ... even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother’s womb, suffer not from another’s but from their own defect ... their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God (Institutio, bK. ii, cap. My translation Davies 1980:9).

This passage illuminates the belief of that time, namely that the natural person, being completely corrupted and totally deprived of all good, would be altogether at one with the Devil, and consequently, easily capable of those pacts with demons that figured so largely in witch trails.

b) Second, Calvinists took their stand on the verbal inspiration of the Scripture. They were compelled by the very nature of their position to set up an infallible Bible as a counterblast to the claims of an infallible Roman Catholic Church, and interpreted the Bible literally, text by text, without any regard to its historicity. A text like:
‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’ (Ex 22:18) was a settled matter. Where the Old Testament was lacking in direct prescriptions, the New Testament made up for the deficiency (Davies 1980:11).

c) Third, the form of government most suitable to Calvinism was favourable to witch-hunting. The Genevan theocracy made the state a department of the Church, while the Church was ordered according to the votes of Church members in the state. With its dualistic system Calvinism regarded the Devil as the ruler of the material world and God as the ruler of the spiritual world - a system that was conducive to the elaboration of witch beliefs.

It is, therefore, not surprising to find that as the spiritual empire of Geneva extended it borders, witch mania found new worlds to conquer. Moreover, it is not surprising either that at about the same time Balthasar Bekker, who had questioned the more sensational phenomena of witchcraft in *The Enchanted World*, was expelled from the ministry of the Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) Church (7 August 1692), excommunicated, and never again admitted (Knuttel 1906:315). As late as 1722 a woman was burnt for witchcraft in Scotland, one of the strongholds of Calvinism, and in 1736 ‘the diviners of the Associated Presbytery’ passed a resolution declaring their belief in witchcraft and deploring the generally existing scepticism (cf Davies 1980:12).

### 2.1.11 The Social Context of European Witchcraft

Levack (1987:125) asserts that in order to provide a satisfactory explanation for the European witch-hunt, one must consider not only the religious changes and conflicts of the early Modern Period, but also the broader social environment in which such accusations arose.
Acquiring a knowledge of the social setting of a crime and the relationship between the criminals and their victims, benefits any type of investigation. He further argues that in the case of an imagined crime such as witchcraft, a social investigation can be even more revealing, since it can help to explain why the alleged victims of the crime were singled out and prosecuted. In this way the social history of the crime becomes more than a study of the victim’s behaviour.

Scarre (1987:37-44) cites four factors which stimulate conditions of witch persecution: (1) witchcraft persecution as a reaction to disaster; (2) witch persecution as a weapon of confessional conflict; (3) functional explanations; and (4) witchcraft persecution as social control. All four factors attribute witchcraft to a response to a disaster.

a) **Witch persecution as a reaction to disaster**

In Europe, the peaks of witchcraft persecution were reached towards the end of the sixteenth century the period which particularly saw social and economic changes. This substantive issue explains the rise of witch-hunting which was a time bound phenomenon, beginning in the fifteenth century and ending by the early eighteenth century. During this period the European population decreased drastically while epidemic diseases and many years of famine abounded (Levack 1981:127). It is well-known that war and famine have destabilising effects which encourage witchcraft onslaughts as well. It is, however, not always true that major catastrophes would lead to witchcraft persecutions - in some instances they may serve as enabling factors in socially tense situations.
b)  *Witch persecution as a weapon of confessional conflict*

We have already argued that during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, both Catholics and Protestants found it useful to tar their opponents with the brush of witchcraft in order to demonstrate their own godliness. To be a Protestant in a Catholic territory, or a Catholic in a Protestant one, placed one at the risk of being charged with heresy and witchcraft. As both the church and state constantly desired to establish their authority over the populace, it is conceivable that decency been viewed as hostility and enmity. Sometimes action against dissidents may take the form of inflicting pain on them to discourage would-be dissidents. The very threat of accusation can thus serve as a regulatory device for keeping certain individuals under control!

c)  *Functional explanation*

Scarre (1987:40) argues that functional explanations of witch persecution in Europe are most convincing when they relate persecution to social or psychological needs. When offered as explanations of why witch persecution takes place, the functional explanation theory argues that the benefit that faces the persecutors serves as a motivating objective, and not merely a consequence of the persecution. According to this theory, witchcraft accusations can be instrumental in releasing dangerous social tensions, or in facilitating the ending of a personal relationship which has, for some reason, become insupportable. Witchcraft accusations can aid in the readjustment of relationships, the releasing of anxiety, or the regulation of social positions. But witchcraft activity is always a dangerous thing in the hands of people because it is transported by stereotypes of the evil witch and calls for the torture of the victims. It is foolproof and does not need a long elaborate process of proving one guilty of witchcraft for, in the majority of the cases, a witch is identified beforehand.
Witchcraft and social control

Some scholars have argued that witch persecution was largely an instrument of social control, a method employed by the powerful to extend or consolidate their hold over the weak (cf Scarre 1987:43-44). This was particularly true of situations where there was a scramble for religious or political domination. In a situation racked by religious or political disagreements which often spilled over into war, the preservation of popular obedience and loyalty was of urgent concern to states and churches alike, and no measures were spared to secure a religious or political conformity that appeared to many to be an essential bulwark against looming anarchy. This phenomenon is not unique to communities that believe in witchcraft. In South Africa the white minority government followed an ideology that brooked no different views. The preservation of popular obedience and loyalty to the state was of paramount importance, and no measures were spared to secure a political conformity that was seen by white Afrikaners as an essential bulwark against social disintegration. In this country ‘comrades’ and witch-hunters can thus be seen as examples of groups who have employed the same strategies to evidently suppress by using any means anything that smacked of deviation from the supposed prescribed norm.

The dichotomous problem of evil and good has occupied the human mind from times immemorial. All missionary religions of the world have been trying to increase their following. As a result, their failure to do so is often blamed on Satan. In their struggle for the hearts and minds of the people, anyone who is viewed as having dubious dealings with their religious enemies, is viewed with resentment. The same applies to secular rulers. The same theory may thus be employed to explain cases of witchcraft persecutions occurring in the Northern Province.
1. In Chapter Seven I argue that a person accused of witchcraft exposes certain marks, forms of behaviour or tendencies that render him/her vulnerable. An accused is not always innocent, but his/her crime may be difficult to prosecute in ordinary conventional courts, so witchcraft has become a potent tool to address the crime or behaviour that cannot otherwise be punished.
CHAPTER THREE

3. THEORIES AND EXPLANATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

Theories are always fair game for testing and subject to disconfirmation.

(Babbie 1989:493)

Theories in social relations have been discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and data analysis suitable for a study of the phenomenon of witchcraft. My contention is that the propositions about witchcraft beliefs and accusations can only make sense within a theoretical framework, through which the reader can trace logical sequences. Without a sound theoretical framework research becomes directionless, meaningless and cumbersome. Belief systems and anecdotal evidences of cultural traditions usually correspond roughly to the roles of theories (Babbie 1989: 493). A research process makes sense if it is according to some theoretical guidelines. Thus, in social research theories are always fair game for testing and subject to disconfirmation (:493). In addition, theory is sacred and every theory should be supported by unambiguous scientific evidence. Theory, therefore, functions as a vehicle through which research is transported to come to a logical conclusion.

In the following pages I thus intend analysing a few relevant sociological theories which will shed light on and provide clues for witchcraft persecution in the Northern Province. I consider these sociological theories essentially relevant to provide some explanations and clues as to the hidden motives behind witchcraft accusations. Although these theories might be compounded by reductionism they cannot be dismissed merely on that ground since they contain elements of the truth.
One of the theories on which I base the causative factors of witchcraft accusations and persecutions universally comprises statements and principles 'supposedly' grounded upon a social pattern, consisting of crisis, conflict and tension that are 'disposed of' through mythological and religious scapegoating - a phenomenon found among all communities of the world. By basic communities I mean communities founded on religious principles which guide them in their overall world-view. My contention is that there will be no stability as long as conditions which give rise to imbalances and inequalities exist in basic communities. Those who feel threatened, will attempt, guided by the belief in mythical cosmology, to bring about a situation of equilibrium as a chaotic situation cannot be tolerated in any society. Solutions to bring tranquillity to the society are, therefore, relentlessly sought. This study thus follows an approach that employs a pragmatic eclectic use of elements. The advantage of the eclectic use of elements is situated in the fact that a complete view of the phenomenon under study is achieved. Recommendations for solutions to the problem are comprehensive and cover a wider area of the solution. This approach is suitable since one of the primary objectives of this study is to sharpen community leaders' and workers' observation of social interactions since, although violence in communities takes on different patterns, its sources are usually similar.

3.1 Three Theoretical Approaches

By a theory we understand an instrument or a device that can be used as a heuristic tool to interpret reality. Although not a reality itself, it can serve as an instrument to guide a researcher in studying a particular social phenomenon. As such, it is a proposition or set of interrelated propositions that purports to explain a given social phenomenon (Bailey 1987:473).
The four theoretical approaches blended to inform, control and guide this study are mainly from Western origin. Since there are no theoretical approaches on the African continent (to my knowledge) which can explain the phenomenon under study. Most of the work on the subject has been done by Western scholars who have employed these theories. In order to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding witchcraft accusations, I will employ the theories already mentioned. I will, therefore, employ Western theories to explain the phenomenon. The works of Karl Marx, Durkheim and Mead have had an important influence on the development of theories in the social sciences. The French scholar, Durkheim, too contributed to the development of functionalism, a theoretical approach which has guided many scholars of religion - especially in the field of Sociology of Religion and Anthropology (Giddens 1997:560-580). According to the functionalist viewpoint, in studying any given society, we should note how its various 'parts' or institutions combine to give that society continuity and focus. Because human beings share experience and have learnt how to react at a given moment their behaviours or reactions to a given situation can be predicted.

Another theoretical approach which has particular relevance to this study is structuralism, that closely links our analysis to the study of language and its importance in witchcraft accusations. Structuralist thought was originally pioneered in Linguistics, and was then imported into the social sciences by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Straus (Giddens 1997:560). Its contributions are incorporated in this study.

In addition, the work of Karl Marx on the cause of conflict in society has relevance to this study. In witchcraft conflict the issues of resources and the struggle to share limited resources are very real. Jealousies, tensions, rumours, and strivings which give rise to witchcraft accusations are usually orchestrated by limited resources. A lack of resources in turn generates the disintegration of healthy relations and thus causes a host of other crises in the community. Such a situation furthermore leads to conflicts and other evils.
The work of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) as well sheds light on the development of the theoretical framework of this study in that. Mead emphasises the centrality of language and symbols as a whole in human social life. The perspective he developed was later called **symbolic interactionism**. Mead paid more attention to analysing small-scale processes than to the study of overall societies.

We will now discuss the relevance of these three theoretical approaches in the explanation of the causes of witchcraft accusations.

### 3.1.1 Functionalism

I consider Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and René Girard as the most important exponents of the functionalist theory because all four theoreticians view society as a system that seeks to attain equilibrium. In broad, their approach represents an instrumentalistic approach to the study of social phenomena. According to this approach, society uses cultural, religious, political or economic phenomena to achieve its perceived goal. Although their theories all four of them stress the function of society to achieve equilibrium.

The basic tenets of functionalism were developed in the nineteenth century. Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer proposed the basic principles of functionalism (Popenoe 1998:54) and maintained that a society is in many ways similar to a living organism. This statement contains the following three elements: first, a society, like a living thing, has a structure. Where an animal is made up of cells, tissues and organs, a society is likewise made up of groups, classes and institutions. Second, like an organism, a society is a system whose needs must be satisfied if it is to survive. Third, like the parts of a biological organism, the parts of a social system work together in an orderly way to maintain the well-being of the whole.
Thus, a society has a function that contributes towards a system which seeks equilibrium and stability (Popenoe et al 1998:54).

Durkheim, in turn, perfected the theory of functionalism. He regarded functional analysis as a key component in his formulation of the tasks of theorizing and research (Giddens 1997:561). Functionalism was further developed by anthropologists to assume its modern guise. Modern anthropologists still attempt to understand religion by studying various cultures. In their study (though reductionist in nature) they analyse the contributions and functions of social practices or institutions. As such, their study of social life is devoted to an analysis of the function of social items to reveal how each part plays a role in the continued existence of a society. According to Durkheim, for instance, religion reaffirms people's adherence to core social values, thereby contributing to the maintenance of social cohesion (Frazier 1975:142).

Functionalism focuses on the organisational structure of social life and bases its theoretical explanation on how societies function on the basis of the way in which the components of society are interrelated. From this paradigm, functionists pay special attention to the impact of broad economic, religious and political conditions on, for instance, delinquency rates and religious conflicts. In the following sections I will, therefore, indicate how this theoretical framework may be applied to the explanation of witchcraft accusations (Giddens 1997:561).

(i) Emile Durkheim - Functionalism Theory

Writing at the turn of the 21st century, the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, saw the major aim of society as the transmission of society's norms and values and, therefore, being in control of all individuals within it. He maintained that society can only survive if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity reinforced by its norms and
values (Haralambos & Holborn 1990:230) as a person is a social being and social relations constitute and determine much of his/her life. Human existence is thus shared existence, rendering dependence upon others as fundamental to living (Frazier 1975:131). As such social relationships and institutions are the bedrock in which human life is anchored and sustained. Society, however, gives its citizens a sensation of perpetual dependence.

Durkheim maintains that members of society are constrained by what he calls ‘social facts’, and ‘ways of acting, thinking and feeling’, external to the individual. These are endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control themselves (Haralambos & Helborn 1990:770). Beliefs and moral codes are passed on from one generation to the next and shared by the individuals who make up a society.

There is no doubt that the Marxist theory sheds important light on witchcraft beliefs among the people of the Northern Province. Members of African societies are expected to behave in the manner that is learnt and acceptable to the entire society. There exist ‘social facts’ and ways of acting, which if consciously contravened, constitute a serious crime. The majority of witchcraft accusations derive from the fact that the accused individual did not observe these facts. For instance, a person may be branded the child of a witch by the mere non-observance of a moment of a silence at a funeral, as the failure to behave in the prescribed manner is attributed to the witches.

Gelfand (1965:119-123) made the following observing about the Shona people: ‘Behaviour is a term which covers a great deal, but a study of a person’s conduct gives a good idea of his/her make-up and character’. Kindness, love and respect are qualities that African society expects from its members, while jealousy, slanderous talk and deceit are traits greatly disapproved of and regarded as tantamount to witchcraft. Greediness is another bad characteristic that is scorned as it is against the public interest for one person to eat more
than his/her share. In addition, an African is from an early age taught that happiness does not depend on mere physical attraction or beauty but on character. Since, honesty, kindness, proper behaviour, and consideration towards others, are virtues expected from each member of a group, the failure to maintain these virtues has far-reaching implications.

Moreover, much of Durkheim’s writing is concerned with functional analysis, seeking to understand the functions of social order. He correctly assumes that society has certain functional prerequisites, the most important of which is the need for ‘social order’ as African societies strive for maintaining a ‘collective conscience’ consisting of common beliefs and sentiments. Without this consensus or agreement on fundamental moral issues, social solidarity that is crucial for any form of co-existence, would be impossible and individuals would not be bound together to form an integrated social unit. It is thus correct to assume that some of the social conflicts raging among Africans in the Province result from the self-interest of some individuals.

Durkheim’s words are apt here: ‘For where interests is the only ruling force each individual finds him/herself in a state of war with every other’ as the collective conscience constrains individuals to act in terms of the requirements of society. Durkheim thus argues that ‘society has to be present in the individual’ (Haralambos & Horborn 1990:772).

(ii) Sigmund Freud’s Theory of Projection

Another theory which operates under the influence of functionalism is Sigmund Freud’s ‘projection theory’.

Scholars working from the premises of the projection theory still explain witchcraft according to the psychological projection theory of Sigmund Freud. The notion that all
objective religious actions are groundless because they can be explained away by psychological factors, is crucial for the discussion of witchcraft belief and persecution. Freud’s views on religion - especially on the theory of projection can assist us in explaining some witchcraft accusations. As witchcraft belief, as I have argued in Chapter Two, is religious and persecutions that accompany it are religiously sanctioned. I, therefore, find some merit in Freud’s claims that religion can serve as a form of projection of something for the society. If Freud’s views are not taken into account, I believe, the chances are remote that motives for witchcraft killings will ever be understood since most witchcraft accusations are projections of the evil in the accusers’ hearts that is projected as being in their victims as well.

Freud and Marx belonged to the same niche of intellectual history though they differed in certain crucial aspects. Both drew heavily on the thoughts of the French philosopher, Feuerbach, especially with regard to the concept of projection. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) held the view that religion is only the imaginative projection of human needs and hopes. He argued that humankind supposes, in its foolishness, that it has immediate contact with superhuman Reality, but is only communicating with itself (Trueblood 1957: 180). The same analogy can be made with regard to witchcraft beliefs. When people identify a witch they are merely identifying a probable adversary. What people accuse of being a witch is nothing but their enemy and ‘scapegoat’. Witches are personified hatred since people, when they accuse someone else of witchcraft, are not conscious of the projection of their hatred. They are overwhelmed by bitterness and delusion which are usually brought about by failed relationships. Witchcraft seeks to explain the ‘why’ of the accidents of life. In the majority of cases the explanation to mishaps is done in an irrational and ambiguous manner.

Freud’s thesis on religion begins with the incontestable fact that ‘humanity’ finds life extremely hard to endure. Death and sickness are the chief factors that threaten ‘human’ life.
There is, therefore, always some measure of privation - there is the suffering which is occasional by the animosity of nature; there are the evils of nature; and always, in the end, there is 'the painful riddle of death'. 'This intolerable situation is unacceptable so humankind, naturally, seeks a solution to this perennial problem' (Trueblood 1957:181). Humankind is in a serious search for solutions to rid itself of the terrors tormenting it. In this search for solutions to its problems humankind is overwhelmed by religious and mythical beliefs that often rob it of the ability to analyse and fathom the facts of life objectively.

One of the ways of getting around intolerable humanity problems is known as the 'humanization of nature'. If the universe is tamed and there are personal forces in it, humanity can do something about them, perhaps by appeasement or bribery or even by cursing them. Threatening clouds, for instance, may be appeased to be friendly or cursed to move away. Because these natural forces can be manipulated by the initiated for good or worse, those who have access to them are answerable to the society. They mediate on behalf of and guide those who seek help. In the African traditional setting we find 'nyanga' and priests/priestesses acting in this way.

Thus a store of ideas is created, born from the need of humanity to make its helplessness tolerable and to build up from the material of memories of the helplessness of its own childhood (Frazer 1975:110). The possession of these ideas not only protects humanity from dangers of nature and fate but also against the supposedly malicious injuries that threaten it from within human society itself. Freud calls this the gist of religion. Religion seeks to bring harmony to humankind but, according to Freud, uses the wrong methods in doing so (:111).

Freud calls all these ideas illusions. According to him an illusion is neither similar to an error, nor is it necessarily an error. It was, for example, an illusion of Columbus' that he had
discovered a new sea-route to the Indies when it was not the case (Frazer 1975:112). Illusions are derived from wishful human thinking. An illusion can be differentiated from a delusion because the former is not necessary false. In the case of delusions, the emphasis is on their being in contradiction with reality. A religious belief is an illusion when a wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so its relation to reality is disregarded, just as the illusion itself leaves no space for verification. Witchcraft beliefs and persecutions have much in common with Freud’s thesis. Freud’s theory might be defective but his observation about religion is striking. His theory cannot be refuted without substituting it with something better in an effort, in this case, to explain witchcraft killings in the Northern Province. Most witchcraft accusations can be said to be evil projected on enemies, serving as sacrifices for the crime they have not committed although they bear certain marks that render them vulnerable.

(iii) Conflict Theory of Karl Marx

Broadly speaking, Marxism can be subdivided along lines that correspond to the boundaries between functionalism, structuralism and symbolic interaction. Many Marxists have adopted a functionalist approach to historical materialism. The conflict theory is explicitly revealed in the work of Karl Marx. The Marxism theory begins with the simple observation: in order to survive, humans must produce food and material objects. In doing so they enter into social relationships with other people. In these relationships there are contradictions and inequalities that give rise to conflict. The major contradictions in society are between the forces and relations of production (Haralambos & Holborn 1991:11-16). My intention in this study is not to analyse Karl Marx’s theory of conflict but merely to show how it explains witchcraft conflict in societies.
In summary, the key to understanding a society from a Marxist perspective involves an analysis of its infrastructure. In all historical societies there are basic contradictions and fundamental conflicts of interest between the social groups involved in the production process. In particular, the relationship between the major social groups is one of exploitation and oppression, while the societal arrangement reflects the interests of the dominant group in the relations of production. The ideology of the ruling class distorts the true nature of society and serves to legitimize and justify the status quo (Haralambos & Holborn 1991:14).

The major contradictions which propel change, according to Marxism, are found in the economic infrastructure of a society. At the dawn of human history those contradictions did not exist, but were developed as societies became market oriented and more complex. At the beginning the means of production and products of labour were communally owned. The emergence of private property and private ownership of the means of production, however, introduced the fundamental contradiction of human society because through ownership of the means of production, a minority became able to control, command and enjoy the fruits of the labour of the majority. Since one group gains at the expense of the other, a conflict of interest exists between the minority who owns the means of production and the majority who performs productive labour. Marxism thus propounds that the tension and conflict generated by this contradiction constitutes the major dynamic of social change.

The question that now arises is how does the Marxist theory of conflict assist us in the development of a theoretical framework for our study of witchcraft? We are not specifically concerned with issues pertaining to the economy but with social relations and conflicts. However, economic ills affect the social setting and can give rise to social crises. Economic constraints thus play a role in conflict occasioned by witchcraft beliefs.
The unique contribution of Karl Marx’s analysis of society lies in the Marxist concept of the secret will to oppress that is built on the assumption that people have differences and conflicting interests. The notion that there are different groups in a society suggests the possibility of violent clashes of interests. Social arrangements will always tend to benefit some groups at the expense of others. Because of the existence of different interests, the potential for, and likelihood of, conflict is always present, especially when the interests of the dominant group are threatened. Different groups pursuing separate interests are, therefore, likely to clash and produce some degree of instability in a society (Haralambos & Holborn 1991:781). I regard this as the clue to the existence of the witchcraft problem in the Northern Province. Moreover, witchcraft accusations also serve as a form of control by those who happen to be in a powerful position.

Marx’s thesis which stipulates that a society forms a totality consisting of various parts that are interconnected and influence one another is worth noting. Thus economic, political, legal, and religious institutions can only be understood in terms of their mutual effect. Economic factors, however, according to Karl Marx, exert the primary influence and largely shape other aspects of society. We need to note that the history of human society is a process of tension and conflict. According to Marx, religious views, that are entirely illusory, are guilty of creating a false consciousness. Thus when religious beliefs justify economic arrangements, and the dominant concepts of the time define them as natural and meritable, members of a society are to a large extent robbed of the opportunity to observe the contradictions they contain. This spirit induces Marx to argue that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness (Haralambos & Holborn 1991:783). Here Marx conveys the idea that the status quo conceals the actual wrongs that are propelling society. In other words, people should move from the world of ideas to that of praxis in order to liberate
themselves. I, therefore, advocate that witchcraft issues should be viewed from this perspective.

Although Marx’s arguments contain a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities and reveal lack of precision I have found them useful as a point of departure for determining the causes of conflict in society. The majority of people involved in, or affected by, witchcraft persecution in the Northern Province are not aware of the economic, political, social, and religious phenomena that trigger the violence. To use Matsepe’s idiomatic expression, ‘society is like the sea’. The sea is capable of causing disturbances within itself and unleash waves that are violent and terrifying. One cannot, therefore, understand the nature of hurricanes without a profound knowledge of sea climatology. Because human society is capable of producing violence that can consume all its members, a careful study of social forces is paramount for quelling them. In other words, to merely study religion without applying these philosophical and psychological norms may rob researchers of the necessary depth they should attain in their studies.

(iv) The Scapegoat Theory of René Girard

A number of anthropologists (cf. Levack 1992:350) argue that in periods of social, political and religious uncertainty people are overwhelmed by fear, panic and hysteria. In an attempt to cope with the situation the society normally looks for scapegoats. Scapegoats can thus be seen as victims of general fears and tensions that they themselves have not caused. The assumption of the scapegoat in witchcraft persecutions governs my approach to this analysis of witchcraft in the Northern Province.

The three theoretical explanations of conflict in society discussed thus far tie in with the scapegoat theory and I will connect these three theories at the end of this section. The basic theory guiding this thesis is firmly located in the French scholar, René Girard’s, theory of
scapegoating. Girard (1982) asserts that collective persecutions, such as witchcraft persecutions and political revolutions, develop in society and give rise to mob mobilisation and persecution. Similarly, political terrors such as ‘necklacing’ in South Africa and witchcraft hunting worldwide belong to collective persecutions. In addition, Girard (1982:12-20) argues that spontaneous groupings of people aimed at committing collective murders are signs of a loss of social order evidenced by the disappearance of rules that define cultural differences, crimes that eliminate differences and the absence of difference that victims bear.

These three stereotypes (in addition to the three theories) define the genesis and character of witchcraft persecutions in all global communities where they occur. They manifest themselves in the weakening of normal cultural institutions and the favouring of spontaneous mob formation. Such voluntary gatherings of people exert an influence over and pressure on conventional institutions which keep the society together. Their goal is to weaken, destroy or replace the old order through uprisings and revolutions aimed at causing them to collapse and then to replace them entirely. The crucial question here is, therefore, to determine the causes of these spontaneous mass mobilisations and collective persecutions.

Such phenomena are not always produced by similar circumstances. In some instances they are caused by external factors, such as an epidemic, a severe drought, a flood followed by famine or a sudden death that occurred under mysterious circumstances. Sometimes the cause may be internal political disturbances, religious rivalry or social conflicts (Girard 1986:12). Such persecutions, once triggered, are then transported by religious myths and illusions that dilute the perception of the people. For instance, to believe that a person can be transported on a broom for a distance of 2 000 km in a single night is an illusion. The situation becomes even more ridiculous if such a person could not use the same weapons to defeat the colonisers who had taken the land from him.
The result of collective persecutions is normally severe loss of social order accompanied by the disappearance of the normal rules and the diversity that define cultural divisions and respect. In Chapter Two we have argued that descriptions of this loss of social order are found in the works of great writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Defoe, and Thomas Mann. The absence of difference or tolerance, the lack of cultural differentiation, and the confusion that results from such a lack are factors mentioned by all these writers. In 1697 the Portuguese monk, Fao de Santa Maria, (1697:112) wrote:

As soon as this violent and tempestuous spark is lit in a kingdom or a republic, magistrates are bewildered, people are terrified, the government thrown into disarray. Laws are no longer obeyed; business comes to a halt; families lose coherence, and the streets their lively atmosphere. Everything is reduced to extreme confusion. Everything goes to ruin ... People regardless of position or wealth are drowning in mortal sadness ... Those who were burying others yesterday are themselves buried today ... No pity is shown to friends since every sign of pity is dangerous.

This passage can be used as an apt description of the witchcraft craze in the Northern Province. The carnage tolerates no difference - it strives to create hegemony and uniformity, as expressed in the words 'No pity is shown to friends since every sign of pity is dangerous' and 'People, regardless of position or wealth, are drowning in mortal sadness ... Everything is reduced to extreme confusion'. In such a situation no difference of opinion is tolerated since those who dare to differ are eliminated under the guise of defending such a practice, however evil it may be. Since people are expected to be the same, any deviation from the rule, either by status or intellectual ability, is regarded as a crime. Stereotypes thus define human behaviour and conduct.

René Girard (1982:14) speaks of a stereotype of crisis which is to be recognised. Logically and chronologically, as the first stereotype of persecution. Where this stereotype exists cultural norms are somehow eclipsed as they become less differentiated and blurred. Once
this is understood, it becomes possible to understand the forces operating in witchcraft persecution - especially as practised by the youth in South Africa. People feel powerless when their cultural norms have been eclipsed and although they are disconcerted by the immensity of the disaster, they hardly ever look into the natural causes of those calamities. Cultural eclipse is a social crisis which is normally explained through social and moral causes. But, rather than blaming themselves for a social crisis, people inevitably look for scapegoats who can bear the blame. Blaming someone else who bears the signs of a victim for ones problems gives a false sense of relief to the persecutors. To look for a suspect for a moral crime reassures the persecutors that they are still in control of their lives and destiny. To be denied such reassurance often engenders blind violence. Therefore, social and religious stereotypes portrayed in myths are useful tools to guide the persecutors in their search for a suspect.

For instance, intense heat or freezing cold is blamed on the people who bear the signs of victims. The Northern Sotho TV 2 announcer, Silas Lemekoane, will, for instance, in forecasting the weather, say that the 'expected unusual' weather will make the witches happy. People regard such statements as normal as witches are known to be like that. In order to explain something depressing a scapegoat is needed to relieve the tension. Parrinder (1963:202) argues that society suffers from neuroses as do individuals. To rid itself from guilt society looks for a scapegoat on whom to blame its faults. Witchcraft persecutions cannot be suppressed as people will always seek ways to explain the ills of life in order to adjust themselves to its changes and chances.

The second stereotype is fed by the presence of differences in the victims of society. First, there are violent crimes that choose their suspects by the victims' role and position in the community. People with intimidating authority - caused either by their knowledge, status, prestige, or entrepreneurship - or those who are defenceless and who deserve care from the
society, are likely to be targeted. Strategically, persecutors attack the very social foundation and cultural order of the society in order to reach their goals. The social bond is initially loosened and thereafter totally destroyed (Girard 1982: 15). This is done in the belief that after the eradication of evil, the social bond will once again be firmly established. Ultimately, the persecutors must convince themselves that a small number of people, despite their relative weakness, are extremely harmful to the whole community (: 15). The stereotypical accusation justifies and facilitates this belief by forcefully assuming the role of mediator. It bridges the gap between the insignificance of the small group of 'supposed' evildoers and the enormity of the social body.

The fear induced into people by the eclipse of culture and the confusion accompanying it are signs of a community that is literally deprived of all that distinguishes one person from another for the purposes of molesting the victims. In such an atmosphere, virtues such as respect for life and property are totally disregarded. Victims are further negatively labelled to remove any sympathy which could make their persecutors reconsider. Once cultural norms are undermined, individuals are stripped of all that make them human through labelling. Resultantly, they are being reduced to a stage where they could be mercilessly attacked, especially since victims are identified, accused and tried in a manner that induces the crowd’s appetite for violence. Paradoxically, the traitors who undermine the stability of the community, uphold the dream of purging the community of the impure elements they infer are corrupting it. In this way they usually succeed in convincing all of the necessity of the action and in mobilising the crowd for action.

The fact that these beliefs and accusations are all juxtaposed in the witch-hunting in the Northern Province proves that they all respond to the same need. Suspects are accused not because of a crime they have committed but because they provide scapegoats for social crises that cannot otherwise be explained. The suspects are merely always accused of nocturnal
participation in a pact with Satan. Moreover, the legal system that suspects are subjected to is flawed since trials are formalities because suspects are found guilty before the legal process has even started. No proof is needed for a suspect to be convicted - not even his/her physical presence at the hearing is necessary. Trials that are normally held are merely reinforcements of the persecutors' convictions to carry out the violent action they have been contemplating for some time.

The third level of the stereotype concerns the choice of victims. It may be possible that the crimes that victims are accused of are real - someone might have died mysteriously, but victims are sometimes chosen because they belong to a class that is particularly susceptible to persecution rather than because of the crimes they have committed. Women, elderly people, children, and the extremely poor or rich are popular victims. Similarly, people with a fiery temperament, religious fanaticism, or being of the opposite sex, tend to polarize the potential persecutors against themselves. Minority, vulnerability and powerlessness are common criteria by which victims are selected. There are very few societies in the world that do not subject their minorities, the poor or merely distinct groups, to a certain form of discrimination and even persecution. There are, therefore, universal signs by which victims of violence are selected.

In addition to cultural and religious criteria there are purely physical criteria as well (Girard 1982:18). Prolonged illness, madness, genetic deformities, extreme poverty, and disabilities in general tend to polarize persecutors from victims. The very concept of abnormality, like the concept of plague in the Middle Ages, is something intolerable as it is both a taboo and curse (:18). The handicapped in the society are normally regarded as a burden and are as such subjected to discriminatory measures that give them the status of victims since their presence in the society disturbs the ease of social relations. Unless a government or even a
religious or political pressure group makes out a case for their benefit (like a preferential option for the poor or handicapped) they are relegated to the level of the despised.

Disability is generally regarded as a sign of a curse. In all social groups every individual who has difficulty in adapting, a stranger from another country with different features, an orphan, someone lonely and penniless, or even one who of a different colour is more or less synonymous to being a cripple. At times of social crises people who are perceived as handicapped and disabled are normally made scapegoats for disasters - a tendency that is clearly noticeable in racist cartoons and religious jargons in the newspapers. Societies have their own ways of getting rid of people who are supposed to be a burden. Religious norms are sometimes interfered with to obtain the desired objective, namely, of eliminating the unwanted or outcast.

The abnormality needs not only be physical. In many areas of existence or behaviour abnormality may function as the criterion for selecting those to be persecuted. For instance, among the Northern Sothos a person with large feet and hands is susceptible to accusations of witchcraft. But any person who exhibits a social abnormality - being physical, psychological, religious or moral - may be selected for persecution. Here the average defines the norm (Girard 1982:18): the further removed one is from the normal social status of whatever kind, the greater the risk of being singled out for persecution. This is especially applicable to those at the bottom of the social ladder because they are defenceless. In times of social turmoil the weakness of women, children and old people, the handicapped such as albinos, as well as the strength of the rich and the powerful, become weakness in the eyes of the mob.

The problem with functionalist thought is that it does not allow for dysfunctions that have disintegrative tendencies. Dysfunctions refer to aspects of social activity that tend to produce
change because they threaten social cohesion (Giddens 1997:562). It is, therefore, a mistake to suppose that religion is always functional - that it contributes only to social cohesion. When two groups support different ideologies major social conflicts may ensue and cause widespread social disruption. This is also seen where witchcraft accusation is orchestrated by one political party against the other, which may result in the dysfunctioning of the entire society. But where the group targets an individual who appears to be a community outcast there is a measure of cohesion among the group. Functionalist thought thus seems to be in operation in witchcraft related cases in the Northern Province. The following four functional requisites have to be present for a society to be orderly: the achievement of goals, adjustment to the environment, integration of the various parts of the society into a whole, and control of deviance (:563).

3.1.2 Structuralism

Like functionalism, structuralism is a product of Durkheim’s writings, although its main impetus lies in linguistics (Giddens 1997:564). The work of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), remains the most important foundation for this theory. According to Saussure, behind the words we use in a language lies a hidden meaning (:564). Saussure argues that the meaning of words derives from the structures of language, not from the objects to which the words refer. There are a large number of words in a language that do not refer to anything observable but nevertheless carry meaning (:565). There are, for instance, meaningful words which refer to mythical objects that do not existent in reality. If the meaning of a word does not derive from the object that it refers to, where does it come from? Saussure’s answer is that meaning is created by the differences between related concepts that the rules of a language recognise (Giddens 1997:563). The meaning of the word ‘tree’, for example, comes from the fact that we distinguish ‘tree’ from ‘bush’, ‘shrub’, ‘forest’, and a host of words which have similar but distinct meanings (:564). Meanings are
created internally within language, not by the objects in the world we refer to by means of them.

Examples abound in which the concept of structuralism can be used to explain some of the incidents in witchcraft related conflicts. An elderly woman may utter the following statement to a naughty boy in a community: “o tla di bona” literally meaning: “You will see them”. The meaning that may be derived from the statement is that mischievous behaviour has bad results, that bad behaviour certainly does not pay but depending on the relationship that exists between the two the statement may be taken to mean something else. It may be taken to mean swearing or threatening the boy with a magical spell. Should anything happen to the boy the incident would be interpreted as intended witchcraft. Any observation that can be systematically distinguished can be used to make meaning. In our example it is the supposed difference that the statement creates that results in it having a specific meaning in the life of the young man - not the actual words, for if nothing happens, the statement is taken as an empty threat or even a benevolent warning.

Led by Levi-Strauss - who popularised structuralism - the structuralist method of analysis has been employed in the examination of kinship, myth, religion, and other areas in this study. Because the study is also concerned with social conflicts emanating from kinship supported by mythical legends and religious beliefs that cannot otherwise be explained, the Structuralist theory is employed to prove or disprove the hypotheses that witchcraft is a relational problem. However, structuralist thought has weaknesses which limit its appeal as a general theoretical framework for this study. Structuralism may prove to be more relevant for analysing certain aspects of human behaviour, especially in the realm of language than for others. It is useful for exploring communication and culture, but is less applicable to more practical concerns of social life, such as economic or political activity. In African daily life what a person speaks and the context in which he/she does it, is crucial. One does not
crack jokes with a stranger or a person who differs from one in age or sex. Only cousins or friends may crack jokes and share in the laughter. It is a well-known fact that many witchcraft accusations result from incorrect use of words and speech.

3.1.3 Theories of Conflict

Theories about the causes of conflict in society abound. Scholars working within the perspective of the sociology of conflict argue that conflict mainly results from the continued existence of disagreements caused by the failure of society to fairly allocate its resources or to properly manage its affairs. Conflict theorists express the belief that societies are in a continual state of struggle when resources are scarce. Power is one of the scarce resources. Conflict theorists, therefore, argue that a society is best viewed as an arena in where there is a constant struggle for power and domination and where force is viewed as an effective tool to be employed to maintain order.

I regard witchcraft accusations and persecutions as primary forms of societal struggle and tension that lead to conflict especially in South Africa and the Northern Province. My contention is that witchcraft persecution manifested in the Northern Province and elsewhere, is not the responsibility of those who suffer from it since they are merely innocent victims although they may have contributed to their demise through ignorance. An explanation for the causes and persecutions should rather be sought in the structural arrangements of the specific societies. The existing conflict merely exposes the struggles among competing individuals and groups within the societies. It may, for example, be competition between those who want to impose hegemony on the rest of the community and those who resist it. Conflict ensues from a struggle between two or several parties. In order to explicate the theories of conflict, I rely on the contributions of selected thinkers such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and René Girard (1982) and indicate how these should
be analysed to explain witchcraft beliefs in contemporary societies. Further, I will plot an area around which the theory framework for this study should be developed by juxtaposing different theories cited in this study. Since various theories can be operating differently, but simultaneously, the proliferation of these theories encompasses the contribution of eclectic elements of all theories.

3.1.4 Symbolic Interaction

Mead argues that humans do not simply without thinking, react to the behaviour of others as animals but think carefully about what they are responding to, plan their responses and even rehearse them in their minds before acting. Furthermore, Mead stresses that human interaction is heavily influenced by cultural meanings and that most cultural meanings are symbolic. The black clothes that most funeral-goers wear, for instance, symbolise mourning while white clothes that church-goers wear symbolise being cleansed in the blood of Jesus.

The daily routines of members of societies, as well as their constant interaction with others, give structure and form to human relationships. Human life is organised around the repetition of behaviour patterns on a daily basis. These social interactions in everyday life, such as greetings, utterances in social context, gestures, facial expressions, as well as body and speech in interaction, contribute to creating impressions and build or destroy relationships. They shed light on larger social systems and institutions and the way in which these are managed. All large-scale social systems depend on the patterns of social interaction they engage in. The social context - being religious, political or economic - determines the particular character of the African world-view.
Northern Sotho Daily Life - An Example of Symbolic Interaction

The Northern Sotho daily routine is characterised by almost constant human interaction that gives structure and form to what the people do. The virtually constant social interaction allows them to learn a great deal about themselves as social beings, and about social life itself. Their lives are organised around the repetition of similar patterns of behaviour from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year. As a close-knit group, even their facial expressions tend to be innate, as well as their way of expressing emotion.

Studying Northern Sotho social interaction in everyday life thus sheds light on conflicts that may arise. All their large-scale social systems depend on the patterns of social interaction they engage in on a daily basis. In Chapter Four the African thought system, will be discussed in detail but in this section I merely demonstrate the applicability of symbolic interactionist approaches to the study of failed interpersonal relationships, especially those that lead to violence. The non-verbal impressions that people convey often reveal insincerity to others. Facial expressions, gestures and body postures that are interpreted as a show of hostility, may harm relationships. There are systems among Africans to promote healthy relations but certain kinds of pressure often exerted on society make the centre not to hold and when anxiety and tension are tearing a society apart non-facial expressions that are interpreted negatively may become elements that add fuel to the fire.

Social Rules and Talk

Although Northern Sotho people, like any other society on earth, routinely use non-verbal language in their behaviour, much of their interaction occurs through talk - casual verbal exchange - carried out in informal conversations with others. Language is, therefore, fundamental to their social life. In their day by day verbal exchange they try to make sense
of what others do and say. They can often only make sense of what others are saying in conversations if they know the social context which does not appear in the actual words themselves. The social context in which words are said is always crucial to the sense made of the words. The social context structures what is said. In every conversation shared understandings and knowledge brought into play by those concerned shape the relationships. In fact, the verbal exchange taking place between people is so complex that it is often impossible to programme it to convey exactly what people mean. A slight misunderstanding can prove to be catastrophic, among Northern Sotho people as well as elsewhere in the world.

Why do people get upset to the point of taking up arms when minor conventions of talk are not followed? The answer is that the stability and meaningfulness of their daily social life depend on the sharing of unstated cultural assumptions about what is said and why. If a communication problem for one reason or another happens and the situation is not corrected, irreversible social conflict may occur. In a society guided by beliefs in supernatural interventions and exploitation by people the result may be witchcraft pointing and accusations. A shared understanding is very important for healthy relationships to take root. A mistake people often make is that they take things for granted. People do not exercise what Goffman calls (cf Giddens 1997:75) ‘controlled alertness’. What people expect from others is the ability to demonstrate competence in controlling their behaviour in the routine of daily life. Failure to do so may be catastrophic.

(c) Slips of the Tongue

Mistakes in speech and pronunciation are often made in the course of conversations. In his investigation into the ‘psychopathology of everyday life’, Sigmund Freud analysed numerous examples of slips of the tongue (Gidden 1997:75). According to Freud, mistakes in
speaking, including mispronounced or misplaced words and stammering, are never accidental. They are unconsciously motivated by feelings that are repressed from the conscious mind. Quite often slips of the tongue constitute misunderstandings that later lead to witchcraft suspicions. A person who hurts others by slips of the tongue and cannot manage his/her behaviour exhibits traits which make him/her different and, therefore, liable to persecution. Moreover, people have the ability to see behind the mask of concealment to the ordinary individual behind. Given the specific social environment in which it is done, serious misunderstandings with far-reaching consequences may occur.

(d) Face, Body and Speech in Interaction

Giddens (1997:76) asserts that everyday interaction depends on subtle relationships between what we convey with our faces and bodies and what we express in words. Without being aware of it, each of us mostly keeps a light and continuous control over facial expression, bodily posture and movement in the course of our daily interaction with others. Sometimes, however, we make verbal slips and reveal what we wish to keep concealed, consciously or unconsciously. A large number of verbal slips at times inadvertently display our true feelings. If this revelation of feelings is seen as evil and sickening the Northern Sotho social context may attribute it to witchcraft.

(e) Impression Management

The sociologist Goffman (cf Giddens 1997:70) gives ten hints on social interaction taken from the theatre. He states that people are performing socially defined expectations that a person in a given social position should follow. To be a leader entails to hold a specific position, while the leader’s role consists of acting in specified ways towards his/her subjects. The elderly, weak, poor, and retarded persons are vulnerable when it comes to impression
management. Because of their weak position they often commit mistakes that cause them to be persecuted by those who are strong. They fail to perform as expected because they are weak.

Human beings act on the basis of meanings which they attach to behaviour and the conduct of others. Meanings arise from the process of interaction. They are created, modified, developed, and changed within interactional situations. In conflictual situations meanings are interpreted according to the relationship between the actor and the observer. By taking over the role of the other and interpreting the intentions of the other the decoder may take certain actions to correct what he/she thinks is wrong in the life of the perceived deviant.

3.1.5 Theoretical Pitfalls

This section sets out to indicate how one should assess and relate to the four theoretical approaches delineated in Chapter Four in the explanation of witchcraft accusation among African people. Although each obviously has its own advocates, there are respects in which they are complementary to one another. For instance, functionalism and some aspects of Marxism concentrate on large-scale properties of social phenomena or societies (Giddens 1997:566). They are mainly concerned with questions such as: ‘How do societies hold together and are mobilised for societal action?’ or ‘What are the main conditions producing social change?’ while structuralism focuses mainly on the cultural features of a society. Symbolic interaction, by contrast, concentrates on face-to-face contexts of social life (:567). We can, therefore, draw selectively on all four theoretical approaches in discussing and explicating a social phenomenon such as witchcraft belief and its resultant consequences in society, but we should admit that in certain respects these approaches do clash. Giddens (1997:567) calls these clashes theoretical dilemmas. But our concern is the contribution that
all four theoretical approaches make to explain the witchcraft problem. As such, their
differences are crucial to us as far as exposing the limitations and pitfalls of each approach
is concerned.

a) The first concern is human action and social structures. This concern involves
providing answers to the following questions: ‘How far are we creative as human
beings in actively controlling the conditions of our own lives?’ and ‘Does it mean that
what we do influences the general social forces outside our control?’ This issue has
for centuries occupied most social scientists. Symbolic interaction stresses the active,
creative components of human behaviour and provides a theoretical explanation that
is somehow different from functionalism, structuralism and Marxism since these three
emphasise the constraining nature of social influence on our actions.

b) A second theoretical dilemma concerns consensus and conflict in society. Some
standpoints found in functionalism emphasise the inherent order and harmony of
human societies. This view further holds that continuity and consensus are the
evident characteristics of society, however drastic changes may take place over time.
Our view here is that this is partially true of a society. Dissenters are normally
regarded as a threat to the normal flow of things. Because of the presence of
dissent in all societies it is inevitable to suppress violence from the majority. The
latter part of this theory finds expression in Marx and Weber who accentuate the
pervasiveness of social conflict. They regard societies as plagued by divisions,
tensions and struggles. To them it is illusory to claim that people tend to live
amicably with one another most of the time (Giddens 1997:567).

We now turn to a detailed discussion of each theory.
3.1.5.1 Pitfalls of Structure and Action

A major theme pursued by Durkheim and his followers is that societies exert social constraint over the actions of their citizens. He argues that society has primacy over the individual person and that society by far exceeds the sum total of its individuals. Durkheim remarks:

When I perform my duties as a brother, a husband or a citizen and carry out the commitments I have entered into, I fulfil obligations which are defined in law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions ... (cf Giddens 1997:569).

Although Durkheim has many adherents, he has many critics as well. What is 'society', the critics ask, if it is not the composite of many individual actions? If we study a group, we do not see a collective entity - only individuals interacting with one another in various ways. Society is merely many individuals behaving in regular ways in relation to one another. According to some critics, as human beings we have reasons for what we do, and we inhabit a social world permeated by cultural meanings. As such, people are not the creatures of society, but its creators (Giddens 1997:569).

(i) Assessment

The problem with functionalism is its assumption that any part of the social system is functional for the entire system. All parts of society are seen as working together for the maintenance and integration of society as a whole. Critics charge that functionalism largely ignores dissent and social conflict. By focusing so exclusively on order, stability and consensus, functionalism may even distort the true nature of society. Unlike the parts of an organism, the parts of society do not always function together for the benefit of the whole -
some societal parts are in conflict since some parts benefit at the expense of others. Merton (cf Haralambos & Holborn 1990:777-780) asserts that particularly in complex, highly differentiated societies, this ‘functional unity’ is doubtful. An example of the complexity of the religious pluralism of the South African society illustrates this point. In a society with a variety of faiths, religion may tend to divide rather than unite. We can, therefore, argue that functional unity is a matter of degree. Its extent must be determined by research rather than by simply beginning with the assumption that it exists.

Another problem with functionalism is its inability to recognise dysfunctions and non-functions of its assumption. This assumption states that ‘all standardised social or cultural forms have positive functions (Haralambos & Holborn 1990:777). However, this assumption is regarded as incorrect. The real situation is that society may be functional, dysfunctional or non-functional. The units that are functional, dysfunctional or non-functional may be individuals, groups or society as a whole. Witchcraft beliefs may thus be functional for society but dysfunctional to the witchcraft victims and their families or even to the entire society.

The next problem with functionalism concerns the logic of its inquiry. In particular, it could be argued that the type of explanation employed is ‘teleological’. Haralambos and Holborn (1990:778) define a teleological explanation as stating that the various parts of a system exist because of their beneficial consequences for the system as a whole. The objection to this type of reasoning is that it treats an effect as a cause while an effect cannot explain a cause since causes must always precede effects.

Despite the widespread criticism of functionalism, it should not be rejected out of hand. Durkheim’s work, for example, has provided insights which will help us understand and explain contemporary societal violence in the Northern Province. Although functionalism
has many flaws it remains useful, so many of its basic assumptions will guide our research into witchcraft accusations: a society should be seen as an integral whole although its parts are interdependent and direct human behaviour.

3.1.5.2 Pitfalls of Marxism

Karl Marx was a Renaissance, Enlightenment and Hegelian humanist. He was in favour of a direct struggle of humankind to realise its universality which has been limited by intolerable forces caused by external conditions. One of the most important doctrines of Marxism cautions the oppressed to be aware of the forces that control, dehumanise and alienate them, since they will eventually be led to a revolution which will, in turn, normalise relations when a classless society is created (:730). The immediate aim of the Marxists is, therefore, the formation of the proletariat into a class, the overthrow of bourgeois supremacy, and the conquest of political power by the proletariat.

As such, the main emphasis in the Marxist aim is to identify the common interests of the proletariat and directing the line of the march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletariat movement (McGovern 1981:38). By analysing history and the class struggle new tools are found through which a better future is promised. The realisation of this new future, in which the ideal society would be created, calls for a ‘conversion’ which will result in a transformed and desired world. Humanism and agitation to confront the existing evil social order and the establishment of a glorious new future are basic steps in Marxism. True humanity (to Marxists) emerges when there is a revolt against an enslaving system of culture, religion and tradition (West 1971:127).

The basic premise of this world-view is that revolt becomes something profoundly positive. One of the main concerns of conflict theorists has been to identify the dominant groups in
a society and to problematise or question the way they maintain their dominance - and in fact determine how they achieved their power in the first place. Opposition of the poor and powerless against the powerful may lead to significant social change.

Its own method is the most important feature of Marxism, and the key to understanding the nature of this doctrine. Marxism analyses society in terms of a class struggle and the results of this analysis are used to urge the oppressed to opt for revolution, which is presented to them as the only logical step they can take in their liberation struggle (McGovern 1981:39). The history of all existing societies, according to Karl Marx, is the history of class struggle: freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, oppressor and oppressed (Ebenstein 1956:723). Society, as a whole, is forever splitting up into two great hostile camps, great classes directly confronting each other - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Having identified the root cause of all misery, namely the exploitation and shameless brutality of bourgeois class interests, Marxism strives to do away with the miserable character of personal appropriation of property, under which the labourer lives merely to increase someone else's capital and is allowed to live only insofar as the interests of the ruling class require (Ebenstein 1956:731).

Another issue that is central to Marxism is espoused by (some branches of) Black Theology: 'determinism'. According to 'determinism', the mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. The philosophical basis of this assumption is that the class struggle is the necessary outcome of the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange. It is not the consciousness of humankind that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness (cf McGovern 1981:32).
Humans are compelled to act in terms of the constraints imposed by the economy and passively respond to impersonal forces rather than actively construct their own history. The proletariat is thus compelled by its economic situation to overthrow the bourgeoisie while the superstructure is determined by the infrastructure and human consciousness is shaped by economic forces independent of human will and beyond the control of humanity.

Scholars focussing on conflict theory have a radically different outlook. Their guiding assumptions can be outlined by taking the Marxist account of class conflict as an example. According to Marxism, societies are divided into classes with unequal resources. Since there are such marked inequalities, there are divisions of interest which are built into the social systems. These conflicts of interest may at some point break out into an active struggle between classes and generate a process of radical change. The Marxist theory of conflict is not only limited to class, but spreads to divisions between racial groups, political factions, sex, and religion. Whatever the conflict groups on which the emphasis is put, society is seen as essentially filled with tension - even the most stable social system represents an uneasy balance of antagonistic groupings (Giddens 1990:570).

(i) Assessment

As is the case with structure and action, this theory is useful for explaining a number of societal conflicts like witchcraft accusations. Both the consensus and conflict theories are useful for explaining the evil of the witchcraft struggle as the values different groups hold and the goals their members pursue often reflect a mixture of common and opposed interests.
Reductionism

Both structure or action and Marxist theories have inherent weaknesses because we encounter the problem of reductionism in their assumptions. Hall, Pilgrim and Cavanagh (cf Cox 1996:46) call reductionism a form of narrowness characterized by compartmentalisation. Reductionism refers to an approach that tends to explain societal phenomena (hence, reducing it) in terms of the methods employed and the conclusions reached according to preset procedures. Because of the assumptions made about society, observations and conclusions made about the phenomenon under investigation are made solely in terms of the assumptions. Such an approach ignores other methods that may be employed to explain the phenomenon under investigation. Explanations made in terms of pre-determined approaches may distort the phenomenon - at least from the point of view of the person actively involved in the phenomenon who may force data to conform to the presuppositions of a particular approach.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionists are concerned with explaining social actions in terms of the meanings that individuals attach to them. As already indicated, they tend to focus on small-scale interaction situations rather than on large-scale change. Critics of symbolic interactionism argue that single-minded focus of the approach on the way individuals interact fails to account for how people’s behaviour is often shaped by larger forces that are beyond their control. It is alleged that this approach ignores many of the effects of social structure on our lives. The approach seems to deny the constraints that history, society and the economy impose on people, while it creates a false impression of unlimited personal freedom as well.
Scholars operating within the symbolic interactionist theory argue that human beings interact in terms of symbols, the most important of which are contained in language. Without symbols there would be no human interaction and no human society because humans have no instinct to direct their behaviour. In order to survive humans must, therefore, construct and live within a meaning (Haralambos & Holborn 1990:799). Meaning is imposed on the world of nature via symbols so that human interaction with that world is made possible. Humans are seen as both actively creating the social environment and being shaped by it. Individuals initiate and direct their own action while at the same time being influenced by the attitudes and expectations of others to form their world-view. The individual and society are regarded as inseparable for the individual can only realise his/her humanity through others. In this context he/she develops a space to relate to others and to him/herself. Without communication in terms of symbols whose meanings are shared, these processes would not be possible (:801). Humanity, therefore, lives in a world of symbols which give meaning and significance to life and provide the basis for human interaction.

Fred Davis’ argument on physical handicap and social interaction (cf Haralambos & Holborn 1990:803) is useful for this study. In an article entitled “Deviance Disavowal: The Management of Strained Interaction by the Visibly Handicapped”, Davis argues that a handicapped person may wish to present him/herself as ‘someone who is merely different physically but not socially unfit”. Such people seek to achieve ease and naturalness in their interaction with others, but their handicap poses a number of threats to the type of sociability they desire. Because they are defined as different, odd and something other than normal by those who do not share their disability, they can easily become victims of various forms of persecution. Disability would include a physical handicap, advanced age, poverty, gender (in patriarchal societies), or even not sharing a political ideology that is a driving force in a certain society.
According to Davis (:804), threats to sociability may arise from the possibility that the handicap will lead to displays of emotion which exceed acceptable limits. Thus, normals may be openly shocked, disgusted, pitying, or fearful. Such emotional displays, Davis contends, overstep what is usually considered appropriate, thereby placing strain on the action.

(i) **Assessment**

Interactionists have been accused of examining human interaction in a vacuum. Critics further argue that interactionists have concentrated on particular situations and encounters rather than on the historical events that caused them or the wider social framework in which they occur. The lack of sufficient attention in this respect is regarded as a serious omission. They are further criticised because they have largely failed to explain why people consistently choose to act in given ways in certain situations, instead of in all other ways they might possibly have acted. They are also accused of failing to adequately explain how standardised normative behaviour comes about and why members of society are motivated to act in terms of social norms (cf Haralambos & Holborn 1990:805).

Symbolic interactionism is also seen as a distinctly Western brand and this aspect is often cited to explain its shortcomings. It is argued that interactionism is largely a reflection of the cultural ideals of Western societies, especially American (cf Haralambos & Holborn 1990:806). Shaskolsky (:806) argues that interactionism has its roots firmly anchored in the cultural environment of American life, and its interpretation of society. Thus, the emphasis on liberty, freedom and individuality in interactionism can in part be seen as a reflection of America’s view of itself. As such, some scholars may claim that the interactionist perspective finds little support in Africa because of the African communal view of life. Whatever its shortcomings and how irrelevant they may appear to African culture, we still
find social processes which cannot be explained except by the interactionist theory. Since humanity shares many things, consciously or unconsciously, it cannot be denied that Africans possess a sense of individualism amidst the overriding feeling of communalism. It is, therefore, true that some of the most fascinating symbolic interactionist traditions are found in Africa.

Assessing theories that explain human behaviour is both a challenging and formidable task. As human behaviour is complicated and many-sided, it is very unlikely that a single theoretical perspective could cover all its aspects. As Giddens (1997:578) aptly puts it, diversity in theoretical thinking provides a rich source of ideas that can be drawn on to explain a social phenomenon. It has been apparent that the four main theoretical approaches discussed in this chapter (functionalism, structuralism, Marxism and symbolic interactionism) are complementary to one another. But there are also marked differences between them which influence the ways in which social issues are handled. The daunting task facing us at this point is the way in which to relate human action to the social problem of witchcraft. In the following chapter I will thus explain cases of witchcraft accusations by using the theoretical "glasses" provided by these four theoretical approaches.

The central thesis that we have been trying to develop in this section is that in times of social crises society adopts stereotypes that would eliminate the distinctions that exist between normal and abnormal behaviour. The theory previously discussed in this study partly explains the tensions resulting from quarrels and jealousy within societies. Certain people are picked out as victims solely because they bear signs that make them different from the group and as such, they are accused of crimes that would eliminate their bearing such signs. As their selection as victims is based on their bearing the signs of victims, it can be inferred that their distinctiveness which renders them susceptible to persecution is based on differences inside the system. Such differences are influenced by a large number of factors
ranging from colonial rule to natural disasters, as well as the manifold changes occasioned by overpopulation and harsh economic realities.

Differences outside the system constitute the second stage of difference which makes a society pick out its victims. In every culture everyone perceives of oneself as being different from all others, while considering such differences as legitimate as well. This feeling is normal, but if it threatens the very system a problem arises. A difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it exposes the system, its relativity, its fragility as well as its mortality. To complicate matters, foreigners and outsiders are seen as incapable of respecting the real cultural norms of the insiders since they have difficulty in perceiving exactly what is sacred and needs respect in a given society.

The existence of inside and outside differences has caused the Northern Sotho people to distinguish between two sets of witches. There are born witches who fall under the human noun class of ‘Mo-Ba’, namely ‘moloi’ (‘witch’ singular) and ‘baloi’ (‘witches’ plural). This further underlines the fact that witches will always be there because linguistically they are regarded as part of us. Another set of witches consists of foreigners. Foreigners fall in the second noun class of ‘Le - Ma’ (‘Lezulu’ - Zulu singular ‘makgowa’ - ‘white people’ - plural). Because they do not fall in the first noun class of humans they are not really regarded as human beings. The ‘Le-Ma’ class is a class of things e.g. ‘Lebitla’ (‘grave’ singular) and ‘Mabitla’ (‘graves’ - plural), ‘Lewika’ (‘rock’ singular) and ‘Maswika’ (rocks - plural).

In times of national social crises foreigners are likely to become the first suspects. In the absence of any marked differences between the ‘insiders’, ‘outsiders’ should bear the blame. Foreign hawkers in the big cities of South Africa serve as a classic example. On Wednesday, 22 October 1997, the Hawker Association took to the streets to demonstrate against foreign
hawkers who were allegedly occupying their market (The Citizen 23 October 1997). As such, foreign hawkers were being made scapegoats for the poor performances of the local hawkers.

Moreover, stereotypes of persecution are universal and found in all cultures. Religious and ethnic minorities as well as outsiders are often reproached not only for their otherness but for not being as different or as similar as expected as well. Paradoxically, violent persecutions may be the result of the loss of difference, the presence of difference or of possessing marks that suggest a victim because of the absence of difference.

My contention in the preceding sections has been that there are large numbers of theories that may be employed to account for the existence of witchcraft persecutions in the Northern Province. For instance, Freudian and Marxist theories of societal conflict shed some light on the formation of tension and eventual violence in a society. Emile Durkheim’s theory emphasises the need to integrate the parts of a society, but people must accept this need. These shared values, we may argue, serve as a kind of ‘glue’ holding a society together. If the ‘glue’ can no longer hold the society together, social stability will break down, resulting in violence. Defective as these theories may be, there are some issues in societal conflicts that cannot be explained except by falling back on these theories. Furthermore, it has been revealed that religion informs human behaviour and action. It eclipses reason and encourages behaviour which, when carefully scrutinised, may appear ridiculous even to the believer. Burning a person alive is a kind of behaviour that cannot be explained as normal and legitimate. My criticism of projection theories in Chapter Four does, however, suggest reasons for this kind of unnatural human behaviour.

The scapegoat theory adds another dimension to the overall strategy of this study. Society gives rise to persecution and the legitimation thereof. Stereotypes of crises come about as
a result of tension, while jealousy and revenge blur reason and common sense. Social conformity within a group often ignores the fundamental fact that people differ and space should be created to accommodate differences.

The most important fact to note is that collective persecution is a weapon used to maintain the status quo and hegemony. As change is threatening it must be resisted at times. However, any change that happens as a result of someone's failure to act correctly and timeously is inevitably blamed on a scapegoat. Portioning blame to others, especially those who have been labelled enemies of society, gives a feeling of false satisfaction to the persecutors by making them feel that they have executed their societal responsibilities judiciously. Tribal myths as well play a vital role in preparing subjects to readily accept the logic of collective persecution.

The third dimension of my theory concerns environmental factors that assist in the conveyance of the belief, namely animism in the case of traditional African belief and dualism in the case of christianised Africans. These factors play a vital role in sanctioning witchcraft beliefs among the people of the Northern Province. In addition, the nature of belief is impregnated with personal forms. For Christians, for instance, the battle between the Devil and the benign God supports the belief in the existence of representatives of the Devil among the people.

The fourth dimension is that of symbolic interaction. Blumer (Popenoe 1998:64) refined the theory of symbolic interaction, basing his viewpoint on three basic principles. First, we act towards things according to the meaning we attach to them. Second, the meaning we attach to things results from social interaction. Third, in any situation, we go through an internal process of interpretation - we talk to ourselves in order to give the situation meaning and decide how to act upon it.
ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Humanity feels insecure if it experiences the world to be chaotic, hostile and threatening its relative security. Humanity would not relent in transforming a threatening chaos into a meaningful whole to reassure its existence (Kruger 1995:55).

2. My contention is that human experience is basically the same all over the world although it may portray some different shades and depth. Illness and death inflict pain and suffering on humanity but the way in which humanity reacts to these phenomena seems to be the same everywhere perhaps because humanity shares experience and one origin.

3. Animism is based on the assumption that the universe is a whole and that hidden connections exist among all natural phenomena. The witch attempts through his/her knowledge and power to control these connections in order to effect the practical results he/she desires (Russel 1980:18). More of this concept in Chapter Four under the section dealing with the animism theory.

4. The question of power is a very complex one in an African traditional setting. A bereaved family occupies a position of power because of its position which evokes sympathy from the people. What the bereaved family says is usually believed. A poor person, especially if, in the eyes of the community, he/she is wronged, occupies a position of power as well. Any complaints from him/her elucidate sympathy from the mass. So the concept of power is extremely complex in an African traditional setting.

5. Noun classes are further discussed in Chapter Four when African cosmology is discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. THE AFRICAN SYSTEM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION

So deeply rooted are some errors that ages cannot remove them. The poisonous tree that once overshadowed the land may be cut down by the sturdy efforts of sages and philosophers; the sun may shine clearly upon spots where venomous things once nestled in security and shade; but still the entangled roots are stretched beneath the surface, and may be found by those who dig.

(Charles Mackay)

Chapter Four concentrates on a discussion of the African philosophical conceptual scheme as pronounced by the three ethnic groups inhabiting the Northern Province, namely the Sothos, Tsongas and Vendas. References to other African tribes are also made for the sake of comparison and amplification of the spread of the African conceptual scheme of things. The inclusion of other African tribes in the discussion is essential because African religion and practices are found in more or less the same form in the rest of the continent except in Islamic African countries.

The African religious world centres around three principles: a belief in a Supreme God, a realm of spirits and humanness based on the principle of a unified community (Kruger, Lubbe & Steyn 1995:20). These three branches of African cosmology represent additional smaller branches to which other conceptions are attached. Religion is a pivotal pillar around which all other conceptions are built. It is in fact not possible to find African people who are not religious. The religious language expressed through folklores, proverbs, myths, taboos and totems, for example, play an important role in the sustenance of the African world-view. In studying these phenomena one should, however, constantly guard against the
Western Christian world view which, over the years, has tried to evaluate African cosmology in terms of the Christian way of looking at things.¹

4.1 Enabling Environmental Factors

Understanding witchcraft persecution and developing a sound theoretical framework for the study need a background study of enabling beliefs in African cosmology. There are various positions regarding the origin and nature of societal conflict, such as witchcraft persecutions. These positions should be differentiated from the theories of origin of conflict because they are merely conditional factors. In this study, I will limit myself to two factors that serve as guiding forces to the nature of belief in evil and its resultant conflict, namely the theories of animism and dualism.

4.1.1 A Supreme Being

Throughout most of Africa there is a belief in God who created everything. Among the three main branches of the Sotho, namely the Tswanas, the South and North Sothos, who constitute the object of this study, this God is referred to as Modimo (God). He is one and the same God as the God of the Christian and Muslim religions, as Setiloane (1975:157) remarks:

Modimo is one ... for the Sotho-Tswana it is a statement so obvious as to seem absurd. Modimo ... has no plural without a radical change of meaning. There is no being whom they could begin to compare with Him.

Although Setiloane regards Modimo as impersonal this does not mean He is adored and respected. But God is only impersonal as long as His role for all practical purposes has been taken over by the ancestors. The ancestors have a more direct relationship with their subjects
than God does. It is only the Western Christian influence that makes Africans try to personalise God.

Gyekye (1987:68) recounts that the same belief exists among the Akan people of Ghana, as the following phrase taken from their prayer of libation reveals:

Supreme God, who is alone great, upon whom men lean and do not fall, receive this wine and drink...

Given this fact, a logical question to be answered concerns the nature of the relationship of the Sotho-Tswana people on the one hand and the Supreme Being on the other. In most communities in Africa God is seen as being rather remote from daily life, although He is not forgotten. He remains eminent although He is not to be bothered with childish and foolish requests. Where people can, they do without Him because they are afraid of making serious errors of protocol. Moreover, they feel that they may even evoke the anger of their ancestors. The generally accepted view is contained in a myth that recounts how the separation between human beings and God came about. The myth has it that people, like children used to report any matter on which they differed among themselves to God, including trivial issues. Since they were disturbing God with their endless enquiries, He could no longer concentrate on His deep thoughts. As a result of these blunders and a lack of knowledge of protocol, God withdrew Himself to where He is now. It should, however, be added here that the withdrawal of the Supreme Being from His people should not in any way be seen as a negative aspect of their religion. Most Africans have a deep-rooted feeling that the more inaccessible God seems to be, the greater and more efficacious He is to their needs. If it rains, and the crops are in abundance and people are healthy, God is regarded as equally satisfied. They thus believe that He should be left in peace although He could sometimes be venerated as a token of respect and unforgettableness.
African religion has often been seen as failing to comply with the set standards usually assigned to religion. Because it is not systematically arranged within a fixed set of intellectual statements of belief and fixed dogmas, it has been relegated to the realm of superstition. It is, therefore, imperative to guard against the subtle self-imposing Western categories when looking at primal religions.

Modimo is thus seen as the Absolute Reality, the origin of all things, the sole and whole explanation of the universe, the source of all existence. The Absolute Reality is beyond and independent of the restrictions of time, space and cause. Modimo transcends time and is thus free from the limitations of time and space. As the ultimate source of being, Modimo created everything that lives, including the deities or lesser spirits that are in his employment, out of nothing. He is mohlodi, ‘the creator and originator of everything’. The names ascribed to Modimo and their significations indicate that Modimo is the ultimate reality, an attribution signifying that all things are dependent upon Him. Modimo is the elder (yo mogolo), the progenitor, the primordial ancestor. Modimo is the uncreated and first cause, independent of all other beings that exist (Gyekye 1987:72).

Mönnig, in his study of the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland, found that in addition to the concept of Modimo (God), Modimo has a personal name, Kgobe (cf Kgatla 1992:40). Because Modimo is used in the Tswana and Sotho Bibles and by missionaries, who when preaching, frequently refer to Modimo, other names have been excluded from the Bible. The whole concept of Kgobe, as well as that of his son, Kgobeane, has practically been lost as a result of the influence of Christianity (Mönnig 1967:45). Kgobe, as a name, embodies the characteristics of God. An expression such as: ‘Ke motho wa Kgobe’ (he is a person of God) which is used to describe the truthful or pure, innocent personhood of God, is still used. It is, therefore, clear that God is seen as the personification of all truthfulness, cleanliness and purity.
Because of the absence of direct worship and contact with **Modimo** in the traditional religion the most important part of the religious beliefs of the Tswana-Sotho is the ancestor cult: the belief in the immortality of the soul. The approach to God is regarded as a corporeal act performed by the whole community, consisting of both the living and the departed. This approach does not take place in ordinary communication. When, for example, someone wants to approach his father, he does not do so directly. He first starts a chain reaction by asking his brother to relay his request to his elder brother who passes it on to the father. The father, in turn, approaches his own father, who is supposed to approach his own father, and so on (cf Kgatla 1992:41). This approach not only ensures effective communication but also a corporate approach which acknowledges seniority in the family and the tribe as a whole. No one should ever feel excluded and marginalised because that is an evil thought. Oneness, reliability and trustworthiness are virtues that make a person a person - one who lacks these virtues is not regarded as a complete person.

### 4.1.2 The Realm of Spirits

Most African people believe in the existence of nature spirits, deities and ancestral spirits. For the purposes of this study, nature spirits and deities or gods are distinguished from ancestor spirits. It should be noted from the onset that there are vague beliefs about the role and function of nature spirits, but consensus on the fact that they are feared and revered.

### 4.1.3 Nature Spirits and Lesser Gods

Generally speaking, the whole of nature and all life are, in terms of African ontology, permeated with the presence of power. Africans see themselves as related to potent powers that reside in natural phenomena inhabiting the cosmos. These powers are manifested in natural centres like high mountains, deep rivers, lakes, dense forests, hills, waterfalls - and
even in people with exceptionally huge physical features. Africans honour these spirits and constantly seek ways and means, through an initiated spirit person, to avoid provoking them or endangering their own relationship with these spirits. For instance, one may not climb unusually high mountains or cross a rising river for fear of transgressing into the territory of the nature spirits. Young people who go out into the veld are normally coaxed not to interfere with the nature spirits or are ritually treated to be protected from the vengeance of these spirits. Nature is never seen as an empty space that is inherently innocent, but as dangerous and destructive. Unfortunately, the majority of Africans believe that evil and silly people take advantage of the presence of these powers to hurt others.

It is believed that witches would use the potent power of nature spirits to harm their victims. Nature spirits are regarded as imminent when interfered with, but otherwise they are seen as harmless. However, witches would, as a result of their evil hearts, empty nature spirits and divert them from their normal functions by using them for their own evil purposes, although nature spirits are not worshipped as such. It should moreover be noted that the Sotho concept of ‘spirit’ does not differ from that of ‘deity’. They are all spirits and, therefore, seen as one and the same thing.

4.1.4 The Ancestor Spirits

Sawyerr (cf Parratt 1994:43) cautions that the concept ‘ancestor worship’ has become devalued to such an extent that it has lost its original meaning. Any attempt to examine it is immediately contaminated with negativity because of the traditional interpretation given to the belief. He (:43) sees these negative connotations manifesting themselves either in the forthright suggestions that ancestor worship is abominable idolatry or in a denial that anything worth any attention takes place in the worship. This is further compounded by the
belief that ancestors come to descendants in dreams, so nothing can be tested empirically in this regard.

In this section attention is given to a discussion of the ancestors with special emphasis on the role they are believed to play in the general life of the community and how this can be linked to the belief in witchcraft. Sawyerr’s (cf Parratt 1994:43) categorisation of the ancestors is applicable to Africans living in the Northern Province. He divides the ancestors into several categories, a categorisation that clarify the whole system of ancestor worship (:45):

1) There are ancestors who can be classified according to direct genealogy. These are the ancestors who have direct family links, for example, grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, and the various in-law combinations formed by marriage.

2) Ancestors associated through professional expertise such as hunters, farmers and warriors who have contributed to the nationhood of the tribe or village. These have acquired popularity because of special services they have rendered to the entire community. This category of ancestors is, however, diminishing because of modernisation and the concentration of all duties of national interest in the modern national government.

These two main varieties overlap because the same is assigned to both groups of ancestors - they merely act as intermediatories. They are also varied because each clan may experience a particular problem ascribed to its ancestors and may want to venerate them privately. Where ancestors are, for example, venerated in times of peace and tranquillity the whole community is involved and the ancestors are given respect corporeally.
The direct influence of the ancestors on their subjects is, however, in inverse relationship to the date of their death. That means the longer the interval after their death, the more remote their memory becomes, and their direct authority accordingly diminishes. Little thought is given to the quality of their waning away, probably because of the fact that those who replace them in an eminent relationship are equally authentic and effective.

Most of the Sothos living in the Northern Province use snuff, beer and meat during veneration rites to the ancestors. Snuff and liquor are normally consumed by the elderly people and it would appear that the descendants regard these two as important means of appeasement of the ancestors. At the rituals planned for the ancestors snuff is normally used at the grave-site. As the priest introduces him/herself he/she would pour some snuff on the grave. The requests or announcements from the descendants are conveyed as the snuff is being poured. In the majority of cases liquor is used as a means of libation to a family. A small aloe is normally planted at the corner of the ‘lapa’ to serve as a symbol of the presence of the ancestors. The blood of a sacrificial animal may also be sprinkled around the aloe where beer is not used or otherwise the bones of a slaughtered animal are left around the aloe after the meal. This ritual conveys that the ancestors did partake in the meal with their subjects so the left over bones are left at the stem of the planted aloe to testify to that fact. This ritual could be compared to the Christian Eucharist where it is assumed that during the Holy Communion God is present and blesses everybody present.

There are three main types of ancestral rites. They are, like the categories of the ancestors, interrelated. The following types of ancestral rules are recognised, at least by the majority of Africans residing in the Province:
1) Goodwill offerings

These offerings are often observed when the first anniversary of the death of an individual is celebrated or when members of the family are about to undertake some venture, for example, getting married or leaving home for work or school. The purpose of this rite seems to be to evoke the goodwill of the ancestors to stop further deaths from coming to the family, or to protect members of the family as they leave the family or to register an acknowledgement of the presence of the ancestors.

2) Thank offerings are made for the perceived contributions of the ancestors towards the welfare of the clan or tribe. This may be as a result of good rains which led to a good harvest, the success of children at school or at work, the recovery from illness, or the birth of a child.

3) Propitiatory offerings towards a member or a friend if a member of the family dreams of a deceased ancestor who complains about something. This could be as a result of death, disaster, illness or punishment thought to be coming from dissatisfied ancestors. The effect of these offerings is to pass on a petition to the ancestors to be pacified so that normality can be restored to life. This offering can also be made following a natural disaster like a thunderstorm, drought and floods to prevent further dangers striking the community.

The living members of the family are intricately joined to the ancestors. The latter are assumed to be more experienced, beneficent and caring but in need of constant attention. They must be venerated, respected and kept in life-long dialogue. They are regarded as having acquired extra power after death and can influence natural trends for good or bad. They, therefore, need entertainment in the form of beer, snuff, meat, and dance like any other human being.
4.2 Being and Causality

Africans perceive of nature as a medley of presences. The Supreme Being, nature spirits, the ancestors, and other natural forces occupy space and creation. They are all considered invisible and unperceivable to the naked eye, but are believed to be real. Africans thus perceive of nature as animated and real. Because it is essentially endowed or charged with power, nature is seen as awesome and threatening to life. The blaze of a flash of lightning, the frightening din of a clap of thunder, the destruction of a gale-force wind, all give the impression of a presence within nature (Parrat 1994:1). The strange behaviour of a night-owl, hyena or any other wild animal that preys on domesticated animals and go out at night when others have gone to sleep, convinces Africans that the specific animal must possess special qualities derived from the possession of special powers. Similar ideas are held about trees that are extremely huge, as well as stones and rocks of peculiar shapes and sizes. It is thus clear that all factors that constitute the African environment are attributed some special power.

In reality everything that an African encounters, that takes him/her by surprise, while all that fascinate and fill him/her with wonder, belong to the world of power. They believe that what is real shows itself to people in its concealment. Those who have thus been initiated in a special art, would benefit from the concealment of a natural power. It is both good and bad to become aware and take advantage of the presence of power in nature. It is good to become aware of its presence and respond to it in ways that would not be dangerous to society. By contrast, it is wrong if one takes advantage of it and other harmful means to excel over others by acquiring fame and wealth. It is wrong if one becomes extremely poor as well because such poverty is ascribed to indulgence in the mystery of natural power.
It is important to note that African people living in the Northern Province maintain a doctrine of universal causation as well. To them everything has a cause. Hence, the proverb: “A person’s skin is not stretched on the floor” that means that human death cannot be blamed on natural causes but on another person or being who has employed natural causes.

Gyekye (1987:76-80) found a similar belief among the Akan people of Ghana. The Akan regard any natural occurrence that does not fit into their conception of the normal order of things as in need of supernatural clarification. Phenomena such as an usually long period of drought, a tree falling and killing a person, or a snake biting a farmer on his way to his farm, a person being killed in a car accident, are regarded as not being caused by an evocation of natural power.

Occurrences characterised by infrequency, those that are abnormal, discreet and isolate, puzzling, bizarre and incomprehensible, are treated with extreme suspicion. It is not that African people do not know that a person involved in a car accident may die or that a snake can bite a person. The question they impose is not ‘Why did the car kill the person?’ but ‘Why did that car kill that particular person on that particular spot and at that time?’ To them the posing of such questions suggests that events like a car accident and the biting of a snake cannot be the ultimate cause but that they can only be means used to arrive at the incident. Those events in themselves are deemed innocent or unsatisfactory to explain their effects. It is and can only be an ultimate or a supernatural cause that caused the death of someone (Gyekye 1987:81).

From the conceptual scheme sketched above we may observe that Africans direct their attention to the situation of the individual as a victim of an occurrence but not to the incident as such. In Western thought ‘cause and effect’ follow physical laws - for instance, an object moves because it has been pushed by another that has a greater force. Africans, however,
regard it as possible for a person who possesses some supernatural power to perform certain rites, while an ordinary object, such as a stone or a tree, can cease to be a mere something through acquiring a new dimension of power. This change may be caused by obeying orders from a person who employs supernatural powers to perform a trick. Accordingly, a witch may cause a person and a car to transcend the physical laws of cause and effect and start moving as he/she wishes it to move. A witch can wish a person dead and that person will then die as a result of that wish. African thought thus distinguishes between accidents and extraordinary events.

The Sotho doctrine of being, for example, provides the metaphysical framework for analysing and understanding the Sotho concept of cause. The world is perceived as a world of actions, animated with spirits endowed with powers of varying capabilities. People who are evil at heart and who wish to harm others can gain access to spiritual powers and use them for their own selfish and evil ends.

Gyekye (1987:80) recounts a similar pattern of thought that exists among the Akan people of Ghana. Among the Akan people, as among the Sothos of the Northern Province of South Africa, religious thought provides causal explanations for events that do not force themselves into a regular scheme of things. For Africans, extraordinary events give rise to the question ‘Why?’. The ‘why-question’ is understood in two ways. The first way relates to situations considered normal, ordinary and easily understandable (Gyekye 1987:80). In the first category, explanations would be given in empirical and naturalistic terms. An example of such a why-question is: ‘Why did the dog bite the child?’ The incident might be blamed on the one who provoked the dog or who went into the area where there was a vicious dog. Such a why-question does not have a loaded meaning as the child or the owner is regarded as the guilty party in this instance. The second kind of ‘why-question’ refers to incidents where a particular person happened to be an innocent victim. The reason for such an
incident is sought outside the situation as it is abnormal and mysterious and thus evokes suspicion. The question why a generous businessperson was killed in an accident would be ascribed to some supernatural powers. In the second why-question the death or incident is surrounded by mystery and an explanation is sought in an interpersonal relationship or from a human relationship with the ancestors (:80). In such situations past experiences and mythical explanations are used to provide explanations.

When confronted with extraordinary, mysterious or abnormal situations Africans fail to consider related factors. Religious beliefs, prejudices, jealousies, and scapegoating preoccupy their minds in seeking explanations for extraordinary events. The impact of a collision in the case of a motor accident, the speed with which the person was brought to the hospital, the treatment given to the patient at the hospital - these are some of the factors that may contribute to the death of a person involved in a car accident. Thus, in their causal explanations, Africans turn from the what-, how- and the first set of why-questions to the second set of why-questions. Instead of asking, ‘What brought this about’? or ‘How did that happen?’ they quickly turn to asking, ‘Why did it happen?’ and ‘Why did it happen at that point to that person?’

In African causal explanations answers to what-, how- and when-questions do not go far enough as they do not satisfy the Africans religious beliefs by providing satisfactory explanations for occurrences. The why-questions are regarded as a deeper kind of question that would lead to finding the correct explanations. One can conclude that the why-questions actually constitute an admission of the inability to give adequate explanations to mysterious events (Gyekye 1987:83).

Most Africans have a vague concept of chance and luck and even where these concepts are considered they fail to provide acceptable explanations in instances where mysterious events
have taken place. Even where an event could be regarded as luck it is ascribed to God or
to the ancestors who have provided the luck or chance (Gyekye 1987:83). The African
conception of the universe rules out the possibilities of an unqualified random event, while
chance is perceived as an uncaused event. According to Africans, luck or chance has a
cause. They, moreover, believe that there are no chances or accidents in nature. An
accident, according to African ontology, has a cause beyond itself which exists even if it is
unknown. Africans would maintain that every mysterious event has a cause and that
ignorance of the cause of an event does not imply that a cause does not exist (:83).

Although mysterious factors play an important role in African causal explanations,
recognition is also given to physical causes. Causal explanations in terms of supernatural
factors are usually evoked when human beings regard themselves as victims of natural events
(Gyekye 1987:83). Thus, the death of a person whom the community regards as a hero,
would almost invariably be ascribed to supernatural occurrences. However, if an old person
dies his/her death may be explained in terms of a promotion to the ancestors’ realm.
Similarly, Africans would ascribe an accident in which foreigners were killed to their own
negligence. The acknowledgment of natural causality suggests a conception of dual causality,
the natural invoked in terms of ordinary events which are comprehensible and the mysterious
being invoked in abnormal events (Gyekye 1987:83).

It is thus clear that the African theory of causality as discussed here, is in some ways a
consequence of the presence of powers animating natural phenomena. In this ontology any
spirit, including the ancestors and ‘initiated persons’, has causal power or control over
human beings and other living creatures. The world of natural objects and phenomena is at
the mercy of those who are wielding natural powers. Causal relations are, therefore,
explained and understood within the framework of God, the spirits and initiated human
beings invoking powers animated in natural objects. Thus, in cases where human life is
threatened, the invocation of supernatural powers is blamed. In those circumstances natural laws, which merely govern the relations between material objects, are incapable of offering adequate causal explanations (cf Parratt 1994:1). Natural laws describe but do not explain mysterious events.

4.3 The Concept of a Person in African Cosmology

The overriding idea in African ontology is a holistic approach to life characterised by the survival of all. This implies that the community lives through its individuals and their creative contribution to life. The Africans’ main object is to live in harmony with humanity, nature and the world of the spirits. An individual’s refusal to conform to the principles and norms of the society earns him/her the despised position of an outcast. The consequences of refusing to live according to set standards are far-reaching (Echekwube 1994:38) for it means that both the living community and the ancestors have disowned such a person. This African approach to life is often confused and blurred in discussions of the ‘ubuntu’ concept. The Africans’ approach to life is communitarian, as expressed in the saying: ‘a person is a person through other people’ but in the African context this does not mean the nihilism of an individual.

When Africans argue that the individual cannot and does not exist alone but corporately (Mbiti 1969:106), they imply that ‘unity is strength’. Because of limited resources and vast needs that must be met the communitarian approach is the best approach for fulfilling these needs. In recent discussions of the ‘ubuntu concept’ as manifested in South Africa, distorted perspectives have abounded. In criticising the Western approach to life - an approach that is intrinsically individualistic, capitalistic and selfish - an exaggerated view of the ‘ubuntu’ concept has often been given. In reality this concept does not imply that an individual is negated and destroyed in the African corporal approach to life since the autonomy and
independence of individuals are recognised in all spheres of African life (Kigongo 1992:10). It is only in the practice of scapegoating and persecutions discussed in the previous chapter - a practice that takes place in all societies worldwide that a deviation is noticeable.

4.3.1 The Individual and the Social Order

Gyekye (1987:155) defines communalism as the doctrine that the group (that is, the society) constitutes the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society. The doctrine emphasises the activity and success of the wider society but this should not be detrimental to the individual - an approach that is not unique to African people. Aristotle, for example, proclaimed that man is by nature a social animal (:155) while all the societies of the world benefit from individuals’ cooperation in societal projects (Fraser 1975:175). This communal approach is found throughout Africa where it leaves space for individualism as well. The Sothos and other ethnic groups living in the Northern Province often express this condition in their language - especially in their proverbs. For example the proverb: “A piano button in solidity does not give a melodious sound” (“Mphiri o tee ga o lle”) (Rakoma 1971:190).

This proverb underscores the importance of a communal approach to life. For a piano to give a melodious sound all its buttons should be played in a particular sequence. This idea is also expressed in letjema, a communal society project undertaken by the whole society for the benefit of individual persons. The individual is inevitably seen as requiring help from others to realise or satisfy his/her basic needs. The value of collective action, mutual aid and interdependence is, therefore, stressed to ensure an individual’s welfare, as well as for the successful achievement of the most difficult undertakings. Communalism, therefore, insists that the good of all determines the good of each individual and that an individual finds the highest benefit - materially, morally and spiritually - in relationships with others and in working for the good of all. The promotion of communal life in African settings is in a sense
the recognition of the existence of conflicts and tensions that normally result in individual
compétition, the desire to satisfy ones needs at the expense of others, the pursuit of a selfish
agenda by individuals, and frustrations that are caused when a person works on his own. In
an attempt to improve relations, minimise competition, and reduce tensions and frustration
a communal approach is adopted aimed not at eliminating individuality but at regulating it
(Gyekye 1987:88). Misbehaviour or anti-social conduct on the part of an individual would
have catastrophic effects on communal harmony. Avoidance of such disruptive behaviour
is sometimes the reason behind curtailment of individualism and independence. But this
curtailment of individualism often has a negative impact on development. An individual may
be prevented to develop his/her skills as is the case in Western cultures. Total control of
individual exercise of independence has negative effects as initiative may not be tolerated,
especially if this is further motivated by jealousy.

My central thesis in this section is that African societies, especially those living in South
Africa, are communal but not in a way that diminishes the individual status and autonomy
of the African subject. African societies strive for a harmonious community that should
balance communalism with individualism. In certain contexts it requires a collective notion
of identity, while others necessitate the individual aspect (Basu 1994: 11). The existence of
counter-hegemonic forces in society may sometimes lead to tension while the egalitarian
drive may lead to conflict as well. The maintenance of a healthy balance between the two
is thus crucial in African settings.

4.3.2 A Person (Soul and Spirit)

Gyekye (1987:85-89) recognises both soul and spirit in African ontology. The soul is said
to be that which constitutes the innermost self, the essence, of the individual while the soul
is the centre of individual life. Being the activating principle in the person (:88), the spirit,
on the other hand, is described as that which refers to all unperceivable mystical beings. Both soul and spirit are invisible to the naked eye, but are distinguishable entities in a human being.

It would appear that Gyekye's analysis of spiritual elements co-inhabiting a person has been influenced by the Christian-Greek philosophical ontological view of a person. Africans, including Sothos, do recognise the presence of a spiritual element besides the human flesh, but their perceptual explanation does not coincide with that of Christian-Greek philosophical schemes. Although all Africans acknowledge the existence of the soul as the consciousness part in the human body, various groups assign different names to it while also perceiving it from different angles. They believe that every human being must have a consciousness which is invisible and when it leaves the body, the person is regarded as dead. When a person is dead, some people may say his/her soul or spirit (moya) has departed and some may say his/her breath is gone (moya). The latter may mean that when a person has died he/she is no longer breathing while the former may suggest that their consciousness has departed. A dead person does not have any character because a character is something perceivable from a living person only.

Human attributes such as a strong personality, courage and high moral standards, may be ascribed to the fact that a person has a good 'spirit' (moya), but this in no way suggests that a person consists of soul (consciousness) and spirit (good character or personality). The attributes of a person are not perceived as existing apart from the flesh through which they are demonstrated and perceived. A combination of what is inside a person and his/her flesh produces human attributes. It is thus clear that the Christian-Greek influence informs Gyekye's (1987) analysis of the constituencies of a person.
4.3.3 Relationships of the Inner-being and Attributes of a Person's 'Seriti' (soul/prestige)

Most of the Africans living in South Africa perceive a person as consisting of at least a body and an inner-being. The interaction between the body and the inner-being (soul) produces a person as he/she is observed in daily life. A person may also acquire certain attributes from natural objects which emanate power from nature, from the, and from ancestral spirits. The Sotho people, therefore, speak of a person who has seriti (an intimidating personality). The Zulus would speak of isithunzi and the Vendas would refer to it as tshirundzi. The seriti is closely associated with a person's personal integrity and the dignity he/she acquires because of his/her social and ritual status (Kgatla 1992:41). Seriti, (Sotho), isithunzi (Zulu), ndzhuti (Shangaan) and tshirundzi (Venda) may be translated as a superlative or supernatural form of 'shadow' or 'power' that causes maime (overburdening), implying that a person with seriti has acquired some imposing power that makes others feel vulnerable, ineffective and inferior. He/she threatens others by his/her mere presence, thereby making them feel insecure and inferior.

There are positive and negative seriti - good people have positive ones while evil ones have negative ones. Some people acquire seriti from birth and some acquire it over the years while others get it through divination. A diviner may let a person develop seriti through muti. Witches also acquire negative seriti through evil means. It is the power of their negative seriti that makes them come into an environment unnoticed, interfere with other people's sleep and move from place to place. The tokoloshi is said to be one of the vehicles through which nightmares (which are effects of seriti) approach their victims.

People possessing a positive seriti are chiefs, diviners, rich people, and foreigners. Witches struggle to attack people with a powerful seriti and as such witches need strong backup to
attack people. People with a good *seriti* will ultimately be admitted to the ancestral status where they will occupy the same authoritative positions as they enjoyed in their lifetime (Tyrrell & Jurgens 1983:53).

As I have argued above, *seriti* is closely associated with soul. When a person is asleep, his/her soul is not firmly tied to the body. Initiated people may remove the soul from a person and bring it back while he/she is asleep. Depending of the strength of a person’s *seriti*, witches can take it, do whatever they want with it and return the next morning. The soul (*seriti*) of people who are turned into zombies is captured by witches at the point of death, thereby changing them into zombies. Some are captured in a fake death and made zombies without the soul being separated from the body.

4.3.4 Pelo (heart)

The Sotho people talk about a person having a *pelo* (heart) while the Zulus call it *inHliziyo* or *inGzondo* (brain, understanding). A person with this quality feels and thinks for others and is thus opposed to a selfish person. A selfish, quarrelsome or temperamental person is perceived as lacking a heart, understanding and intellect. Living next to such a person is counter-productive because his/her individuality is not contributing to the communal life. In times of heightened tension in relationships and group persecutions such a person may be associated with witches. The persistence of his/her anti-social behaviour may be seen as a manifestation of inherently evil qualities. Such a person is evil and cannot help practising evil, including witchcraft.

Having shown how the interaction of the inner-being (soul) and body influences a person’s personality, integrity and life, I will now explain how these factors determine a person’s emotions. I have already argued that a person consists of two parts, soul and body. But the
soul can be described from various vantage points depending on which activity is being observed. African people, at least in South Africa, express themselves in the following ways when describing their emotions:

- His soul/spirit (moya) is sad - meaning he is angry
- His soul/spirit is gone - meaning he is dead
- He is asleep (o robetše) - meaning he is dead
- He has a good spirit/soul - meaning he is kind or generous
- His spirit/soul is happy - meaning he is happy
- His spirit/soul is heavy - meaning he has a strong personality (seriti)
- His spirit/soul is evil - meaning he is an evil person

In all these statements attributes are made to one inner-being that embodies different characters (Gyekye 1987:90). My conclusion is, therefore, that there is no ontological recognition of the two inner-parts of the human body - instead, there is only one which can be observed from different angles.

4.3.5 Noun-Classes as Category of Explanation in Witchcraft Naming

In Northern Sotho noun classes play an important role in the categorisation of people, animals, edible and medicinal trees and the natural objects. This categorisation explains why and how people are named in witchcraft accusations and thus underlines the importance of relationships. Noun classes explicate the fact why certain evils or misfortunes are blamed on ancestors and humans but not on natural laws or trees or even strangers. The conspiracy theory that a witch is a person known to the victim is explained by the categorisation through noun classes.
There are five noun classes in Northern Sotho. In order of importance they start with the following prefixes for the singular and plural form: a) **Mo-Ba**, b) **Mo-Me**, c) **Le-Ma**, d) **Se-Di**, e) **N-Di**. This categorisation indicates the significance of the class and who can belong to a specific class. It also explains the relation of a person, animal or tree to humans that are placed in that particular class. Other humans can be classified with animals and things to indicate their innocence, ignorance, worthlessness, and mental situation.

The first noun class, **Mo-Ba**, is a human class, including the ancestors. Examples include motho (person), batho (persons/people), modimo (ancestor), and badimo (ancestors). Ancestors remain intrinsically connected to the people hence they should periodically be venerated. They are regarded as being able to think, and get angry and impatient like living people, hence they are referred to by Mbiti (1969:23) as the living dead. No other living dead organism belongs to this class. It is a strictly human class. This means that only people who are normal and accountable for their deeds belong to this class. In the case of crime or misconduct committed by a person belonging to this class there is no excuse. His/her crime should be punished or retribution should be made.

Witches belong to this category. This explains the fact that one should first be classified with human beings before one can be accused of witchcraft. This also explains why witches are hated so intensely. Because witches have no colour (identifiable marks) and are living closely to their would-be victims they are dangerous. The solution to their imminent threat is their elimination. A psychopath or a deviant belonging to the fifth noun class may be pardoned for his/her crime but not a witch. This implies that a person who points out another person as a witch has a definite grudge against such a person - the grudge that emanates from their relationship. Because of the existing relationship, a pardon or reconciliation is hard to find. In the case of a mob accusing an individual or individuals it means the mob feels betrayed by the action of such a person or persons.
The second noun class is **Mo-Me**. This class includes all trees with edible fruit and those with medicinal value. It can also include certain birds that are thought to have medicinal value as well. Examples include *morula* (morula tree) singular, *merula* plural, *monamune* (orange tree)(singular), and *menamune* (plural). Medicinal trees include *moiluso* and *meiluso*. No human being is classified under this class except people whose character is associated with a tree such as *morara* and *merara*. *Morara* is a vine tree with branches that curl around other trees for support. A person with such behaviour is a cheat. Trees categorised in this class should not be chopped for any purpose except when it is unavoidable.

The third noun class is **Le-Ma**. To this class belongs a variety of things that have no immediate value to humans such as foreigners, strangers, for example a white person (*lekgowa-makgowa*), a grave (*lebitla mabitla*), a thief (*lehodu mahodu*), and an owl (*leribishi-maribishi*). Humans, animals, trees, and things belonging to this class have a remote relationship with real humans belonging to Mo-Ba. This explains why strangers such as whites and foreign blacks stand a remote chance of being accused of witchcraft. Because of their remoteness to humans and because no relationship exists between the two, the chance of them being accused of a crime belonging only to real people is remote.

The fourth noun class has all the trees that have no value to human life and all the fruit regardless of whether they are edible or not. The class includes some medicine (harmful and unharmful). All mentally derailed people, psychopaths, deviants, and things belong to this class. If a person is called by a name from this class it may either mean that he/she is being insulted, demeaned or he/she is no longer regarded as a human being. A person who causes problems in the community and is called by a name from this class stands a remote chance of being accused of witchcraft. A worse thing that may befall him/her is that he/she may earn the sympathy and be regarded as a victim of bewitchment. He/she needs to be elevated to
the position of Mo-Ba before he/she can be accused of witchcraft. Witchcraft accusations imply that the person so accused is normal and capable of knowing good and evil and instead of choosing good he/she has chosen evil.

The fifth and last noun class is N-Di. The N-Di class includes all animals, wild and domestic. Traditional healers (ngaka-dingaka) belong to this class because they are dithakadu (plural ant-eaters). They are like ant-eaters that dig anthills in search of medicine. Other humans who take their name from this class are either genii in their work or hopeless. A springbuck, for instance, denotes a person who runs fast while a chameleon is a slow person.

4.3.6 Disease, Death and Divination

The most constant problem human beings have always been wrestling with, is how to keep alive. Although death and disease are man’s final enemies, a person has to overcome famine and disease in order to stay alive. Africans have, over the years, attempted to overcome these threats by devising ways and means of determining the causes and remedies thereof. The search for solutions to these ultimate questions has produced scapegoating and blame transference onto others.

In this section an attempt is made to explain the names given to the various diseases, the causes to which they are attributed and the ideas underlying the rites which mark the end of a disease. Most Africans call the complaint from which they suffer by the name of the organ affected; for example, a person would say he/she has a foot, a hand or a neck - meaning he/she has a pain in the foot, hand or neck. Africans view all human organs as if from outside the body. When there is a pain in one of them it is viewed, in the majority of the cases, as coming from outside the body. A person will thus complain of ‘a blood’ (madi) or abscess (sesepedi) which moves from spot to spot, finally taking its abode in a place
where it is difficult to cure. They believe that many diseases attack a number of organs. As such, a person is vulnerable to a large number of diseases, especially in a community where many witches are believed to be residing (Junod 1927:470-475).

It is true that traditional healers are not skilled like Western doctors who know the anatomy of the human body. Traditional healers cannot tell if a person, for instance, has diabetes or gastritis, congestion of the liver or dysentery, because they have neither been trained nor do they have the necessary tools to detect certain symptoms characteristic of the various diseases. They are often unable to prescribe the right medicine and merely rely on the superstitious beliefs of the patients. For instance, if a patient who suffers from ‘inside trouble’ would say that ‘it bites’ (loma), the traditional healer would know that it is most probably a case of intestinal colic. But it becomes more complicated when a patient declares that he/she suffers from an intestinal worm which moves from his/her stomach into his/her neck through his/her lung. In such a case witchcraft (meleko ya boloi) will be suspected.

Most people of the Northern Region, like many people in Africa who find themselves in similar situations, still believe that witches use magical powers against people. They believe in two types of witchcraft: witchcraft of the night and the witchcraft of the day (Mönning 1967:71). The same distinction is made between witches of the night and witches of the day. Witches of the night are generally believed to have inherited the ability to do evil from their parents, while witches of the day have acquired the skill by buying it from experts.

Night-witches are born with an inherently evil quality as a snake is born with its venom. They have a compulsion to do evil which needs not be triggered by jealousy or hatred as in the case of day-witches since their nature compels them to harm others purely for the pleasure they derive from it. A child of a night- witch inherits this quality from his/her
parents and he/she can never change his/her nature. Although night-witches work chiefly at night, they can also operate by day if circumstances permit (Krige 1937:250).

A day-witch is any ordinary individual who, by means of medicine obtained from some expert or spell, tries to kill his/her enemies or even innocent people. He/she has no knowledge of witchcraft beyond the medicine obtained for this purpose. A day-witch in notorious and dangerous for he/she goes directly at his/her prey in daylight. This type of witches can be deterred from their practice by putting them to death if found. They never miss an opportunity to bewitch their victims and are especially active at festivals where liquor and food are served.

The night-witch is able directly, and without the aid of any medicine, to effect his/her evil purpose. He/she can enter a closed hut and travel on a broomstick from, for instance, Pietersburg to Durban and back during the same night. Night-witches are usually women who are believed to be walking naked in the night, even in the coldest winter nights. Night-witches cover themselves with ashes to disguise themselves and in the guise of witches they run faster than they can under normal circumstances. They are feared by people so that people who do not have the right protective medicine shy away from walking in the night especially around two o’clock in the morning. It is believed that night-witches are most active around that time because they would have held their regular meetings and their plans would be ready to be executed.

Night-witches form fraternities (or covens) and have meeting places (Hammon-Tooke 1974:337). At night they all assemble at designated areas and know one another. When everybody else is asleep they meet to drum and dance for amusement if their plans do not compel them to undertake long journeys for the execution of particular operations. They are
normally motivated and excited about their trade and tend to be impatient in summertime because they dislike the long days and short nights.

Night-witches employ familiar animals such as hyenas, large dogs, weasels, owls, snakes, or lightning birds. Through their skill they can cause influenza, bilharzia, malaria, and rheumatism. These diseases have technical names: bilharzia, a form of haematuria, is called motseni; malaria is letadi fever; while rheumatism is called bonyelele (the ‘runner’), as it seems to be moving from the surface of the flesh to the bones. Cholera is known as letšhologo le legolo - severe diarrhoea. The causes of these diseases are attributed to natural spirits, the ancestors or even to God. The most dreaded diseases among Africans are sechufa (tuberculosis) and sefolane (leprosy, heart-attack or stroke), while the most commonest epidemic disease among blacks living in the Northern parts of South Africa is mooko or setlapatlapane (measles which is common among children), while smallpox is called sekobonyane because the of small scars it leaves on the face of the sufferer. The causes of these diseases are also attributed to witchcraft caused by nature spirits, or makgoma (contamination). Where the disease has taken the life of an individual a diviner must be consulted to determine the exact cause of the death.

**4.3.7 Other diseases believed to be caused by witchcraft**

Dr (Motshadibe) Motimele, Dr Letsoalo and *The Realm of a Rain-Queen* by Krige and Krige are my main sources of data in this section. Dr Letsoalo is currently president of the traditional healers in the Northern Province while Dr Motimele is a practising diviner in the vicinity of Turfloop.

The most dreadful diseases and conditions (meleke) witches can cause include tladi/legadima (artificial lightning), sefolane (magical disease), sejeso (poisoning), go tsekela
(mental illness), boopa (infertility), kotsi (accidents), as well as setlotlwane (zombie). All these conditions and diseases are ascribed to day-witches although night-witches are capable of causing them as well. They are usually referred to as meleko, the plural form of moleko, which means to try, to tempt, and hence, by extension of meaning, to challenge or send misfortune by means of magic (Krige & Krige 1937:253-254). A witch may mix the soil on which his/her enemy’s footprints are made with medicine to cause pain in the leg, which may gradually affect the whole body. He/she may cause death by pointing a finger at his/her victim, or using the clothes, urine or hair of his/her victim. People thus have to be careful about their disposals. Moreover, a witch can merely utter a word and his/her wish will be carried out. Expressions such as o tlo di bona (you will see them) are strong enough to cause meleko (misfortune) to the person so addressed. Diviners are also believed to be using meleko against their rivals in fights for territory (:255).

(a) Tladi-mothwana (artificial lightning)

Sending lightning (go ratha tladi) is regarded as a common means of harming ones enemies. To say of a person, ‘he/she has nonyane’ (bird) means he/she is tladi-mothwana a (lightning witch). Africans living in the Northern Province believe in the existence of two kinds of lightning - natural and ‘sent’ lightning. Natural lightning comes with the rain and is caused by the lightning bird. This bird gets its food from sepaapaa (the blue-headed tree lizard). When the bird strikes a tree it catches the lizard and leaves its eggs in the soil around the tree. Diviners must then come and burn the tree lest the bird returns for its nestlings. Natural lightning is believed to strike only trees or rocks far from the villages - never people, animals or human properties. ‘Sent’ lightning has as its target people, animals and human property and is accompanied by little or no rain (Krige & Krige 1937:254). It is thus clear that lightning is judged solely by its results: if it does no harm, it is natural but if it strikes people or anything in the society, it is ‘sent’ by people intending evil.

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(b) **Sefolane (magical disease)**

*Sefolane* includes many diseases and conditions. It is believed to be a common witchcraft weapon used by the majority of witches. It includes stroke, swollen legs/feet, sudden sharp paralysing pain in the body, loss of vision, loss of sensation in one of the organs of the body, and related conditions. Witches employ *sefolane* like a snare which they put in the way of their victims. When a person passes the place where *sefolane* is set, he/she experiences a sudden attack either on the foot, arm, side, head, or the whole body. The patient is sometimes not aware of the 'contamination' until he/she is diagnosed by a diviner. *Sefolane* is hard to cure because those who set it do so while being aware of the fact that the sufferer may retaliate or send the spell back. Resultantly, only strong renowned diviners are capable of treating *sefolane*. It is mainly out of jealousy that witches use *sefolane* to harm their enemies.

(c) **Seješo (food-poisoning)**

*Sejeso* be caused by poisoned food, liquor, cold-drinks, tea, fruit, and water. By special design witches can put *mpholo* (poison) in the beer intended to harm a particular person without affecting the rest of the group sharing the beer. Depending on what they want to achieve, witches can render their poison effective immediately after it is taken, thereby causing a sudden death they can let it take effect after a while. They can even let it develop gradually to cause harm to the body - especially if they do not wish the victim to suspect them. They can also make their *sejeso* to be *sesipidi* (from the word 'move'), in other words, as the affliction is treated, it moves from one place to make it impossible to be removed from the body. *Sejeso* can be employed with the intention of turning a victim into *setlotlwane* (zombie) as well, a condition that needs specialised and experienced diviners to cure.
(d) **Go tsekela (mental illness)**

The throwing of the bones sometimes ascribes death or disease to *go tsekela*. This condition normally occurs where a witchcraft victim has requested a strong diviner to send the spell back to the owner. In that case the witch will *tsekela* (move around aimlessly speaking to him/herself). In this instance, Dr Letsoalo mentions the use of *letšwa rope in go tsekela*. According to Letsoalo, *letšwa* is laid after the funeral of a witchcraft victim, so that the person responsible for the death will *tsekela* and be seen by the people in the village. The disease (*go tsekela*) can also be stopped but only by a strong diviner. Witches can sometimes cause a very prosperous person to *tsekela* out of mere jealousy, but in the main *go tsekela* is believed to be the effects of spells sent back to the owner.

(e) **Boopa (infertility)**

Witches can cause women, especially married women, to be infertile as well. The reason for the action will be to cause the marriage to break up so this is usually done out of jealousy. If their trick to cause infertility does not succeed they can even cause a pregnant woman to die in childbirth. This spell is called *go thiba*, meaning to prevent (stop) the child from being born. In some communities a pregnant woman may not divulge the date on which she expects a child in fear of *go thiba*. As witches are believed to be extremely cruel and silly, they will usually not miss any opportunity to harm their victims.

(f) **Kotsi tša mehuta-huta (various accidents in Africa)**

We have already alluded to the saying that ‘human skin is not stretched on the floor’, implying that there is a culprit who is responsible for every death. The Northern Sotho thus believe that events such as car accidents and injuries in soccer matches do not occur without
any premeditated intervention. Depending on the anxiety caused by the accident the cause will be determined on the basis of the impact it makes. If the loss is great and rouses suspicions that it would delight the victim's enemies, it is likely to be ascribed to witchcraft. But if the loss would enhance the family status it is ascribed to the ancestors and the intervention of any enemy will not be considered.

(g) Setlotlwane (zombie)

The most dreaded condition to which a witch can reduce its victim is a setlotlwane, a human being who has been killed and his/her soul turned into a slave for the witch. Setlotlwane, which is also called sentlowetše (a person in the state of an orphan) and setholane (a dumb person), does not refer to an ordinary corpse, but to a person who has been disguised as dead, thereby enabling to make him/her to be used as a slave for the foe's purposes. At night he/she has hoe for his/her master, cut poles for building or go on nefarious errands (Krige & Krige 1937:252). Most of the rich people are suspected of having employed the services of setlotlwane in the process of becoming rich. It is held that some men working in Johannesburg and Pretoria have been employed as ditlotlwane, especially those who are no longer supporting their families. The proverbial expression used to describe them: “Ba jele baleeleane” (“those who have derailed”) explains their condition. This second version of setlotlwane seems to be an expression of frustration rather than of anything else because the myth behind the belief has it that if you meet a setlotlwane, you will faint at the sight, while your body will remain dried up even after having received medical treatment. It is believed that a person with such a ghastly appearance cannot work in an industrial environment with people who are normal.
I have already alluded to what is deemed normal behaviour among Sotho people when I discussed the idea of changing religious affiliation (conversion). In this section, I merely intend amplifying some salient features of what Africans regard as normal behaviour. Africans have the same view of normal behaviour as Europeans and people from other parts of the world, especially in despising a person who is untruthful and who tells lies. **Sehwrirhwiri** is the Sotho name given to a person who makes untrue statements and has a bad character. **Dihwirhwiri** refers to those people who spread lies and rumours about others, thereby harming them (Gelfand 1965:119).

Conversely, honesty (**botshepegi**) is appreciated as an important quality. Parents constantly remind their children to tell the truth, not only to their relatives, but to all people as there is no justification for telling lies. Kindness both humanness and/or love (**lerato**) and sympathy (**mogau**) are attributes that are greatly appreciated and highly valued. All societies in Africa stress these virtues and praise their exercise since to Africans the purpose of life is to promote good relations, unite people and cement affections between kin. As beauty and happiness are generally treasured people should appreciate the positive qualities of other people and never scorn them.

Jealousy and bitterness are traits greatly disapproved by the Sothos, Vendas and Shangaans of the Northern Province. Children are warned against these bad traits and taught that a person exhibiting these weaknesses is similar to a witch. Greediness, rudeness and hostility are other bad qualities much disliked by people. While a quarrelsome and moody person is a hazard to the lives of others, a good person brings peace, happiness and laughter to other people.
From early age African children are taught that happiness and joy does not depend on mere physical attraction or beauty but on a good character. Honesty, kindness, good behaviour, and consideration towards others are expected from all normal people while qualities such as hatred, bitterness, jealousy, as well as the inclination to spread evil and scandal are ascribed to witches.

4.3.9 Bones that Speak

The divinatory bones constitute a system of divination and play a considerable part in the life of a tribe. They are perceived as capable of affording methods for controlling and unravelling all supernatural forces and secrets (Mönnig 1967:81). They not only enable people to know the sources of mishaps, but even reveal the methods that may be used to nullify or remove such causes. Although they are ordinary bones they have a vital force of speaking to their interlocutors.

Divinatory bones may be divided into two major kinds: the bones properly speaking, most of which are bones, and various objects that are not bones. Some of the bones belong to domestic animals, such as goats and sheep, and represent the people dwelling in the village (Junod 1927:543). Only four bones belonging to he-goats will be selected to represent the following people: (1) a bone from an castrated old he-goat will represent the old men, (2) a bone from a middle-aged he-goat will represent men of ripe age, (3) a bone from a non-castrated he-goat will represent active men in their prime, (4) a bone from a non-castrated younger he-goat will represent young men of about twenty years of age while bones from she-goats will represent females in the same order. The bones from sheep will represent the chiefs, while ox bones in various shapes represent tribes and their totems.
In addition to bones taken from domestic animals, there are a number of bones taken from wild animals. Bones from male impalas would represent the chiefs and those of female impalas their wives; duiker and reedbuck bones may represent quarrelsome men and witches; while bones from wild boars that eat roots would represent medicine-men who search for roots to prepare their drugs. Baboons and monkeys may represent neighbours, while an ant-bear may represent ancestors or medicine-men.

The second category comprises objects which are not bones or parts of the body of an animal. These may include sea-shells that may represent the attributes of male or females. Male attributes include virile courage and strong character and female attributes include pregnancy, birth, lobola, and cooking. Stones with special forms represent the vegetable world, like drugs and muti.

4.3.10 The rule for interpretation of divinatory bones

I am indebted for this information to my informant, Ngaka (Mochadibe) Motimele of Mamotintane. The two principal pairs of bones representing the male and female categories are the most important for the interpretation of divinatory bones. The sixteen basic bones (with four sides each) have sixty-four different falls. The smaller objects - including seashells parts of tortoises and even well-curved pieces of wood - supplement the fall of the bones, although the divinatory bones constitute the chief diagnostic method. In most instances they consist of about sixty-four pieces in pairs of two or four.

When consulted, the diviner will often breathe into the container with the bones (thebele) or having chewed a little piece of muti, spit on them and throw them onto the mat while praising them. The throwing of the bones constitutes a preliminary act. By spitting on his bones the diviner indicates his wish to awaken them and proclaims himself as their owner.
Because they are perceived as alive and can be addressed, they are expected to respond to his greetings. After the preliminaries, the diviner will hand them over to the consultant, who will first breathe into their leather container to infuse them and then introduce him/herself to them. The consultant will throw them throughout the whole consultation, while the diviner will merely hold his stick or pointer and point at them in order to explain their significance. Each throw is followed by an utterance of praise by the diviner to laude them for the good work they are performing.

Questions are put to the bones either by the diviner through the consultant or by the diviner directly before each throw. Questions such as: ‘What is the cause of the disease, death and so on?’ ‘Does it come from the ancestors?’ and ‘From a male or female ancestor?’ When the bones answer in the negative, another name is tried until the whole list has been exhausted. This is followed by another series of questions. The process will be continued until the bones point out the culprit or the cause of the mishap. Sometimes the bones may refuse to speak by the way they fall. If they refuse to speak the diviner may suspect danger. If the consultant is being haunted by a spell as a result of retaliation for indulging in witchcraft practices the bones may refuse to speak. In that case the diviner will leave to consult them in private. If it is found that the consultant did not come with clean hands he may receive a stiff fine.

To see if the bones have consented to speak three or four things must be noticed: the sides on which the bones have fallen, the direction in which they face, their disposition or the position they have taken in regard to one another, and the relation of the male and the female bones towards one another (Junod 1927:552). In each fall the side on which the principal bones land is crucial. Convex side up is a favourable sign and concave up is an unfavourable sign since the convex is the active position and the concave the passive. The bones may not fall on these two principal sides, but on the right or on the left side. The right side is said to
be a strong position of attack while the left side is a weak side, indicating a defensive position. I will now discuss the meaning of some of the divinatory positions. If the convex side of the baboon bone is facing upwards, the village or homestead is secure and free of impending danger. By contrast, if it is upside down, the village is in ruins, disease or death threatens and what the consultant eats does not remain inside - there is imminent danger. The same is said about bones representing the ancestors. A convex position indicates their happiness while a concave position represents the unhappiness of the ancestors. If the ancestors are happy, then they are asleep (Badimo ba mo robaletše).

Crocodile bones represent the country, village or homestead as well. In this instance a concave position indicates that the crocodile is hidden in the water, a waiting its prey to come and drink water to snatch it. These bones thus represent starvation, death, defilement, and danger. Tortoise shells represent a state of plenty, peace and a big harvest if the convex sides are facing upwards - times in which people drink beer and have plenty to eat. A concave side in turn spells misfortune in the village, a time when everything looks dark and threatening (Junod 1927:555).

To illustrate the procedure of divination, I will cite an actual case of divination simplified only by the omission of the praises. Motimele, a doctor, had just finished divining for patient A, when another patient B, A’s friend who lived about five miles away, arrived the scene. After handing over money for pula-thebele (opening of a divination bag), B requested that the bones be thrown for him. Motimele threw out the bones, and looked at them in deadly silence. The silence symbolises morara (magical trap). Moiluso/Serokolo (common muti) will be chewed to get out of morara which literary means grape-wine. After having chewed a piece of moiluso, he took the bones in both hands, spat on them and while uttering a praise, cast them on the floor. The fall was moferefere (a position meaning trouble) and the doctor told his patient that he had been greatly troubled. ‘The tortoise bones lie’ motagola.
(indicating hidden illness), he explained. ‘The fall indicated that the patient was suffering from blood, and intestinal trouble. ‘Do you have dreams?’ the doctor asked and B replied in the affirmative: ‘Chiefly about my dead parents’. ‘Chuene’ (baboon bones) are full (lie on their convex side); your sickness is in the chest’, the doctor retorted.

Thereafter the patient was given the bones to throw and told to repeat the doctor’s praise of the bones. He threw them and the doctor read the fall. Mothimele asked the patient, ‘Do you know any kwena (man with the crocodile totem)? Are your in-laws crocodiles?’ He mentioned that one of his neighbours had a crocodile totem. The patient was resultantly cautioned not to take any beer with the neighbour, the crocodile man, because the latter wanted to give him selešo (poison).

Such an exercise will be continued by asking whether the patient has an ear problem, an eye complaint, back pain, or foot trouble. In each instance the patient would receive advice as there would be an adversary waiting to seize the opportunity to trouble him. People with different totems will be suggested and the patient will disclose those among his relatives and neighbours.

To conclude, since good health is always the quest of everyone and disease the most persistent and dangerous enemy, most of the divinity cases concern detecting causes of illness. It is, moreover, believed that even the most harmless disease may afford a witch an opportunity to strike at his/her victim. The office of the diviner (doctor) is both important and honourable, for he is seen as the guardian of the people’s welfare and custodian of all mysterious happenings. There is no oath that binds him/her to loyalty and integrity, but all these things are expected of him as well as to preserve the secrets of his/her clients (Krige & Krige 1937:230).
4.3.11 Observation

Among Africans the art of bone-throwing is taken very seriously. In the eyes of practitioners and their followers it is a true art which they practise in all sincerity, believing that they receive objective revelations through its means. The sincerity is based on the following:

1) The bone-throwing and its interpretations are not a secret, but everyone knows its rules and takes part in the interpretations.

2) Each bone bears a name which reminds them of the person, object and condition it represents. The diviners' entire lives are connected with the art, to which they sincerely dedicate their lives.

3) However, diviners may also be tricky since their interpretation does not proceed from well-defined formulae or procedures, but from powers of the imagination. Their interpretation may be subjective to fulfil the expectations of a consultant. Bones which represent totems, such as the wild bear, elephant and porcupine may, for example, be the same. Such a wide range of representatives may be abused to allow for a wild quest to accommodate the consultant’s imagination. The anxiety to know the cause of a disease, death or the future may sometimes be so overwhelming that the diviner does everything possible to satisfy the expectation of the consultant.

4.4 African Tribal Setting and the Law

African traditional political life is normally a combination of monarchy and democracy (Junod 1938:93). The old African nationhood consisted of close-knit members who were striving after a common purpose. Currently, the chief forms the centre of the national life, being the symbol of unity and without whom the nation loses its bearings and feels that it has
lost its head. When he is dead, the Sothos announce his death as **mmu o utswitswe** (the soil is stolen) because without him the nation feels that it has no firm ground beneath its feet.

The chief invariably plays a very prominent role in African life. He is the head of both the state and government (Junod 1938:94). His duties include the regulation of the affairs of the nation while he is the chief priest of his people as well as the chief commander of his army. Moreover, he is the chief justice and interpreter of community laws and watches over the interests of his people. He is regarded as the earth on which his people has abode.

His absolute power is nevertheless regulated, checked and balanced by the chief’s counsellors, who also act as his assessors in court as well as his advisers and consultants in tribal affairs. The chief is regarded as the son of the nation, guarded and guided by his uncles from the nation. His counsellors usually consist of his close relatives or loyal and upright men of his nation. The counsellors serve to ‘shepherd’ the king and ensure that the chief does not faulter. No chief would dare ignore the advice of his counsellors.

### 4.4.1 Administration of Justice

The administration of justice begins in the family, among the peers (hunters, shepherds and so on), while the headman of the village is a justice of peace in the first level of the hierarchy of government. All petty offences that cannot be solved by the extended family are generally taken to the headman (Junod 1938:95). On a larger scale, all cases are referred to the chief after all levels of lower courts (headman, senior headman and chief headman) have been exhausted. The chief will only adjudicate over them after he has been briefed and has consulted with his counsellors (:96). At the chief tribunal the following procedure is usually followed: The court sits in a circle while the complainant sits next to the counsellor through
whom the matter was brought to the chief. The accused sits opposite the complainant and the chief sits on an elevated hillock which enables him to see everybody present.

The counsellor formally informs the chief what the court is about and the complainant is then allowed to tell his story by speaking to the counsellor near him. When he has finished his story the counsellor repeats it, while being interrupted by other counsellors who point out contradictions and stress important points. The complainant is then asked to confirm or deny the version given by the counsellor. If he concurs the accused is allowed to reply, speak or question the complainant. The counsellors listen carefully to the version of the accused, checking any contradictions and exposing weaknesses if any. After everything is said and done the counsellors begin to discuss the case by quoting precedents of the past and expressing their opinions and feelings about the behaviour and character of the relatives of both complainant and accused.

If the counsellors feel that the whole truth has not been revealed, they may order the accused or the complainant to be whipped to extract the whole truth from him/her and also to demonstrate that the chief's court should be respected - only genuine cases may be taken there and only the truth must be told there. As the proceedings unfold the chief is guided by the discussion to come to a verdict. If it is difficult for the chief to come to a verdict, he may call for an adjournment of the court and go to consult with his assessors. However, once given judgement, the chief's judgement is final and there is no appeal against it.

Offences of various kinds are tried before the chief's tribunal: adultery for instance (that is severely punished in the case of married people), murder and witchcraft. The following observation may be made:
1) In African courts an accused is guilty until he/she has proved him/herself innocent. It is not the responsibility of the chief to prove the accused guilty through evidence given but the responsibility of the accused to prove himself innocent. The system seems to be more efficient and effective than Roman-Dutch law where a lack of evidence can free even a hardened criminal. The assumption of African justice is that a man is guilty unless his innocence is proved. An innocent person cannot fail to defend him/herself. In a case where it is established that the complainant has fabricated his/her story in order to put the accused in trouble the same punishment that would be meted out against the accused would be meted out against him/her. As Africans assume that all people cherish positive norms of honesty, kindness and truthfulness, once a person is accused of evil he/she is strongly suspected but he/she has a chance of proving him/herself innocent.

2) An oath is not taken in African courts because the oath is not necessary. A human being is at all times under oath and he/she is obliged to tell nothing but the truth at all times. Everybody is taken by his/her word until it is be established that he/she is a liar.

3) There are no witnesses in African courts for that would mean witnesses know something about the crime. If the witnesses know anything about the crime they are equally guilty and liable to stand trail. In Roman-Dutch law a person can be technically guilty but used by the state against someone else and yet be excluded from prosecution. Africans do not have room for such double standards. You are either wholly guilty or wholly innocent. Nevertheless, Africans have a very strong sense of justice and their goal is to purge society of all impurities.
The basic idea of African justice is that of collective responsibility (Junod 1938:97). A person has a responsibility for an object he/she has lent to another person. If the object has been used to commit an offence with the owner is also culpable. If X kills a person with Y’s axe, Y too has a responsibility in the case.

The intention of African justice is not to revenge, but to be reformative, deterrent and constructive. It must not only protect society, but must check evil at its very root as well. Emphasis on technicalities that are bases for appeals are seen as a negation of justice, because they do not consider the motive or the intention of the crime, but are regarded as a mere play on words. A large number of observers see this as the reason why many Africans do not trust Western courts. I will revisit these aspects in my general recommendations in the last chapter.

Africans do not take any chance when a person has died. The Sotho provide “Letlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase” (a person’s skin is not stretched on the floor) is apt here. The implicit meaning of the proverb is that there is a cause for every human death and the deceased’s relatives should never rest until the cause has been determined. The cause could be witchcraft, nature spirits, disgruntled ancestors, or contamination as a result of *dibeela* (defilement from death and unclean fetish) in the surroundings.

When a medical person is employed to determine the cause of the disease or death he/she takes little notice of the physical symptoms. In the case of diagnosing disease there is no exanimation, no examination of the secretions, blood, urine, or temperature. The primary means of diagnosing a disease or the cause of death is the throwing of bones. The bones are expected to reveal the cause by the way in which they fall. It will be helpful here to discuss divinatory bones and how they are chosen and grafted because this is an important factor in determining the causes of disease, death and other mishaps that is relevant to our central
question in this study, namely how witches are smelled out, brought to trial and eventually executed.

4.4.2 The divinatory bones

Bloomhill (1962) and Junod (1927) did excellent research on how divinatory bones are chosen and assembled. Their works and oral information gathered from traditional healers/diviners will form the basis of this section. Bloomhill (1962:38) mentions that the Shona people from Zimbabwe use the term hakata for divinatory bones, while Junod (1927:541) states that the Shangaans from Mozambique and the then Eastern Transvaal use the term hakati for divinatory bones. Mönnig (1967:80) recounts that the Sothos of Sekhukhuneland use the term dikgarara or ditaola for the bones. The three terms (hakata, hakati and dikhabara/dikgagara) have the same root - bones.

4.4.3 The Concepts of Sin, Evil and Morality

As the concepts of sin, evil and morality are religious, they must be discussed from that point of view. The African ontological approach is thus entirely religious. There is no stage in life where an African may think he/she is not religious because the entire life is permeated with religion. These three concepts are thus fundamental to any discussion of African religion(s).

4.4.3.1 Sin

The term adopted by the church for ‘sin’, and which is used in the Sotho Bible, is sebe. Sebe cannot be equated with the term ‘sin’ as used by Christianity because it has a slightly different meaning. As in the case of mosotho (is a conjuncted form of the sentence motho yo moso), sebe has been derived from selo se se be (an evil thing). To avoid the threefold
repetition of se the first and the last syllables are combined to form sebe (cf Nokaneng nd:57). In ordinary religious language the term sebe is seldom used since molato (literally meaning a ‘case’) is preferred. Mönnig’s (1967:63) conclusion that sebe is an old concept and was not first introduced by Christianity does not altogether hold. The concept existed, but it was not accentuated as is the case in the Bible. Molato was more pronounced.

Molato is an unintentional transgression against the customary order, which is punishable in court. For example, should a man’s cattle stray into someone else’s field and destroy the crops, the latter has a cause for action against the former. This is a molato, and can be taken to court. Such a transgression, due to mere negligence, is not seen as intentional evil, and no supernatural sanctions are expected (Nokaneng nd:57-58). Taking a person who has committed molato to court does not mean anything except to seek redress for the loss suffered. Normally molato is taken to court where a guilty party refuses to compensate the other party.

Sebe, in the sense of denoting evil intentions, is rarely used since bobe, which means ‘evil’, ‘wrong deed’ or ‘intended transgression’, refers to deeds such as witchcraft, theft, killing, and wishing evil on others. A person who commits such deeds is said to be having pelo ye mpe (evil heart). Consequently, when counselling their children, the Sotho will warn them by saying: ‘o se ke wa dira motho yo mongwe bobe’ (do not commit bobe ((evil)) against another person). The Afrikaans equivalent for bobe is ‘kwaad’. It is taken for granted that every normal person knows what is evil because he/she too does not want that done to him/her: ‘Do to others as you want them to do unto you’ is a golden rule observed in African traditional society. Everybody is supposed to know what he/she wants others to do to him/her. As such, any deviation from this rule constitutes intentional evil.
Closely connected to the concept of *bobe* is that of *ditšhila* (literally meaning ‘dirt’, ‘impurity’ and, more relevantly, ‘ritual impurity’). This condition of impurity is, under certain circumstances, unavoidably acquired by people (Mönnig 1967:66). A woman who has had a miscarriage; a woman who has intentionally or unintentionally had an abortion; and a woman who has become pregnant as a result of prostitution, will create a condition of *ditšhila* (impurity). The condition of *ditšhila* is closely connected to the critical changes of life such as death, the birth of a child, and illness as well. The condition of *ditšhila* is dangerous both to those who are impure and those with whom they come into contact. It is a contaminating condition which can infect the fertility of the land and cows, and can stop rain from falling. People who become impure because they have suffered from these conditions have *makgoma* (derived from the verb *go kgoma*, ‘to touch’) (:67). Various purification rites are observed throughout the year, during sowing, ploughing and harvesting, and all these are intended to cleanse society, the landscape and the individuals of evil and misdeeds, known and unknown, and their consequences (Parrinder 1963:71). It is important to note that a person who causes a condition of *ditšhila* does so intentionally for there are ways to curb it. Only evil people who do not care about the welfare of others will cause conditions of *ditšhila* and *makgoma*. Such people can be punished if found but where they are not known they can be punished ritually by using ‘muti’.

Another concept that, in some instances, overlaps with one or more of the concepts already discussed is *seila* (taboo). The word *seila* is derived from the infinitive *go ila*: ‘to avoid’. *Seila* is a supernatural prohibition of certain actions, a breach that may evoke retribution from either the grieved ancestor or God (Douglas 1985:64). In addition, there are taboos forbidding the use of certain words which are thought to be offensive when used in certain contexts. There are tabooed actions, relationships, colours, names, and numbers (Mbiti 1975:178). Any sensible person who works for the promotion of the welfare of the
community will observe all taboos. Any person perceived not respecting them is seen as evil a public enemy.

The fear of supernatural retribution of this nature is an important mechanism for ensuring the maintenance of the prescribed ways of the tribe. It is seila for any man or woman who is in a condition of ditšila to enter the hut where a birth has taken place. Similarly, it is taboo for young people and women to use the first name of a boy who is attending an initiation school, for that boy is in the stage of transition, moving from youth and an irresponsible position to that of manhood and responsibility. To use a name under these circumstances is tantamount to disregarding the delicate stage through which he is passing. It is also taboo for any person in a condition of impurity, who can, therefore, contaminate others, to enter the cattle-kraal, work on the lands or attend tribal gatherings (Mönning 1967:69).

The Sotho people - in fact all Africans - attach great value to the health and well-being of people, livestock and crops. Their complex values involve health and fertility. Another value concerns harmonious social life, the elimination of discord, as well as the ensuring of co-operation and mutual goodwill among people. A failure in health or fortune is generally caused by some failure in social relations, either with the ancestors or with ones kin or neighbours (Hammond-Tooke 1974:359). A high premium is, therefore, placed on proper social behaviour, as a breakdown thereof has drastic consequences for life as a whole. The emphasis on interpersonal relationships, therefore, forms the basis of moral behaviour.

As Mbiti (1975:176) found with other African tribes, the Sotho people have a hierarchical system based on age and the degree of kinship. Within this hierarchy there are duties, obligations, rights, and privileges dictated by the moral stance of the society. Parents have a duty towards their children while children, in turn, have certain duties towards their parents. Children must obey their parents, tell the truth, help other people, be honest, work
hard, as well as friendly with one another and hospitable. All these are fundamental moral duties that parents must teach their children, and any adult person is allowed to reinforce the same in children wherever he meets them (:176).

In daily matters of human conduct, people are expected to know what is right and good, as well as what is wrong and evil. They are expected to have acquired good morals from their parents and friends. There is, therefore, a saying: "Ngwana wa tšiwana molao o tšea tseleng" (An orphan gets his/her moral codes alongside the road) (Rakoma 1971:197). This view emphasises the fact that there is no excuse for someone not to acquire good morals for there are many places where one may learn them. Good moral standards are believed to be written in the minds and consciences of children throughout their upbringing and their observation of what other people do and fail to do. Only the children of witches and bad people lack good morals because, "Ngwan wa noga o tswalwa le bohloko" (a snake’s young is born with venom) (:197).

4.4.4 Conversion (tshokologo) in Sotho

The concept of conversion or a change of religion is inconceivable among the Sotho people. Newing (1975:13), in his study of pre-literate societies (to which the Sotho people belong), maintains that there is no possibility of changing from one religion to another in these societies. Pre-literate societies are ‘a group of people who feel that they belong together through sharing a common culture and set of values, a common territory and social organisation’ (:13). In these societies religion is all-embracing: agriculture, social life, the political structure, economics - everything is saturated with religion. As such, these societies are profoundly religious communities. Practically every activity, both individual and communal, has some religious significance: religion is something that accompanies everyone from birth to death (Mbiti 1969:103).
There is, therefore, no idea of changing from or leaving one's religion for another or recruiting other people to join one's religion lest the hierarchy of God, the ancestors and the elders be disturbed. Moreover, in the traditional community, there are no irreligious people. To be a person means to belong to a particular community, and this in turn involves sharing in the religious convictions, ceremonies and feasts of that community. As I have already said, all this implies that conversion from one religion to another is an impossibility: one has to be born into a society in order to participate in its religious life (cf Mbiti 1969:103) and continue its beliefs until life is exchanged for the ancestral abode.

The belief that one cannot change one's religion is upheld against all evil-doers. Among the Sotho people there is a strong belief that witches, for example, cannot abandon their evil deeds because their compulsion to do evil needs not be activated by jealousy or hatred, but exists because they are born with an inherent ability to perform witchcraft (Mönning 1967:71). As the same holds for other evildoers, the only solution here is to kill them because they do evil to harm others purely for the pleasure they derive from it (:71). They, moreover, believe that a child, for instance, inherits this quality and ability from its parents as is the case with all bad people such as murderers and adulterers.

The term tshokologo is not used in connection with traditional religion to refer to the same concept as Christian conversion but it is derived from the verb sokologa (turn around), fetoga in South Sotho, gucguka in Xhosa, and phenduka in Zulu. This word has been used to translate 'conversion' and 'repentance' in the Sotho Bible and is generally used by the church. The infinitive go sokologa does not refer to something as fundamental as changing one's religion or patterns of behaviour to something new and different. In its daily use it merely refers to a change of bodily position, literally turning around, or returning to the original position. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the traditional religion of the Sotho people is an unchangeable entity because, through the centuries of colonial occupation of
South Africa, political factors such as wars and conquests, population shifts, technological achievements, and church missionary campaigns, have resulted in modifications of the thought patterns of many Sotho people. On the other hand, I have to admit that these have not produced radical changes because even those changes that did take place, were merely superficial while the deeper religious aspects of life remained unaffected.

4.4.5 Observation

Among the Sotho people moral concepts such as bobe, ditšhila, makgoma, and molato are fundamental to both their moral thought and the practice of their culture. In the preceding sections we have seen that what is morally good, among the Sotho people, is not that which is commanded by God or spiritual beings although the practice of goodness makes them happy. A Sotho person would say: Badimo ba tla re robalela (an ancestor would sleep without grudges against us). Although no one would say the action is good or evil because God has said so. In Sotho thought the criterion of goodness is the welfare or well-being of the community, so goodness includes actions such as good deeds, habits and patterns of behaviour considered by the society as good because of their consequences for human well-being. These would include friendliness, faithfulness, honesty, truthfulness, compassion, hospitality, peacefulness, happiness, dignity, and respect. While God refers to the actions that promote human interest, for the Sotho what is good is decreed by human beings within the framework of their experiences in life.

The Sotho see evil as opposed to good. Just as good is seen in actions contributing to a behavioural pattern that is conducive to well-being and social harmony, evil is that which is considered detrimental to the well-being of humanity and society. Evil is defined in terms of the needs of society as well. As anyone who does good or evil does it to the whole
society, it is the society's prerogative to reward those who do good and punish those who commit evil.

The category of evil includes acts such as incest, rape, theft, and murder. Evil is tabooed, so there is no excuse for committing evil. The Sotho proverb: "Motsi-mohloka-moditi o tšea ka tsebe" (An initiate that does not have a teacher teaches himself by listening to what is being taught/said) implies that ignorance is no excuse before the law. It is believed that lessons in the public arena are provided daily. People who want to learn have plenty to learn from. This view is also found in the biblical metaphoric teaching in Proverb :8 which states: "Listen! Wisdom is calling out. Reason is making herself heard. On the hilltops near the road and at the cross-roads she stands. At the entrance to the city besides the gates, she calls ..." (Holy Bible).

4.4.6 The Place of Women in African Societies

The portraiture of women in most African societies reflects male prejudices. Anyone who takes time to listen to the stories and frustrations of women will necessarily encounter the problem of everyday misogyny. There will always be discrimination and a snobbish attitude by one sex against the other, but it cannot be overemphasised that misogyny has been a strong factor in shaping African social systems. The most evident form of African misogyny is found in witch hysteria. It is not a coincidence that the craze for witch-hunting picks on women because their physiological make-up, their being viewed as the weaker sex and their being different from men, make them vulnerable.

Thompson (1993:2) mentions similar stereotypes against women when reflecting on the place and role of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth century witchcraft craze in Europe. He asserts that accusing a woman of witchcraft was the final stage in the years of confrontation
and disruptive interaction among neighbours and between husband and wife that often set women at odds with their husbands or neighbours.

In the broader sense misogyny means that men hate and fear women, while women hate and fear other women and even hate themselves (Thompson 1993:3). Women hate other women and themselves because of a low self-esteem inculcated in them by the dim view men have of them. Among most African ethnic groups in South African women are blamed for nearly all misfortune that occur because their different physical structure and incidents like menstruation, conceiving, becoming pregnant, and breast-feeding make them unique and different from men. In patriarchal and discriminatory societies these are sexual features that are considered when appraisive measures are applied.

Among the Sotho, and other African ethnic groups in South Africa, misogyny is pronounced in proverbs, the counselling of the boys by men and ultimately in female persecution. In many proverbs women are satirized, lamented and their roles in society ridiculed. The following two Sotho proverbs sum up some of the prejudices against women:

4.4.6.1 Mosadi ke pudi, monna ke nku (a woman is a goat, and a man is a sheep)

This proverb equates a woman with a goat. A goat is seen as the most notorious among all domesticated animals. It is noisy, travels much, climbs mountains, and embodies a total lack of self-respect. Its character leaves much to be desired. All these characteristics are contained in this proverb. On the other hand, man is seen as the symbol of respect, dignity, integrity, self-respect, and tolerance. He is perceived as having good manners as a sheep is the embodiment of a fine personality and gentleness while women are seen as vessels of weakness and, therefore, of evil. They cannot keep family secrets and are slanderous.
Motši se theetše mmago, mmago ke tšhukudu, theetsa papago
(Initiate, don’t listen to your mother, your mother is a rhinoceros, listen to your father).

This is the basic instruction given to initiates at the circumcision lodge. The mother is likened to a rhinoceros that suggests reliance on physical strength and being quarrelsome. Its sharp horn and strong legs say it all. Its small head in proportion to its body suggests that it does not rely on its intellect but on its strong body in whatever it does. Women are like that and men are the direct opposite. The intended goal of the teaching to initiates attending circumcision is that blessed is the man who does not sit in the counsel of women. Furthermore, it is suggested that women are not consistent in what they are doing but are unpredictable and unreliable. They are in fact childish.

Prejudice against woman starts at the moment of her nativity - a female child is usually greeted with less enthusiasm than is a male infant. Because of its patriarchal structure, with its emphasis on property and a male heir, female children are regarded as a liability rather than an asset in the amassing of family fortunes through filial ties. A female child is seen as a mere passer-by who is of no potential help to her family.

In most African traditional settings women have no say over their lot. They cannot show their feelings or reject any arrangement made for them. Most of the girls are forced into arranged marriages with no possibility of any veto on their side. Any veto or resistance to the arrangements would be viewed as a lack of interest in the welfare of the clan and family. This may be the basis of her conviction in later years if suspected of, for instance, witchcraft. Her willingness to accept orders as issued by a male may count in her favour in times of testing and reckoning. Spinsterhood, however, is undesirable because unattached women are viewed with suspicious hostility, being outside the immediate patriarchal control. Spinsters (mafetwa - left-overs) are suspected of having come from families with a poor reputation.
and are, therefore, seen as not altogether blameless, although they are simultaneously seen as social failures because they have become a burden to their families. A Sotho equivalent for brother-in-law is molamo. Molamo may refer to a stick that functions as a shield. A brother-in-law is like a shield because he relieves a family of the burden of a bride because women are seen as good for nothing and it is a relief if they get married and leave their brothers with the house. A brother-in-law is that stick that relieves another man of a burden.

Sexual misconduct by girls is seen as wrong partly because in the Sotho social system of marriage based on the exchange of property, girls are often viewed as chattel and their marketability would be destroyed if their virtue was questionable. Any man thus seducing his neighbour’s daughter does him the greatest possible damage and is heavily fined. Where a girl gets a child before marriage the young man who impregnated her is heavily fined because that is viewed as a great damage to the girl. Because a girl is treated like a perpetual minor she is not held fully accountable for the act while the boy is.

4.4.6.2 Wifehood

The matrimonial responsibilities of wives in Sotho families are great. A mother is required to supervise the household, look after the children, entertain guests who might stop by unannounced, as well as being a physical ‘helpmate’ for her husband. Many Sotho women are skilled in all domestic arts. If, however, a woman does not understand what her proper household role entails, there are other women who may teach her. But if relations between her and her in-laws get soured she may be sent home for further instruction. Such a move will be a negative reflection on her and her parents. Wives are blamed for anything going wrong in their marital lives. If, for example, her children are not doing well at school, she will bear the blame, but if they are clever the credit goes to the father. She is indeed a scapegoat for many misfortunes.
Of course, one of the most basic duties of a wife is that of being a sexual partner for her husband. The begetting of children is a primary function of marriage. In most African communities infertility is blamed on women. They are believed to be infertile because of two reasons. First, it is so because they are bewitched by those who are jealous of their marriage. This view is normally held by a woman’s parents and relatives - in fact those who are well-disposed towards her. On the other hand, they may be seen as barren because of the evil practices they performed before marriage. This view may be held by their husbands and in-laws - especially if relations have soured.

In most African situations modern women regard the lot of women as unbearable. However, most of them accept their situation and invert ways for survival under those precarious conditions. The situation of unmarried women is by no means better. Though unmarried women are not like married women who assume great domestic responsibilities, succumbing to the physical disabilities of nearly constant pregnancy, hard labour in the fields, and malnutrition, unmarried women have their own problems. The Sotho name given to them is lefetwa (passed-by), as I have already indicated. The name is in the noun class of non-humans (Le-Ma). Unmarried women, and those who have reached their menopause, often become victims in a society that emphasizes fertility as an ideal. In traditional Sotho villages such women may easily become prey to accusations of witchcraft. In this study an attempt is being made to show that witchcraft accusations, tribal settings, in the Northern Province are socially acceptable means of denying charity to ones neighbours in times of agrarian economic crises and rapid population growth by blaming these evils on those who do not seem to be victims of such conditions. It is a blurred, confused and ambivalent situation, but the victims of witchcraft accusations usually come from the poverty-stricken and deviants from the rule.
4.5 The Animism Theory

The African system of thought and religion cannot be adequately appreciated without a grasp of the dynamics of the animism theory. Animism is 'the belief that all natural phenomena are possessed of souls that animate them and explain their special characteristics' (Philpot 1982:16). The history of the belief in spirits goes back to all communities of the world - especially the most ancient ones. There is, therefore, no culture that has not had a history of animism and magic, this magic being a device used for protection against 'evil' spirits or for gaining help from 'good' spirits. The animism belief postulates that latent power in natural objects can produce a desired-for effect if correctly manipulated: Ghosts, spirits and gods are seen as possessing a certain amount of intelligence.

Contemporary scholars regard animism as a crude form of belief based on an erroneous understanding of the physical universe. Those who hold this view believe that superstition belongs to the same category as animism. Such a view dismisses the reality of spirits except that they exist in the minds of people. This view sees the belief in magical interventions in human life as an anachronism incompatible with an advanced religious and scientific view.

To the majority of Africans living in the Northern Province, nature is a medley of the presence of magical powers. The blaze of a flash of sheet-lightning, the frightening din of a clap of thunder, the encounter with a menacing serpent, a sudden death, and the sudden darkness that obscures the moon during a lunar eclipse, are all impressions of the presence of unnatural forces (Sawyerr 1994:1). This presence, therefore, constitutes reality for them. The contrasts and contradictions of life are never taken for granted but are viewed with suspicion. To many Africans reality is a single whole they feel part of.
The only device to control and subdue hostile forces in their environment is by employing magic. The factors of life are sometimes unbending, they merely surrender and subordinate themselves to these factors. Unfortunately, people are neither the same nor equal. Evil ones have access to the natural powers and manipulate them to hurt or disadvantage those who do not have the same ability. Spiritual beings are, therefore, often credited with a knowledge of magic. They either hand it down to people or use it in their relations with others.

Looking at witchcraft from this point of view, Sawyerr (1994:11) defines witchcraft as an expression of the disapproval of a breach of the world-order. Tribal life does not readily accept any differences from the accepted order, as we have indicated in the previous sections. As tribal society frowns on any departure from the accepted norms of behaviour, witchcraft is thus associated with women who are lesbian, who are normally past child-bearing age and disinterested in male associations, who are hostile, crude, and unfriendly. These people are different because of their accessibility to nature that they use for their own selfish goals. This view tallies with the Northern Sotho saying: "Tšhwene ge e re hoo e bona lewa" (when a baboon sees a cave it barks). The implied meaning here is that strange/abnormal women are hostile, crude, stubborn, and unfriendly because of the magic craft they possess just as a witch is regarded as an arrogant person who derives his/her arrogance from the fact that he/she possesses lethal weapons.

To summarise, the belief in and presence of the animism theory explains the reality of collective persecutions. People who believe that nature is impregnated with soul and spirits (good or evil) that could be manipulated by evil people will not find it hard to support witch-hunting campaigns. Myths that are embodied in the animism belief and social crises present in the society will enable the society to find victims for persecution. At the time of a social crisis religious people delve into their fundamental religious beliefs and employ magical formulae and objects for assistance.
4.6 Dualism Theory

The dualism theory postulates two hostile and opposing deities. The ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, is a good example to prove the existence of this theory. Zoroastrianism pictured two gods who were equal, each counterbalancing the other. One was a 'good' god while the other was 'bad'. The same belief is present in the African world view. In Africa a person’s concept of him/herself develops a bi-polar content, consisting of one, who is regarded as a guardian angel, well-disposed towards him/her and the other who is regarded as a hostile demonic force, alien to him/her.

Virtually all religions of the world have evil and good spirits or gods. In Christianity there is the doctrine of God and Satan. Although Christians would not agree that the concept of God and Satan is dualistic because Satan is subordinate to God, on a practical level both have the same access to and influence on people. Christians too are faced with a struggle between two equal forces which pull them into two different directions. My contention is that the tension and struggle facing Christians is dualistic: although their belief promises them victory at the end of times, they are currently involved in a dualistic warfare.

The dualistic belief provides fertile ground for witchcraft beliefs to germinate in. It is not difficult for Christians to believe in witchcraft because of the concept of Satan. Satan, the chief enemy of God and the adversary of humankind, has access to the will of the people. He can lure them away from God, form a pact with them and emulate them with supernatural powers to destroy God’s Kingdom on earth. It is thus easy for a person involved in a dualistic belief to readily accept witchcraft beliefs without questioning them. It is, therefore, clear that animism and dualism both provide a solid base for witchcraft beliefs and persecution.
ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. There are only a few writings by African scholars about African Religion. The bulk of the works on African cosmology was done by Western missionaries, anthropologists and sociologists with the result that most of these writings have tilted towards a Western bias since an outside observation influenced by a different worldview that primarily aimed at conquering and subjugating another religion can never report objectively. An inside view is thus important to counter existing skewed perceptions.

2. The exclusion reveals, among others, the impatience and ignorance with which African religion was approached by colonial and church authorities.

3. Misogyny means 'women hate'. Women may be hated by men and other women primarily because of fear.
5. THE COLONIAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUPPRESSION OF WITCHCRAFT

Innocent have I come into prison, innocent have I been tortured, innocent must I die. For whoever comes into the witch prison must be tortured until he invents something out of his head (Russel 1980:56)

Colonial powers and missionary agents who came to Africa after the seventeenth century were mainly from witch-infected North America and Europe. They had a fair view of what suffering the belief had caused in their home countries since the notoriety of such trials in England and other parts of Europe had helped some of them change their views against witch beliefs (Russel 1980:122).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century most of the cultural and political leaders in Europe were gradually abandoning their support for persecuting people accused of witchcraft. In both England and North America there was a gradual decline in witchcraft trials and accusations. This decline may be ascribed to intellectual influence exerted by the Enlightenment and the legal indefensibility of witch trials (:122). The belief, nevertheless, continued mainly among church people probably because of the influence of Protestantism and Catholicism. In England, the Statute of 1736 marked the end of the official prosecution for witchcraft although the witchcraft laws remained until 1951 when they were eventually repealed. In England, the last person to be executed for the crime of witchcraft was hanged in 1684 (122).
The witchcraft belief declined because a new intellectual world-view that emerged at the end of the seventeenth century declared witchcraft belief a superstition that was contrary to rationality. It thus declined because it was as intellectually disreputable to defend witchcraft under the new thought system as it had been to attack it in the old dispensation. The new emerging world-view was a philosophical and religious revolution that changed the whole concept of the cosmos and how it functioned (Russel 1980:123). The philosophical revolution was led by people like Descartes (1596-1650), Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Newton (2642-1717). Descartes, for example, argued against and dismissed the traditional medieval philosophy that believed in the operation of demons and angels (Bosch 1991:350). He rendered this philosophy illogical and replaced it with the existential philosophy based on observable, mechanical and logical reductionism (Russel 1980:123).

The increased skepticism and consequent rejection of supernatural evidence by the courts were, however, not left unchallenged, least from religious communities. Sir Thomas Browne (cf Levack 1992:57), for instance, wrote: ‘For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there were witches: they that doubt these, do not only deny but Spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence a sort, not of Infidels, but Atheists’. Wesley (:57) saw it in the same light: ‘the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible’. The belief in witchcraft, as I have argued in Chapter Two of this study, was for many solidly founded upon the Bible, and the central text was Exodus, 22:5: ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’.

The two views - skepticism and the rejection of witchcraft, and the religious insistence on the existence of witchcraft - were blended and upheld by colonial powers and missionary agencies who came to Africa. As a group of Europeans embodying one culture they held an ambivalent position regarding the belief in witchcraft: witchcraft was a reality but at the
same time it was rejected as a superstition. This view is discernible in the way in which they formulated and administered witchcraft laws.

Before discussing witchcraft laws in detail, it is perhaps fitting to analyse some of the missionary attitudes towards African institutions. The analysis of missionary attitudes towards African culture should increase the perspective of the reader on the operationalization of Witchcraft Suppression Acts in South Africa. It will also assist the reader in understanding the prolonged attack on African institutions by the church and the state in Africa.

**Missions and Witchcraft**

It was impossible for missionaries of the past three centuries to start their work among Africans without even a fair conception of African culture and the social institutions of Africans. It was even regarded as a waste of time and resources to undertake an in-depth study of African religious life and how the latter sanctioned social behaviour. Missionaries were conscious of the differences between themselves and Africans. In addition, the existing missionary culture was viewed as correct, civilized, progressive, and Christian while African culture was regarded as superstitious, evil and retrogressive (Louw 1941:232). In the early records of African culture in South Africa one finds remarkable - and extremely negative - accounts of Africans given by colonial powers and missionaries, for instance of their eating of unwashed intestines, their use of animal fat to rub their bodies with, their habit of wrapping dried entrails around their necks, their inability to conceive of God, and their incorrigible indolence (Coetzee 1988).

In South Africa, in particular, the attitudes of missionaries have been more destructive and have resulted in causing a notable measure of social disorganization, social dislocation and
insecurity in the lives of Africans. Significantly, African education was designed not only to cultivate inferiority among the youth but to deny them the very opportunities that the education they received, promised. They were not expected to develop, through education, to the level where Whites were. It should be emphatically stated that education for blacks was designed to produce subservient people who could not be independent from whites.

The attitude of missionaries towards witchcraft was equally destructive. Like their colonial counterparts, missionaries laid all blame for the belief in witchcraft on the traditional diviner, derogatorily called a witch-doctor. He was held responsible for keeping the belief alive, and held to be the cause of all social conflict because of his divinatory bones (Louw 1941:235). Without the slightest understanding of African culture, missionaries blindly and uncritically followed the destructive policies of their colonial counterparts. The quote of Louw (:235) from McCard, J.B. in Medical Missionary Work in Africa, portrays the general missionary attitude towards the traditional diviner:

Their (the doctors’) influence is all for evil and against Christianization and uplifting of the people. The missionaries in Africa will be unanimous in the testimony that the witch-doctor, and the superstitions which he represents, is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, factor in opposing the spread of the gospel and the up-lift of the people.

All the heathenish evil customs of the people of Africa are intimately associated with the superstitions of witchcraft. These evil customs are demanded by their religion of witchcraft, and people are afraid to break away from these evil customs because of the wrath of the evil spirits.

This belief in witchcraft follows the correct convert into the church. It follows the student into the school. It follows the Native minister into the pulpit. It is a constant drag [sic] on all to drag them back into the mire. That is why we have so many heart-breaking backslidings among our Native converts. Get the people free from their belief in witchcraft and their fear of witchcraft and we will remove the greatest obstacle to the spread of the gospel in Africa. And the man who stands behind this belief in witchcraft, who fosters this belief in
witchcraft, is the witch-doctor, and he gets his power and influence through the constant presence of disease and through the fact that people believe that he can cure disease and cause disease. He is really the ruler of Africa.

Now the especial province of medical missionary work is to attack this stronghold of superstition. If the people can be brought to believe that disease can be cured without recourse to witchcraft, if people can be taught that their beliefs in witchcraft and fears of witchcraft are groundless, then the day of the witch-doctor is past. And this cannot be done by teaching, it must be done by demonstration. It must be done by actual cure of disease, by the Christian, scientific doctor. And this is the peculiar function of the missionary physician and for medical missionary work.

From missionary documents written during the last three centuries one discerns the missionary tendency of confrontation and negation of the African traditional world (Kgatla 1988:80). Missionaries went out to mission stations to fight ‘Satan and its works among Africans’. They took no ‘risks’ because they believed that they were fighting the devil, and the devil needed no compromise. African institutions like lobola, polygamy, passage of rites, and, in fact, all religious practices had to be renounced to pave the way for the Christian religion. It had never occurred to the missionaries that Africans had their own religion and religious practices that gave meaning to their behaviour. Like in all other religions, Africans needed a priest in the person of the traditional healer. They also had social conflicts as Europeans had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Crushing and negating the African world-view could never have been a solution or an advantage in the communication of the Christian message to Africans. On the contrary, the missionaries merely caused the African religious world to go underground to be practised in secret.

Colonial Governments and Witchcraft

Colonial governments were equally void of understanding the nature of religion and culture of Africans, as well of the role and functions of their priests in their lives. Influenced partly
by racial prejudice and the philosophical and sceptical revolution of the Enlightenment, colonial governments saw all African institutions and religions as superstitious.

As the colonial authorities were especially pronounced in their treatment of people who believed in witchcraft, they designed severe punishments for such people.

Sections 14 and 15 Proclamation 110 of 1879 - according to which the Transkei was annexed to the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope - read (cf Louw 1941:197):

Every person practising, or pretending to practise, witchcraft, or other acts commonly regarded as such, shall be guilty of an offence punishable by fine, or imprisonment with or without spare diet and with or without solitary confinement, or whipping not excluding thirty-six lashes, or by all or any of such punishments.

Any person falsely accusing another or practising witchcraft, or other such acts, shall be guilty of an offence punishable as in the last preceding regulation provided.

Subsequent Acts (Act No 24 of 1886 of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, The Witchcraft Suppression Act No 2 of 1895, Act No 8 of 1897, and the existing Witchcraft Suppression Act No 3 of 1957, as well as the Amendment Act No 50 of 1970) echoed the same sentiments. Act No 3 of 1957 as amended (Act No 50 of 1970) consists of six sections with four subsections on possible punishments ranging from two to ten years' imprisonment. The Act is a culmination of all witchcraft laws passed over the years. It reads:

a) Any person who imputes to any other person the causing, by supernatural means, of any disease or injury or damage to any person or thing, or who names or indicates any other as a wizard;

b) in circumstances indicating that he professes or pretends to use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration,
imputes the cause of death of, injury or grief to, disease in, damage to or disappearance of any person or thing to any other person;

c) employs or solicits a witch-doctor, witch-finder or any other person to name or indicate any person as a wizard;

d) professes a knowledge of witchcraft, or the use of charms, and advises any person how to bewitch, injure or damage any person or thing, or supplies any person with any pretended means of witchcraft;

e) on the advice of any witchdoctor, witch-finder or other person or on the ground of any pretended knowledge of witchcraft, uses or causes to be put into operation any means or process which, in accordance with such advice or his own belief, is calculated to injure or damage any person or thing;

f) for gain pretends to exercise or use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, or undertakes to tell fortunes, or pretends from his skill in or knowledge of any occult science to discover where and in what manner anything supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction - ...

From the wording and punishments imposed on transgressors of the Witchcraft Suppression Act, it is clear that witchcraft beliefs and their related killings were a real menace to the colonial authorities. It is also evident from the title of the Act (The Witchcraft Suppression Act) that the intention of the legislature was to suppress any form of witchcraft beliefs, practices, accusations, and persecutions. Through the might of the state colonial powers brooked no witchcraft belief. It is also worth noting the views of the new democratic government of South Africa on witchcraft. The new government views witchcraft in the same light that the colonial powers did. All notoriously suppressive acts, such as the Terrorist Suppression Act, Communism Suppression Act and Mixed Marriages Act, that were meant to oppress Africans, have been repealed except the Witchcraft Suppression Act. This serves as a clear indication that the new democratic government has no alternative but to curb the witchcraft carnage.
The second observation one may make is that the Witchcraft Suppression Acts were proclaimed by people who had no understanding of or sympathy for African religions. Africans were neither consulted nor their co-operation enlisted in the search for solutions to social problems that affected them. Those who enacted the laws did so under the assumption that Africans had nothing to offer and decisions had to be taken on their behalf. The European mentality of assuming trusteeship of all African affairs is clearly manifested in these laws - Africans were treated like children who were seen as incapable of taking informed decisions about their own lives.

Furthermore, one observes ambivalence and contradictions in these laws. The tone of intolerance and the making of rash assumptions characterise these laws. It may be construed that this may be the result of controversies in the minds of the colonizers, about whether witchcraft does exist or not. What is obvious, however, is that Africans are not given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether witchcraft exists as their beliefs have been summarily outlawed. The promulgation of these laws actually admits that witchcraft may be existing but Africans are not allowed to uphold their belief in it. Section (e) of the Witchcraft Suppression Amendment Act No 50 of 1970 reads:

Any person who - on the advice of any witchdoctor, witch-finder or other person or on the ground of any pretended knowledge of witchcraft - uses or causes to be put into operation any means or process which, in accordance with such advice or his own belief, is calculated to injure or damage any person or thing...

This passage reveals that witchcraft beliefs and witch-findings are seen as malicious practices so any person who sets a witchcraft process in operation and harms other people is guilty of the offence. This section is directed against a witch, who according to Africans, is regarded as one of the worst offenders in the community, and who must be punished. A person who willingly and for the sake of pleasure harms innocent people is liable for a
maximum fine not exceeding ten years if found guilty on terms determined by Western laws. The inherent contradiction is obvious: first, there is doubt whether such a person exists but second, if he/she found guilty, he/she is liable for punishment.

Africans view this kind of approach to the serious offence of witchcraft as childish and unintelligible. People who approach witchcraft in this way can only be ignored and if they endeavour to suppress such a belief by force, the belief will merely go underground. The punishment provided by the European legal system does, therefore, not serve as a deterrent, as reformative or seen as severe. On the contrary, many Africans believe that witches will continue their evil practices, because they are being protected by the government. Although the section upholds the existence of witchcraft, there are not enough checks and balances built into the system to adequately protect the victims. Furthermore, since the African religious world is negated by law and by foreign Christian religion, the whole African system of religion and justice has been grossly violated and suppressed.

In Chapter Four I have explained how African justice works. I have argued that it is a elaborate system that is, by all standards, aimed at promoting and protecting the welfare of the community. If a person is found to pretend to be something which he/she is not or to falsely accuse other persons of witchcraft the same punishment that would be meted out would be inferred against him/her. This happens in some tribes where a person wrongfully accused of witchcraft is compensated by his/her accuser (Stayt 1931:283).

Another point of criticism against the Witchcraft Suppression Acts is that the concept ‘witchcraft’ is not defined and should have included all magical activities, whether regarded as good or bad by Africans. The sole purpose of the Act was, it seems to ‘re-create’ African cosmology in the likeness of the European world-view. Africans were people to be moulded to become carbon copies of Western Christians, although they were expected to remain subservient at the same time. Whites in Africa have pretended that witchcraft does not exist,
and in speaking of 'any person falsely accusing another', the idea would have been that all
criticisms of witchcraft were false and all claims of witchcraft pretentious, or if witchcraft
existed, it posed no threat to whites and Africans who had become Christians (Num 23:23).
Conversely, if the belief were false, it would gradually fade away and eventually disappear
under severe suppression to be replaced by the perceived superior Christian belief. We have
seen that the alternatives for Africans who had abandoned their belief in witchcraft were not
negotiated with them but merely forced on them. It is possible that if dialogue (on symmetric
level) was allowed between the two religious streams an amicable alternative with far-
reaching solutions might have been found.

Section (a) of the Witchcraft Suppression Amendment Act, No 50 of 1970, like all former
Acts, forbids all imputations of witchcraft. The mere act of accusing any person is
punishable with imprisonment not exceeding twenty years or to a whipping not exceeding
ten strokes or to both imprisonment and whipping. Whoever would be proved to be by habit
or repute a witch-doctor or witch-finder would be punished with a maximum of ten years’
imprisonment, or with a whipping not exceeding ten strokes or both. Ever since the whites
set foot in South Africa community priests/diviners have been regarded as instigators in
witchcraft accusations while Africans have always viewed them as important specialised
people.

An African ngaka (doctor) is, according to Western law, a person who by habit and repute
names or indicates others as witches, while a moloi (witch) is a person who uses charms and
non-natural means to cause disease in any person or animal, or to cause injury to any person
or property. The basic assumption of the law is that witchcraft does not exist and the witch-
doctor or witch-finder can only be a deceiver and troublemaker of the people and should,
therefore, be punished. In the eyes of the Africans the person who is able to furnish some
protection against, and often rid a community of witches, is penalized while real public enemies are protected by Western laws.

Furthermore, the law punishes anyone who employs or solicits any witchdoctor, witch-finder or any other person who names or indicates any person as a wizard. Any person who supplies advice regarding witchcraft or supplies witchcraft materials for bewitching or injuring persons or property is also punishable while whoever uses this advice or materials is subject to the same punishments. This Act clearly reveals that from the point of view of its criminality, no distinction is made between the activity of the 'witchdoctor', the fighter against witchcraft and the performance of the witch. The Act thus shows a total disrespect for people of integrity and culture. In the eyes of Africans the perpetrator of evil, who always acts in secret, and can only be discovered by a specialist such as an African doctor, is now free to act without any restraint (Louw 1941:204) as a result of the banning of traditional African methods of fighting witchcraft by the laws of the whites.

Colonial Authorities and the Destruction of Paramountcy

The joint endeavours of colonial and missionary suppression of the African world-view was not merely limited to witchcraft beliefs - it was widespread. One of the African institutions that became the target of imperial domination and subjection as well was paramountcy. Missionaries believed that their gospel would spread more rapidly among Africans if the chief's domain and power were destroyed and 'witch-doctor' influence eliminated (Kgatla 1988:80). In South Africa this strategy of keeping African autonomy and self-development under white control was later continued by the apartheid government so that Africans were never allowed to develop to a position where they could impose threats to the whites. Whites increasingly viewed African political independence as a fundamental barrier to evangelization, civilization and expansionism (Sontag 1894:1439).
The paramount chief was the centre of the national life, a link between his people and the ancestors, a community medicine practitioner who officiated at all rites concerning his people (Delius 1983:53). The chief played a central role in rain-making rituals too. The relationship between society and supernatural forces was seen as mediated through the person and office of the chief. In executing his duties the chief needed a strong medicine person (doctor). The best doctors of the nation were singled out and employed by the chief. The chief demanded, from the best tribal doctors, to give all the best medicine available to him, partly because he wanted to know how to defend himself in the case of a magical attack and partly because he wanted to have a record of what his medicine men were capable of.

Any attack on the tribal institution of the doctor, as well as restrictions imposed on his/her profession, was inevitably seen as an attack on the chief's paramountcy. The fall of the institution of the medicine man meant the weakening of the institution of chiefdomship. In South Africa the breaking down of the paramountcy was consciously and systematically done. Whites increasingly regarded the chief's dominance, expansion and formidable resistance to colonial authorities as intolerable. Although some paramount chiefs such as Sekhukhunе of Sekhukhuneland, Malebogo of Bahananwa (to the north-west of Pietersburg), Makhado of Vendaland, and Makapane of Ba-Tswana held their own against the Voortrekkers, they were eventually defeated because of the superior weapons. Some of the chiefs were arrested, imprisoned and eventually died or killed (Delius 1983:251).

The result of the defeat of the African chiefs was the introduction of the Department of Native Authority Affairs where African governance and development were severely curtailed, manipulated and distorted. One of checks and balances to gauge as to whether African chiefs had accepted white rule was the installation of taxation. The judicious collection of taxes required an effective system of administration that would immediately sent out warning signals to white authorities in cases where chiefs were defaulting (Delius
1983:223). Defaulting chiefs would first be warned to pay their taxes while punitive measures would later be used against them if they did not comply (Kgatla 1988:21). Missionaries, who were working among the Africans, would keep colonial governments informed of all military plans and movements that posed a threat to the whites. Missionaries were, therefore, employed as critical eyes of the colonial government.

The introduction of the department of Native Authority Affairs under the jurisdiction of white colonial governments meant effectively breaking down the power of the chief paramountcy. Subordinate headmen were granted recognition as chiefs if they accepted white rule under the establishment of tribal authorities. Fearing the torture they have seen their paramount chiefs suffering at the hands of white colonial rulers and seeing the incentives offered to them if they accepted the ploy, many headmen defied their traditional establishments and accepted the offer. The incentives they received included better salaries, cars, decent houses, offices, and the fame which goes with chiefdomship. However, acceptance of the scheme meant their effective and perpetual dominance by colonial rulers, becoming civil servants, to be hired and fired, and in fact selling their birthright to White domination (Kessel & Oomen 1997:563-565). In Sekhukhuneland where there was only one paramount chief when the first white people arrived in 1968 there were more than fifty-six chiefs with hundred-and-ten headmen waiting for approval of their applications to become chiefs (according to information provided by the senior magistrate at Schoonoord in 1984).

The developments discussed in the preceding paragraph became a fertile ground for witchcraft-hunting, accusation and persecution in the 1980s and 1990s. Many chiefs, business people and community leaders, who were seen as collaborating with the oppressive apartheid system, were accused of witchcraft and subsequently killed. I will discuss these events in Chapter Eight when I analyse the factors and circumstances that led the identification and persecution of a witch. Suffice now to state that crushing the institutions
of tribal doctor, chieftaincy and other related African beliefs and practices caused untold struggle and suffering in South Africa. When these institutions were reclaimed, people who were perceived as having portrayed a black agenda for their own personal gains suffered severely. The above discussion has thus revealed that witchcraft-hunting and persecutions were in some respects shaped by historical events.

In her article "From Confusion to Lusaka": the Youth Revolt in Sekhukhuneland”, Van Kessel provides insightful information on the insurrection of the youth against leadership and the eventual witchcraft-craze of the mid-1980s. She calls these phenomena ‘confusion’ because the widespread protest, resistance and revolt were confusing both to the authorities and those who were ignorant of historical political developments in South Africa. The widespread revolt of political resistance and witchcraft persecution in the rural homelands of the 1980s was a token black resistance which started with the first encounter between blacks and whites in South Africa. These incidents can be traced back to a history of black resistance against colonial conquest until 1879.

The common denominator to all insurrections that occurred in the period starting with the 1976 Soweto Students revolt was that Africans experienced a vacuum in their lives. They were without their acknowledged and authentic leaders and were at the same time denied the kind of religion they regarded as their birthright, as well as their traditional way of practising medicine. In other words, they were politically, economically, religiously, and culturally oppressed and suppressed. The revoking of their religious and cultural heritage, the transformation of their societies through revolution and the elimination of the puppets of white government, as well as the cleansing of societies from witches remained their only option. They believed that their survival as a nation depended on their courage to execute the identified option.
Some Traditional Methods Employed for Combatting Witchcraft

The Africans employed a large number of traditional methods employed by Africans to combat witchcraft. Various informants contacted in this regard gave different accounts of what used to happen to the accused. One man, aged eighty-four and residing at Dikgale village some 30 km east of Pietersburg, informed me that his chief controlled witchcraft accusations by not paying any attention to them. He barred all witchcraft cases from being tried in his tribal court. His main argument, according to the informant, was that witchcraft cases were family fights and as such they should be solved either at clan level or attended to by employing diviners. This approach helped in scaling down witchcraft cases in his area.

The condition of blacks and the way in which they conducted their affairs before the coming of the colonial conquerors are, unfortunately, often romanticised. An objective assessment of how they treated victims of witchcraft accusations is always blurred by attempts of many scholars to present black culture in a positive light. The political dynamics of the South African context appears to have profoundly influenced the formation of this positive anthropology of the blacks. However, my plea is that one should be freed from romanticising black culture and religion and objectively state how blacks treated their witchcraft victims - because romanticising black culture does not present the true state of affairs and, therefore, aid in finding the proper remedies to solve the problem. My view is that all human behaviour is the same although it may happen in different. Human conflicts have the same root and they need similar devices to address them.

The way 'supposed' witches were treated by the Northern Sothos did not differ from the way in which Europeans treated their 'supposed' witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. People suspected of practising witchcraft were harshly treated depending on the way in which the persecutors viewed the crime. Where a witchcraft accusation was
engineered by tribal politics the death penalty was imposed but where the accusation was viewed as trivial, a less severe punishment such as banning a victim from the society was imposed. Questions that were to be put to the accused, and torture or fear of torture readily elicited confessions.

If some mysterious accurance befell a family or on individual a diviner would be summoned to ‘sniff out’ the witch responsible for the incident. Once pointed out as a witch, the majority of them would confess how he/she got the craft and point out his/her partners in the trade.¹ The witch-hunters were determined that the accused should confess and thereby admit their guilt. When one thinks of the treatment meted out to those suspected of witchcraft, it is not surprising that so many did confess, although some did not.

To the uninitiated reader the confessions of the witches would be most startling. Some of them are utterly unbelievable, such as flying through the air naked or changing into the form of an animal, or even having sex with men who were asleep without them noticing it. But it is clear that, in order to escape torture, such startling confessions had to be made. Those who denied charges of divination were not acquitted but put to vicious tests, such as a poison test. The poison would be administered internally, mixed with beer, in the belief that death would occur if the accused was guilty but would vomit if innocent (Melland 1923:222). The person who was being tried had to sit on a scaffold with his/her feet on a pole so that no part of his/her body touched the ground. If the accused vomited his/her relatives fought with the accusers, but if the accused died his/her relatives ran away, taking the corpse with them to prevent the body from being burnt.

Many of the methods used in the trials of witches would not be admissible in modern courts of law. In the majority of cases guilt was assumed from the outset. Since the witches had been identified upon accusation, public or private, they were taken to tribal courts by a
hostile crowd (Parrinder 1963:79). The accused was constantly hammered with questions that were designed and repeated so that he/she might very easily be trapped into contradicting him/herself. Witches were not allowed counsel in the tribal courts as this practice is never allowed in tribal courts. Any person who might testify for the acquittal of an alleged witch might him/herself become liable, especially if he/she would make it difficult for the conviction of the accused for aiding a witch was regarded as even more serious than being a witch (:79). Leading questions that could easily trap the witches and extract free confessions from them were deliberately put to them. This explains the remarkable similarity of many of the confessions.

It has to be admitted in all fairness that Africans did not have more humane methods before the coming of the colonial authorities and to remove the idea that everything was spoiled by the arrival of the latter. ‘Witches’ were often killed and in some cases the accused were allowed to escape if they would permanently leave the community. It is true, however, that witchcraft was considered a crime for which traditional Africans administered capital punishment (Kluckhohn 1944:49). In some cases, when tension had sufficiently mounted, a witch was even killed without a ‘trial’, sometimes by an aggrieved mob. The manner of execution varied, but was usually extremely violent (by axes, kieries or stones).

Krige (1937:206-227) found that among the Zulus witchcraft was a crime which was generally punished by death. The cruelty which witches were capable of inflicting on innocent people was meted out to him/her through the suffering of death. As a witch was seen as a murderer whose presence endangered the safety of all, death was regarded as the only effective deterrent.

But among the traditional BaSotho and BaVenda persons convicted of witchcraft were treated differently. Death was imposed in rare cases and only on unrepentant day-witches
and people who were believed to have a lightning bird and who terrorised people. Among the BaVenda and BaSotho some of the following options were chosen to deal with those suspected of witchcraft or who have been diagnosed as such. Interestingly, Gelfand (1967:111) recounts similar practices among the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

i) The smell-out of the witch was done by a diviner through the process of divination. He/she should establish the name of the witch by first establishing his/her totem. If the accused was finally traced and found he/she would be driven out of the country/village. If it was a man he would be driven out alone leaving his family behind but in the case of a woman she would be driven out with her children.

ii) Another punishment which could be meted out to a person accused of witchcraft was to treat the grave of a deceased or sick person to implore them to send back death. This often led to the death of the witch. It was, therefore, generally believed that there was lešwa (a counter measure) to any act of witchcraft. This deterred witches from attacking people. Nevertheless, very few cases of witchcraft led to an open accusation because the affected family might not want to be seen as victims of witchcraft. The family would consult a diviner, treat its sick and ‘send back’ sickness or death to the witch (Krige 1936:259). To cause a witch to desist, the victims, after consulting a doctor privately for instructions, might resort to go ebela - that is, shout out on the streets, speak alone while throwing the hands into the air and picking up papers. Sometimes a doctor could feta (pass in front of them) the witches, that is, cause them to forget to act or destroy their efficiency through magical intervention.

iii) Another form of control of witchcraft was to apply a method of prevention. Witchcraft was viewed as an epidemic disease that had to be brought under control through immunisation. In this regard there existed many precautions against
witchcraft. For instance, a special medicine was used to protect babies from the age of two weeks. Children and adults were protected against night-witches, 'sent lightning' and other witchcraft practices while the diviner (*ngaka*) was annually invited for the protection ceremony where he/she would make incisions in the skin over the whole body. He/she would then rub some of the medicine into the little cuts (Gelfand 1967:111) to protect people against witches. Students and young men going to study or work far from home for a long period would be reinforced against witchcraft in this way.

In some instances, it is alleged, a found witch was made to confess his/her guilt.² If a witch confessed, the victims would at once begin to improve slowly, and the witch would die within a year of the same symptoms. Sometimes cruel methods were used to make a suspected witch confess his/her sins. This was believed to be a deterrent for prospective witches.

iv) Another effective way of keeping witches at bay was the placing of medicine round the village fence, which either made the witches forget their errand or made the village appear like water or a forest (Krige 1937:251). Huts could be protected against lightning in a similar magical way. If a witch trespassed and struck a protected village, it was believed that he/she would fall and change into a person who could then be caught. Night-witches were believed to be caught by similar kinds of medicine that would compel them to stay on the spot as they would be unable to move till the following morning. Only a witch caught red-handed in that way could face immediate death. Similar protective methods are still applied today, even by members of indigenous Churches for example by putting a copper wire over their gates as protection against witches.
Concluding Remarks

There is a serious contradiction implicit in the Witchcraft Suppression Act. In the first place the existence of witchcraft is denied although the mere act of accusing another person of practising witchcraft is seen as an offence - an act that admits to the existence of witchcraft.

Punishment is also meted out against any person who believes him/herself to have any powers of witchcraft and for making use of any advice regarding witchcraft or any witchcraft materials. These provisions of the law can only be considered as an admission that witchcraft exists. Furthermore, there is no distinction between the diviner (witchdoctor) and the witch or between useful magic and harmful magic as the term witchcraft is used to include almost any practice that involves the belief in the employment of supernatural powers. No distinction is made between the different uses of supernatural powers, whether the purpose is death caused by means of witchcraft, or healing occasioned by the diagnosis of the bones. In the eyes of the Africans the crime of the person who by deviation is proved to have caused death - a crime which would not escape severe punishment in the tribal courts - is treated lightly by the white person's law, while consulting a diviner or even using protective charms, that is believed to be indispensable to safety, is strangely enough punishable by law (Louw 1941:208).

But the confusion caused by the contradictions of the Witchcraft Suppression Act does not or should not imply that Africans had a better deal before the coming of the Church and the colonisers. Africans had no real solution to the problem as they still do not have any. It is unfortunate, however, that the colonial masters thought that their solutions would last while they have merely added to the existing confusion.

The situation was further complicated when white governments and churches jointly attacked the office of the chief. By attacking and negating the practice of the African doctor they
destroyed the office of the chief. The disappearance of the paramountcy and replacement of it by Bantustan governments worsened the situation as Africans lost two vital leadership components. As a result, the youth born in subsequent years, were born into a vacuum. There were no authentic leaders who could guide them but merely government puppets in the persons of the Bantustan chiefs. In their search for their own identity and in repositioning themselves for a new and authentic political order occasional by eminent victory over the apartheid government the youth were bound to falter because of the absence of authentic leadership. A real societal crisis was thus caused in the process of trying to manage the resurgence of traditional beliefs that had been suppressed for centuries while simultaneously anticipating a democratic order. This tense situation was compounded by the opposition by opportunist leaders in the form of chiefs appointed by the whites. The situation could easily have erupted, causing the complete destruction of the country.
1. Rosen (1969:49) argues that some of the witches who confessed their art in sixteenth century England were undoubtedly senile or crazed while some were malicious, and it seems very likely that they might have carried out witchcraft acts. The same can be said about African witchcraft confessions. It cannot, however, be argued that those who confessed their sins for practising the art did not sometimes in their lives resort to employing black magic to improve their lot or even frighten others, or that they had never hated and fell into jealousy or rage against their kin or neighbours.

2. Parrinder (1969:82) found similar tactics in the European witchcraft-hunt. An accused would be lured into confession on the basis that if he/she confessed the victim (sick or dead) would be healed or raised from the dead. The same methods were reported among the African people.
CHAPTER SIX

6. WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AND THEIR SOCIAL SETTING - CASES IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

If you want to know about something, why not just go where it is happening and watch it happen? (Babbie 1989:261)

To provide a satisfactory explanation for the witchcraft accusations in the Northern Province of South Africa, we should consider not only the religious changes and conflicts but also the broader social environment in which these accusations are made. Levack (1987:125) maintains that in studying any crime, we can profit from acquiring knowledge of the social setting of the crime and the relationship between the criminal and his/her victim. Variables such as the economic condition of the community, the sex and age of the victims, agricultural conditions, the infrastructure, social cohesion, and the levels of poverty of the community are to be considered. In that way we can fully understand what motivated the criminal and his/her accusers. In this chapter we will investigate social relationships of victims of witchcraft-hunt. Such an inquiry will undeniably aid us in explaining why the alleged victims of the crime, or their kin, are singled out for persecution.

In my opinion the social history of witchcraft accusations should become more than a mere study of deviant behaviour. In dealing with witchcraft researchers must explain not only why the alleged witch acted in a certain way, but also why the witch’s neighbours and relatives suspected and accused him/her. It is possible that the alleged witch might have been responding to social or economic pressures when he/she cursed his/her enemies or used ‘witchcraft’ against them, but his/her neighbours and relatives, by denouncing him/her may be deemed equally responsible for having contributed to the social conditions in which they are living. It is equally true that witchcraft accusations in the Northern Province (like in
early modern European communities), allow people to resolve conflicts between themselves and their neighbours and to explain misfortune that has occurred in their lives.

In establishing the social context in which witchcraft accusations are operating and the extent to which some of them may be attributed to failed interpersonal relationships, I will consider seven case studies from the Northern Province. These case studies are all based on kinship stresses, political tensions and unsettled communities.

This chapter addresses witchcraft accusations by employing the case study method. Five cases are thoroughly discussed in this chapter in order to clarify why witchcraft accusations occur in some areas and not in others, and to apply the theoretical frameworks discussed in the previous chapters in order to explain this phenomenon. By going directly to the social phenomenon of witchcraft accusations and observing it as fully as possible, one can develop a profound understanding of social factors that cause the problem. This mode of research is best done with a number of research topics that may assist researchers to recognise several nuances of attitudes and behaviour that might escape researchers using other methods (Babbie 1989:262). In this respect we will consider Lofland’s insight on social research.

In his *Analysing Social Settings* (1984:71-92), Lofland identifies several appropriate kinds of focuses for the case study method. He calls them thinking units and lists them as follows:

1) Meanings - This includes linguistic devices such as culture, norms and world-views.
2) Practices - This refers to various kinds of behaviour.
3) Episodes - This includes a variety of events such as crime and illness.
4) Encounters - This involves human relationships and interaction.
5) Roles - This refers to people’s positions and their roles in family and society.
6) Relationships - This refers to the kinds of behaviour appropriate to pairs or sets of roles, such as mother-son relationships and friendships.

7) Groups - Moving beyond relationships, small groups such as friendship cliques, associations and professionals influence events in society.

8) Settlements - Smaller scale 'societies' such as villages, ghettos, neighbourhoods and methods used to sustain the society are also important for defining to society how to attend to its problems.

In the light of Lofland's thinking units the following list of topics has been formulated to provide direction and facilitate understanding of witchcraft cases discussed in this study:

1. The village - Layout and composition of the village, provenance of families, administration of the village, business, schooling, main livelihood of the village, and links with the 'outside world'.

2. Agricultural infrastructures - How much land is cultivated, problems and shortages in agriculture, natural resources, cattle, natural hazards, employment opportunities, and individual roles in the community.

3. Relations between families - Kin relations, irksome kinship, role of larger groupings, market, and commercialisation in the village.

4. Tensions in the village - History of marriages and marital problems, relations between in-laws, brothers, people who are marginalised, interfamily feuds, struggles for power, problems with authorities, and tensions between villages.

5. Beliefs about witchcraft - How supernatural happenings are explained, scapegoating, jealousy, strives, conflicts, protection against witchcraft, and divination.

6. Accusations of witchcraft - Who is likely to be accused? Men, women, old, young, powerless, powerful. Who takes the initiative? Ways of identifying a witch,
divination, smelling, sniffing. How can counterclaims be established? Role of the young and old in accusations.

7. The effects of accusations - Witchcraft confessions, ways of cleansing or exonerating witchcraft accusations, witchcraft confessions.

The following five areas or farms were identified for this case study research: Makgabeng (Early Dawn), Mongalo (Udeny), Marabjane (Avon), Dikgale (Kalkfontein), and Koringpunt (Zebediela). They were not selected randomly or because they were experiencing more problems than others, but selected because, according to police records, they had experienced incidents of witchcraft accusations in the recent past and are basically rural villages. The areas or farms (as they are called by the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs) are lying to the south, north-west and east of Pietersburg - the capital city of the Northern Province.

6.1 Makgabeng (Early Dawn) Farm

6.1.1 The Location, Topography and Climate of the Farm

The Makgabeng farm is situated in the Central Region of the newly demarcated Northern Province. The Province is divided into seven regions. Makgabeng is about 100 km north-west of Pietersburg. The area straddles the Tropic of Capricorn 23° 30. The altitude varies between 900 m and 1 200 m above sea level. The area is gently sloping towards the Blouberg Mountain in the north, while the drainage is mainly from east to west along small spruits that flow into the Magalakwena River - a tributary of the Limpopo River. The annual rainfall varies between 380 mm and 550 mm, with most of the rain during the summer months (October-February). The area is characterised by fairly frequent mid-season droughts that cause much frustration to crop farmers. The maximum summer temperature
EARLY DAWN

UDNEY

Hazelbridge Hill

Dithabaeng

Go-Nejapa

AVON

Farm boundaries
District
Secondary
Main
Arterial
Freeway
Roads
Footpath
Towns & Villages
Average rainfall
250
350
450
550
750

W
E

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varies with the altitude and is around 25-35°C in summer and 17-22°C in winter. Maps A, B and C on the next pages portray the areas. The yellow spots are villages and the open spaces fields and grazing areas. The area is not demarcated according to modern farming practices where the residential areas, ploughing fields and grazing camps are fenced into camps.

6.1.2 **Ethnic Group and Historical Background**

The residents of the area are Northern Sotho people, one of the four ethnic groups that inhabit the Northern Province. The main clan is the Ngoepe clan. The farm was bought from the old Transvaal Administration by people residing on it in the early 1950s and is classified as a privately owned farm with government having little say on the farm (Independent Development Trust 1998). Everything done on the farm, including modern agricultural methods, must be planned with the consent of the owners.

6.1.3 **Land Use**

According to the Agricultural Report by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) of December 1998 the farming system in the area has developed after a long process of trial and error in an endeavour to fulfil the compelling necessity of basic needs within the constraints of the prevailing socio-economic, socio-cultural and political milieu. There is no water or irrigation system to ensure commercial farming. People who practise the subsistence mode of farming solely depend on rain for producing anything. There is only one communal borehole with a mono-pump that supplies the whole community with water. The constant shortage of water exerts tremendous pressure on the community, forcing some to travel long distances to buy water from those with their own boreholes.
6.1.4 Grazing

As has been indicated, Makgabeng is a privately owned farm. Because of the previous government’s policy, resources were channelled to trust farms (government controlled farms) while bought (private farms) were neglected. There are, therefore, no camps according to which the farm is planned; there is also no rotational grazing system practice. In addition, there is no cooperation between members of the community to manage their farm according to modern techniques. The effect of this lack of cooperation and systematic approach to use their farm as a resource is overgrazing, destruction of natural vegetation and starvation. On the other hand, there is a perceived reluctance in the community to reduce their stock to match the carrying capacity of the farm. Many cattle die because of these conditions and this increases existing stress and tension in the community.

According to Madima (4) the average carrying capacity of Makgabeng farm is 14 hectares per one Life Stock Unit (14ha/LSU). At the moment there is one LSU per 8 hectares. On the basis of the carrying capacity of the farm, the farm is grossly overstocked. This has resulted not only in the deterioration of the natural grazing and vegetation, but also in considerable tension and strife among the cattle owners. Given the population numbers on the farm each family should have only 4 LSU but it is impossible for one family to entirely depend on 4 LSU. Matters are further complicated by the notion that the people regard stock keeping not as a business venture but a status symbol and for speculative reasons cattle and goats are thus not kept for economic farming where profitmaking is the motive but for personal prestige and gratification or egotism.
6.1.5 Vegetation and Grazing

The land area is mixed veld. The trees found in the area are *Sclerocarya caffra* and *Terminalla sericea*, while grasses include *Eragrotis* species, *Aristida* and *Schmidtia bulbosa*. The natural vegetation is drought resistant and the kinds normally found in hot, dry and gravelly areas. Shorter trees are chopped down for firewood and for erecting fences for the fields and homesteads.

6.1.6 Type of Soil

The soil is dominantly shallow to very shallow brown apedal, gravelly loamy sands and sandy loams overlying weathering granite and rock. From the soil survey report by Maheya (:1), the soil in Makgabeng is rated as having a low agricultural potential because the whole area is made up of Namib soil with a low agricultural potential because of its limitations, such as severe erosion due to its containing a large proportion of sand. Although drought resistant crops like maize, grain, sorghum, millet, and cowpeas can be planted, the soil is in a bad condition because of mono crop rotation and the lack of fertilizes and organic material in the soil. Because of the lack of a proper infrastructure no commercial farming can be practised while subsistence farming on this farm is done on a small scale and rather haphazardly.

6.1.7 The Population Statistics

According to the agricultural census of 1997, the farm Early Dawn has one hundred-and-one (101) family units with a total population of 699. The average *de jure* family size is seven (7). Eighty per cent of family members live at home. There are seventy-five (75) men, one
hundred-and-two (102) females, two hundred and seventy-six (276) boys and two hundred and forty-six (246) girls (1997 Annual Census).

With the high mortality rate of males, social practices like polygamous marriages and labour migration that enstranges some men who work far from home, women have become the de facto heads of families. According to the Independent Development Trust (3) thirty per cent (30%) of families in Makgabeng are de jure headed by women, mainly widows and single women. The age distribution of heads of the family units is skewed towards the upper age groups - sixty years and higher. This indicates that only a few new family units are being created while many young adults are living with their parents in an extended family. The cause of this is mainly the increasing unemployment rate in the country. Most of the heads of families have never been at school and are, therefore, illiterate.

The community’s lack of trust in government officials from the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health, Law Enforcement and Justice undermines any programme aimed at social development. The proximity of government offices plays a role in undermining or enhancing confidence in the government while the authority of chiefs and indunas is undermined because of their inability to improve the living conditions of their subjects. The nearest police station is about fifty (50) kilometres away, the nearest hospital is thirty-five (35) kilometres from the village, while the nearest magistrate’s court is one hundred (100) kilometres away. The nearest railway line is also a hundred (100) kilometres away. Moreover, the roads are in a bad condition. There is one primary and one secondary school and one church building. Resultantly some of the churches thus have to hold their Sunday services in community school classrooms.
6.1.8 Landownership

Individual title to the land is vested in the original purchasers of the land and their heirs. People are mostly living in rondavels or flat-roofed houses with two to five rooms. There is no electricity in the houses so wood and paraffin are used for cooking and heating. The problem of malnutrition is acute, while the absence of hygienic pit latrines on the farm is responsible for some diseases in the area. In addition, as there are no water storage facilities strategically placed for communal use by both humans and animals, they have to rely on the communal mono-pump, that is also not a reliable source of water. It is often dysfunctional because of a lack of gasoline or breakage, thus forcing people to walk long distances to adjacent farms to fetch water where they have to pay five Rand for a hundred litres that some families cannot afford to pay.

Most households have no external source of income. Almost fifty per cent of family units depend solely on an income from old age state pensions. If livestock unit and crop production is taken into consideration it is assumed that the average income per family unit is R5 900 (IDT:3). The income is far below the acceptable living wage of R14 400,00 per annum. The improvement of the living conditions of the people in the area is closely related to the religious constraints of the people. These include the improvement of the water supply, energy supply (electrification of the area), upgrading of roads, inputs for agricultural production, improved schools and training, improved communication networks, employment opportunities, a radical change from blaming any tragedy on witchcraft and supernatural interventions, as well as seeking scapegoats for human failure. Effective strategic intervention should be made to improve the infrastructure and human conditions before any programme to change the mindset could be effected.
6.1.9 Subsistence Farming

All families on Makgabeng (Early Dawn) farm are practising subsistence farming, that is, farming that produces only enough crops for the farmer and his/her family to live on, leaving no surplus that can be sold. Farmers at Makgabeng follow virtually no crop rotation while they also practise mono-cropping with no application of fertilizer to their fields. As a result of this poor farming practice all soils have low phosphate and nitrogen and moderate potash (IDT:-:9) levels. In order to reach an acceptable production level the soils require intensive building up by the incorporation of organic matter.

The mode of farming practised at Makgabeng is dry land crop production. Dry land farming is farming where no irrigation is practised since farmers depend entirely on rain. With a below average rainfall of 380-550 mm per year and poor soil with depleted organic material the crop yield is frustrating. According to Bembridge (cf IDT report - :14) the citizens of Makgabeng have to purchase almost eighty per cent of their maize requirements from outside. This means they only get twenty per cent of their maize requirements from their fields. The subsistence farming practice is thus not providing for all their needs.

In the preceding section, I have argued that communally owned rangeland is difficult to manage for sustained production because the land is normally not properly planned, while there is virtually no cooperation between the owners. Problems like soil erosion (the taking away of fertile topsoil from the land), the increase of insect pests and diseases, the depletion of organic soil material, and overgrazing result in many stressful situations that cause tension among the people.

The scenario presented above explains one of the most important issues in the consideration of victims of witchcraft accusation. Why is the belief more pronounced among
underdeveloped areas and among basic rural agricultural communities? What are the stresses that favour its growth? Why is a certain class of people accused more often than others? I will return to these questions later in this study.

Evans-Pritchard (1937:61) concludes that the concept of witchcraft provides the Azande people of Sudan with a natural philosophy by which the relations between people and unfortunate events is explained and a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events presented. Witchcraft beliefs, he asserts, embrace a system of values which regulates human conduct. To this end witchcraft plays its part in every activity of the Azande people’s lives - in agricultural, fishing, and hunting pursuits; in the domestic life of homesteads as well as in the communal life of people; it is an important theme in the mental life in which it forms the background to a vast panorama of magic; its influence is clearly stamped on law, morals, etiquette, and religion; while it is prominent even in technology and language. To summarise, there is no niche or corner of culture in which it does not feature (:62).

Evans-Pritchard found that any happening that has a negative impact on community life is blamed on witchcraft. If, for example, blight seizes a crop, it is blamed on witchcraft; if the bush is vainly scoured for game, it is witchcraft; if a wife is sulky and unresponsive to her husband, it is witchcraft; if the weather is cold, it is witchcraft; if, in fact any failure or misfortune falls upon anyone at any time and disturbs any normal activity of an individual, it may be blamed on witchcraft (Evans-Pritchard 1937:64). All misfortunes, according to Evan-Pritchard, are attributed to witchcraft unless there exists strong evidence to the contrary.

Witchcraft is not less anticipated than, say, adultery. It is intertwined with everyday happenings that form part of some African people’s ordinary world. There is nothing remarkable about a witch - anyone may be one - hence the saying: Moloi ga a na mmala (a
witch has no colour). African people expect people to become ill, but there are certain illnesses that are ascribed to witchcraft.

It is thus obvious that the agricultural conditions discussed in this section serve as precipitating factors for witchcraft accusations. To combat the carnage, agricultural factors must be addressed as well. Since education without corrective agricultural and economic developments will achieve nothing. People need resources to sustain life, the absence of which may have catastrophic effects.

6.2 Makgabeng (Early Dawn) Episode

In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants and informants to protect them from further harassment, the anthropological notation system of twelve primary terms is used. Pseudonyms and first letters of the names and surnames are also used to reduce additional confusion that may be caused by the notation system. The names of the people are denoted by the first letter of the notation while their surnames are denoted by the second letter of the notation. Where the first names and surname refer to more than one person only the first letter of the first name is used.

According to my informants, Makgabeng’s social conflict was triggered by the death of a certain woman nicknamed Gauta (Gold). She was married to J of the Ngoepe family (the main clan of Makgabeng). The death of Gauta was preceded by the death of her daughter NR - a week earlier that was, in turn preceded by that of her son a few years earlier. According to the informants the events unfolded as follows:

Gauta’s daughter NR got ill after giving birth to a baby girl. She was ill for six months. She was coughing and became extremely emaciated. She was taken to traditional healers for medication but did not get better. One evening her
condition deteriorated and she died the same night. The following Saturday she was buried and a hair-shaving ceremony was held. At this ceremony diviners were called to come and determine the cause of her death. At this ceremony three diviners were present to determine the cause of the death of NR, Gauta’s daughter as well.²

The following diviners were present at the ceremony. E (female), Gauta’s HBW (sister-in-law), S (male), Gauta’s HeB, and P, a distant relative. The bones were thrown to establish the cause of the death. E’s bonefall was: Ke morupi, ke a rupa letswele la mma le a hlabane nhlaba ka matutu (literally: I am a sufferer, suffering because of my mother’s breast; my mother’s milk is piercing me to death). The conclusion arrived at the ceremony was nonyane e iphahlile ka lephego (literally: a bird has upset the baby daughter’s eye by its own wing). All three agreed with E’s interpretation that Gauta had been responsible for her daughter’s death. P, a distant relative (diviner), further cautioned Gauta and E that S (diviner, elder brother to Gauta’s husband and E’s husband) was grumbling that his younger brothers and their wives did not accord him the respect he deserved as the elder brother. This implied that his dissatisfaction might lead them into serious trouble if they did not change their attitude. The warning was not taken seriously. The ceremony came to an end with the assumption that Gauta had been responsible for the death of her daughter and if the family was not satisfied it was at liberty to send out spells to kill the person responsible. Gauta’s husband was expected to take the lead in getting a diviner to send out spells to the responsible witch.³

After the ceremony Gauta experienced some discomfort with her stomach: she was constipated. She consulted a local diviner, M, for a laxative to help her bowels to empty, but Gauta’s stomach did not respond to the medication and this was a matter of concern for diviner M. He was heard complaining to Gauta’s family members that Gauta was not responding to the treatment. Gauta’s condition deteriorated and she died seven days after
the funeral of her daughter. To some of her extended family members this indicated that the spells sent out after her daughter’s death had struck back and the victim was found. The fall of the bones was being vindicated by the events. But the ‘grave-diggers’ ascribed the death of Gauta and her daughter to the village witches. The grave-diggers felt that witches were freely killing innocent people without being checked and regarded it as their responsibility to make the witches account and pay a penalty for what they were doing.

After Gauta’s funeral the grave-diggers converged at the induna’s kraal and demanded that each family be ordered to produce a sum of ten Rand (R10,00). The money so collected would be used to transport a delegation to and from the Lowveld where a renowned diviner was residing. The induna was the first to produce the R10,00, followed by his subjects - including the victims listed below. An undisclosed sum of money was collected and given to a delegation that was sent to the Lowveld to consult a diviner who used a mirror in his divination. It is alleged that the diviner gave the delegates a certain mixture to drink which intoxicated them and thereafter they started seeing witches in the mirror. The delegation returned with a list of nine (9) supposed witches at Makgabeng. Figure A represents some of the victims, whose full profile is presented below. They are listed in chronological order and according to the seriousness of their crimes:

a) L - a wife to D
b) E - a wife to A
c) MN - a third wife to Lepokisi
d) RM - a friend to L, a cousin to L’s husband and working in Johannesburg
e) MS - a third wife to S and aunt to L
f) RM - a sister to MS
g) TN - a brother to L
h) NN - a relative to the Ngoepe family

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Figure A

- △ = Husband
- ○ = Wife
- ★ = Accused Female
- ● = Male Accuser/Comrade
- △ = Male Accuser/Comrade
- △ = Deceased Husband
- △ = A supposed bewitched Victim
- △ = Deceased police person
- Police

Diagram notes:
- LN
- M
- D
- I
- S
- P
- G
- J
- A
- E
- R
6.2.1 Profiles of the Victims

a) L was the wife of DN - the first son of Liphokisi Ngoepe (Box) (LN). KN had three co-wives all marked M in the diagram. LN’s first son, D, had been working in Johannesburg since 1952 and got married to L (first victim). L was a hard-working woman and a disciplinarian. During her husband’s absence she ploughed the fields, hoed them and harvested the crops. She sent all her children to school. The first son was a qualified policeman and the other three had obtained degrees. She could achieve all these because her husband, D, was sending her money from Johannesburg and she would seize every opportunity to plough her fields. L and D built a flat-roofed three-bed roomed house. According to local standards they were a rich couple because the majority of their neighbours could not afford a cement and corrugated iron house or send their children to university. L did not associate and socialise with other people as she was always pre-occupied with the welfare of her family. She did not drink liquor and she had a successful married life. L was 64 years old.

b) E was the wife to A, the last son of LN’s second wife. A had three brothers, S, P and J. S was the eldest brother and earned his living by subsistence farming and divination. P had not married and was staying with his younger brother, A - the husband to E. E was a female diviner and it was her bones that sniffed out Gauta as being responsible for the death of her daughter. She came from a village called Ga-Ramalapa - about fifty kilometres (50 km) south of Early Dawn. She was forty-five years old. When she got married to A, she did not have the art of divination. She had learnt the art from her in-laws and this caused friction between her and her HeB, S.
who was in the business of divination as well. Her husband, A, was employed in Pietersburg as a labourer.

His income was meagre and could not satisfy all the needs of the family. E was supplementing it through her divination and by selling liquor and chickens. Her divination business was lucrative in terms of local standards. She got many clients. P, her HeB (unmarried), was collecting muti for her from the nearby bushes. E was also a prophetess in the Apostolic African Church in the village. She performed many roles in the community and was an outspoken person.

c) MN was the third wife of LN who had emigrated to Ga-Ramalapa (E’s home village) to live with her son who built a tile-roofed house. She seldom visited Makgabeng and was supposed, according to custom, to be living with her husband LN. It is not clear why she had left Makgabeng. She earned a state old-age pension.

d) RM was an emigrant kitchen worker employed in Johannesburg. She was a bosom friend of L (accused number one). She was unmarried and was doing well as a single parent. She was a cousin to L’s husband.

e) MS was the third co-wife of WS and stayed three kilometres from the place where the incident took place. She was L’s aunt and had three daughters and two sons. Two of her daughters were married and the lobola paid for them was a herd of cattle. She earned a state old-age pension.

f) RA was MS’s sister and L’s aunt. She was married to WM who was an emigrant labourer in Ellisras (an industrial town 300 km west of Pietersburg on the border of South Africa and Botswana).
g) TM was a brother to L. He was working as a labourer in Pietersburg and commuted from Early Dawn to Pietersburg by bus on a daily base.

h) NN was married to WN - a nephew to Lephokisi (LN). She was a housewife.

i) WN was a close relative of most of the accused and accusers. He was an emigrant worker.

6.2.2 Relationships

The victims were closely related and their accusers were their close relatives as well. Accused Number One was related to all eight victims. She was born in Mojela’s family and married to Ngoepe’s family. Her HyBW, E, was accused Number Two and her FiW, MN, Accused Number Three. Her bosom friend, RM, was Accused Number Four and niece to Accused Numbers Five and Six. L was a sister to TM, Accused Number Seven, and a sister-in-law to NN and WN, Accused Numbers Eight and Nine.

S, who was the chief instigator according to the victims, was closely related to them all. S was a brother-in-law to Accused Numbers One and Two. MN, Accused Number Three, was his FW and RM (Accused Number Four) his cousin. Accused Numbers Five and Six were aunts to S and TM his brother-in-law while NN was his sister-in-law. WN, Accused Number Nine, was his stepbrother.

6.2.3 The Aftermath of the Parade

All the accused reported that they were shocked and stunned by the witch identification parade. They were ordered not to speak in their defence but to leave the farm within seven
days or be burnt to death. Some of them fled on foot, the same night, to the police station, forty-five kilometres away. When they arrived at the police station, after two days of walking, they found the police on strike so they could not get any help from them. They went to their relatives to hire a truck which could go to Early Dawn farm and rescue what could be salvaged. When they eventually returned to Early Dawn farm after four days, their belongings had been burnt down. They could only rescue a couple of corrugated iron plates that they used to erect tin-houses at their new place of abode. At first, some of the husbands were reluctant to join them on the journey to seek refuge. After a few consultations, the husbands joined them at the Matlala police station where they took refuge for six months. They were later settled on the farm Helena - twenty kilometres from the Matlala police station.

When Accused Number One (L’s son), who was a policeman working east of Pietersburg, heard what had befallen his parents he ran amok. He took his service revolver and went to the families of the ringleaders. He shot eight of them - four died on the spot and four were seriously wounded. At the end of the tragedy he turned the gun on himself and killed himself. Five young lives were thus terminated because of the incident and nine families were displaced while a permanent rift was created between formerly close families and relatives. When the accusers were asked as to whether they could reconcile with their victims they replied that reconciliation was not possible. Reconciliation could only take place if the victims could bring their dead ones back to life. The victims as well did not see any possibility of reconciling with their accusers. They all said the wounds caused could never be healed. They, therefore, decided to continue living in the squalor conditions in which they were.
6.3 Mongalo (Udeny) Event

6.3.1 Background Information

Mongalo farm falls within the geographical boundaries of the greater Makgabeng and Mmalebogo. The farm occupies 1 908 hectares and is situated 120 km west of Pietersburg. Mongalo farm is separated from Makgabeng farm by the Makgabeng Mountain Range that adulates southwards towards the Magalakwena River. The farm has the same climatic conditions, soil type, vegetation, altitude, and longitude as Makgabeng farm. People living on the farm are facing the same hardships as their neighbours. Like Makgabeng farm, Mongalo farm is a privately owned farm and is also underdeveloped.

The farm has a population of 789 with 120 family units. There are about 380 children of whom most do receive any tertiary education. On the farm there are two pre-schools, two primary schools and one high school but no church building. There is also no clinic on the farm while the nearest hospital is 20 km away at the foot of Blouberg Mountain. There is only one road leading to and from the farm. The nearest bus-stop is 5 km away on the main road from Pietersburg to the Magalakwena River. People and domestic animals get their water from two communal boreholes.

Mongalo farm is ruled by three headmen: Mongalo, Nailana and Mampuru. Some tension exists between the headmen as there is competition to win the favour of the people on the farm. All three headmen are unemployed and earn their living through subsistence farming and getting state old-age pensions. They all resort under chief Malebogo who until the 1994 democratic election was very critical about apartheid in South Africa. It was partly because of this attitude that his area was neglected by the government.
6.3.2 Phoko ke phoko (Defamation has a decisive effect on its victims)

The Mongalo episode which had a ripple effect on the community was triggered by the death of a school girl. After the death of the young girl, Malusi, a search for the allegedly responsible witches was launched, but a diviner had not been consulted after the death of Malusi although the victims were identified deductively. The bereaved families took all the events that had taken place before the death of their daughter into consideration and used them to find the witches.

Figure B on the next page represents the two families who were intermarried and between whom the conflict started. According to informants the event unfolded as follows:

Malusi, a twelve-year standard two girl, got ill around November 1993. Her condition gradually deteriorated until she could no longer attend school until her death in June 1994. Around March 1994 it was clear that she could no longer go to school that year. As she realised that she could not go to school, Malusi sent a message, from her sickbed, to her cousin, JS, to bring her her 1993 school report. JS fetched the report from the principal and handed it to Mika, Malusi’s younger sister, to give to Malusi. According to the informants Malusi was suffering from ‘big or severe headache’. A few days after having received her report Malusi died and was buried.

Another related incident which added to the intensification of the witch-hunt concerned that of a lost pen. In the second incident JS had earlier lent her pen to her cousin and classmate, FK. FK lost the pen and reported to his cousin, JS, that the pen was lost. Initially it appeared as if the matter of the lost pen was settled. After the death of Malusi her cousin, JS, got ill and her parents were concerned that she would die as well. They sent a message to FK’s parents that JS was ill and if she would die they would be held responsible. The
two incidents were, according to the affected families, proof that PP and RS were targets of witchcraft accusations. Tensions and anxieties escalated until the climax for a witch-hunt presented itself and daggers were drawn against the two families. Diagram B portrays the family relationships in this case.

The son of MP enlisted the help of his comrades on the farm and started a witchcraft-hunt. No diviner was involved to sniff out the village witches but the two incidents had incited people to start the witch-hunt. Five victims (together with their parents) were identified and ordered to leave Mongalo. Before they could organise themselves to remove their belongings, their huts were destroyed. They fled to Bochum police station - some 25 km away. The following victims were evicted: PP, one of the co-wives of VP; MK, a first daughter to PP; and RI, a granddaughter to PP. RS, the second wife of MM; and her daughter-in-law, SS, were also evicted. The police came and helped carry their belongings to the Bochum police station where they were given temporary abode. No arrest was made and the victims were all relocated to a new residential area east of the police station. What remained was phooko (defamation of character).

6.3.3 The background of the families

PP was a daughter of the Mojela clan who married WP of Phala's clan. MP was WP's first wife and eWB. WP's brother had passed away before MP bore a child and she was given to WP to ensure his brother's genealogy. Because MP was WP's elder brother by definition he had to marry his own wife so he married PP as his rightful wife. MP gave birth to three boys. MP was his first son. WP's second wife, PP, gave birth to four girls and a boy. MK was her first daughter who gave birth to FK.
Figure B

- △ = Husband
- ○ = Wife
- ⬤ = Accused Female
- □ = Childless Family
- ⒜ = Married by Family
- △ = Male Accuser/Comrade
- ▼ = A supposed bewitched Victim
- Ⓐ = Female Accuser
- △ = Accused Male
The family had gone through many turbulent times during the fifty years prior to the incident. PP always conceived herself as the rightful wife of WP, but MP and her children reckoned that they were the senior ‘house’ and they should be accorded the necessary respect. MP, the elder son of WP, got mentally deranged when he was working in Johannesburg and had to stop working. PP was accused of bewitching him, but MP eventually recovered from his illness.

Another factor which made PP vulnerable was the fact that her first three children were girls and the boy came late in her life. She was always believed to be jealous of her co-wife’s children because she had two sons. Boys are regarded as prosperity to the African family because the reproduction of the family is ensured and boys could also work in industries to provide for their children. Girls did not ensure any better prospects for their families because, when they grow up, they would marry and leave their families. *Lobola* paid for their marriages is not always regarded as a gain but merely a cancellation. In the case of their marriages breaking up the *lobola* has to be refunded.

RS was a daughter of the Nonyane clan who got married to AS of the Seanego clan. AS had two co-wives and his first wife was MS, the sister of MM of Monyebodi. She had no children while MS had six children. As it became clear that RS would not bear any child after she had had three miscarriages she married SS to bear children for her lineage. SS resultantly gave birth to JS who alleged that she was used to bewitch her cousin MM.

### 6.3.4 Informants’ Circumstantial Evidence that led to Accusations

According to some of the informants, they were singled out purely on the ground of jealousy and because they had not surrendered to the will and wishes of their co-wives and their children. PP, the second wife of WP, had four beasts, eighty-five sheep and six goats and
this, according to an informant, evoked jealousy among her relatives who had none. She was receiving an old-age social pension as well while her co-wife’s children were not receiving it because of their youth. PP, as surviving wife of WP who was also receiving an old-age pension, was seen by the children of MP as a thief as she was in effect getting a double pension which she was not sharing with her co-wife’s children. Instead, she was helping her daughter MK, and her granddaughter RL (who were married and were in their own families). MP’s children always felt that PP had bewitched their mother in order to take their father as her husband for the sake of his wealth. The problem thus involved a crisis occasional by suspicion, rumours, jealousy, the agony of poverty, and religious beliefs.

RS, the co-wife of AS, was accused of having snatched her husband from MS. She was relatively young and skilled in the art of divination. She received an old-age pension as well. Her nickname was Nkokoto (a person with a strong will who cannot easily be conquered). SS, RS’s daughter-in-law, was accused of witchcraft merely because she had allowed herself to be married by lapa (married to bear children to RS according to tribal custom) and in that way had sided with the chief enemy of MS’s family. It was thus concluded that she must have been a witch to have accepted such an arrangement. Because she was a witch, it was argued, she taught her daughter, JS, the art of witchcraft. In the scheme of things it was contrived that she connived with her mother-in-law, RS, PP and all her daughters to bewitch MM for the enjoyment of it. An analysis of these circumstance will be given in the last part of this chapter.

6.4 Marobjane (Avon and Innes) Episode

Marobjane farm lies within the same geographical area as Makgabeng and Mongalo. Unlike Makgabeng and Mongalo that are privately owned bought farms Marobjane is a trust farm falling under the jurisdiction of Chief Seakamela. Chief Seakamela was inclined to be more
friendly towards the white farmers and the former Lebowa government. Unlike Chief Malebogo, under whose jurisdiction the rest of the farms fell and who had been hostile to Afrikaners since the Boer and Malebogo War of 1894, Chief Seacamela received a fair amount of assistance from the government. His farm was divided into camps, while rotational grazing and crop rotation were strictly adhered to. But the area experienced the same hardship as the rest since the annual rainfall is between 350 mm and 450 mm and the area is dry and extremely hot in summer. Nevertheless, the soil is typical of the fertile Bushveld and as such ideal for cattle farming. On the farm there are 1 193 families with a population of 9 040, thus being more densely populated than the other two farms.

The Marobjane episode was a political rivalry rather than a family feud. The incident revolved around one person who was seen as too powerful to the faction opposing or planning to dethrone Chief Seakamolela. We will now give a full account of PR, the chief victim in the case.

6.4.1 PR - The Farmer and Motor Mechanic

6.4.1.1 Historical and Personal Background

PR was born in 1956 at Ga-Hlahla Village, about 30 km north of Pietersburg. He attended primary school at Ga-Pitsi Village - adjacent to his village Ga-Hlahla. After receiving his secondary education he went to Shikwane Matlala Trade School where he completed a three-year diploma in motor mechanics. PR attended to his work with vigour and purpose, in the words of an informant he was a hard worker.

After his trade training, PR went to the Lowveld where he worked for vegetable and horticulture farmers. PR had soon acquired skills in horticulture and vegetable farming. In
addition, he knew most of the methods of growing, managing and carving trees. By the early 1980s PR had become a formidable farmer and trader despite the rural setting with its backward farming methods. He went to settle at the following villages belonging to Kgosi (Chief) Malebogo: Pappegaai, Witlig, Ditatšu, and finally at Marobjane that belonged to Chief Seakamelo. However, PR had left all these places after unpleasant incidents had occurred. He had his own personality, a personality that could easily aggrieve other people, but had entrepreneurial skills.

Chief Phineas Seakamela gave him a piece of ground (two hectares) to settle on as well as a large field to plough. PR turned part of his residential site into an orchard, planted a variety of fruit trees and sunk two boreholes, to provide water for his orchard and vegetable garden. He furthermore erected a workshop where he repaired cars for the local people. He provided and sold car parts for various models and makes and in so doing, assisted many people who could not travel the 110 km to Pietersburg.

By the beginning of 1992 PR had become a successful businessman (in terms of local standards) who was generally admired. He repaired their cars, provided them with fresh vegetables and fruit and expressed brilliant ideas at the Seakamela tribal court. He could argue his case convincingly and proved a formidable force to reckon with. As he won many arguments at the tribal court, Chief Seakamela co-opted him as a member of his tribal council to advise him.

PR’s flourishing business (in terms of local standards), his popularity with the chief, his unusual personal life, and being admired by the majority of the tribal people, resultantly earned him a number of enemies. To some he was a foreigner and as such he could not be absorbed into the chief council. He was also a threat to those who aspired for leadership positions in the tribe. His leadership qualities, incisiveness in argument and uprightness
could not be surpassed. He had a tractor which he used to plough his fields as well as those of the community and earned himself a revenue, a big truck to carry stock for his business and a car to transport the chief and his counsellors to any place they wanted to go to. He was adored by the chief.

PR was a member of the Zion Christian Church of South Africa. He did not drink or smoke. By seven o’clock in the morning he started working - either as a mechanic, farmer or shopkeeper. The process continued from Monday to Saturday afternoon, while he attended the church service on Sundays. Because of his qualifications and dedicated life to his Church, Bishop Lekganyane appointed him a minister of religion for the Seakamela area in 1990 and a member of his Church Council at Moria. At the age of 36 years PR was already serving in various tribal and Church Committees.

6.4.1.2 Problems Started with the Royal Kraal

PMS, Chief Phineas Seakamela’s paternal uncle, was not happy with the way in which tribal matters were administered. He felt that his brother’s son, Chief Phineas Seakamela, was not recognising him as his uncle as he was working with foreigners. The uncle, therefore, started looking for ways and means to dethrone his brother’s son. The chief counsellors were too strong for him to tackle them alone, so he brooded over the problem for some years, not knowing how to tackle it.

The first South African democratic election of 1994, however, provided PMS with structures he could exploit to further his aims. In the run-up to the 1994 election the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) was introduced to the farm Marobjane. The youth saw SANCO as a useful tool to overthrow traditional chieftaincy that was associated with the extension of apartheid in rural areas. As SANCO gained momentum and started
mobilising the masses for the election, disgruntled members of tribal structures, like PMS, could hijack it to serve their personal agendas. SANCO mainly consisted of the youth (comrades) who became anxious to overthrow the apartheid regime.

SANCO was officially launched by Chief Seakamela in 1995 after a prolonged struggle with the chief and his people. First, the youth approached the tribal court with a list of people who were supposed to form the executive committee of the local SANCO branch. The committee consisted of four commoners and one royal member, PMS. The chief and his council questioned the validity of the method used to elect SANCO members. He was not opposed to the establishment of SANCO in his area but to the method by which its members were elected. PR was instrumental in exposing the flaws in the election of the SANCO committee. The new members of SANCO conceded that they had erred by imposing SANCO on the tribe and agreed to reintroduce it properly.

A few weeks later a tribal meeting was called where the tribe was going to nominate SANCO members. The electoral officer was from the ranks of the youth, while nomination was done by a show of hands. As the elderly people were not familiar with election and nomination procedures, the electoral officer merely allowed the youth to nominate members of SANCO. Philip Seanego was again nominated to represent the royal family on the new SANCO. This caused severe dissatisfaction in the royal family but SANCO was constituted.

The following week Chief PMS was approached by the new SANCO executive to hand over the office keys, tribal records, cheque books, and receipt books. When he questioned the role of SANCO he was told that his chieftaincy had been replaced by SANCO and that his area was then falling under Paramount Chief Collin Malebogo while PMS, his uncle, was the Induna for the area. The Chief approached PR for advice. PR advised him to consult members of his royal family for advice. The Chief then consulted his uncle (the younger
brother to PMS), his aunt and the tribal council. The council’s decision was that SANCO and PMS were out of order and the matter had to be reported to the Bochum magistrate.

PR was approached to assist them with transport to the Bochum magistrate the following day. The Bochum magistrate referred them to the office of Tribal Affairs headed by Rachidi. Rachidi confirmed to the delegates that Seakamela’s chieftaincy had been replaced by SANCO and that they were resorting under Paramount Chief Malebogo. The police told them the same story. An urgent tribal meeting was convened to inform the tribe of the new developments. At that meeting PR proved his worth to the tribe. He stood up and advised that a delegation should be formed to accompany the Chief to Pretoria to enquire about the circumstances that had led to the termination of his chieftaincy. PR offered to take the delegation to Pretoria and back. They went to the office of the commissioner responsible for traditional leadership and chieftaincy.

The Commissioner affirmed the existence of Seakamela’s chieftaincy. The chieftaincy was established in 1936 and the present chief was Phineas Seakamela. He further issued letters to the Bochum magistrate, the house of the traditional leadership in Pietersburg, Chief Malelogo and the Seakamela community affirming that Chief Phineas Seakamela was the rightful heir to the throne vacated by his deceased father. SANCO’s plans were thus shattered and the blame fell on PR. He was branded SANCO enemy number one and had to be punished for the role he had played in frustrating the SANCO mission to remove PMS from the throne. An opportunity had to be found at which PR could be punished.

Chief Phineas Seakamela was reinstated, while the books and records taken from him by SANCO had to be returned to him. Moneys withdrawn from the bank and collected from the tribe in his absence had to be refunded by SANCO. SANCO was humiliated and it was
not given a chance to save face. PMS was also removed from power and had to face the humiliation of being removed from a position of authority and fame.

6.4.1.3 PR is Accused of Witchcraft and Banished from the Village

The opportunity for which SANCO had been waiting to retaliate presented itself in 1996. A certain man by the name of Mpaše got mad and the rumour started going round that the chief adviser and business person was responsible for the incident. He had bewitched Mpaše in order to make his own business flourish. PR was pointed out as the witch responsible for Mpaše's illness. When the youth mobilised an attack on PR, Mpaše's parents stood up and exonerated him but the mob refused to listen. The chief advised PR to run for his life but he refused. The SANCO youth moved from street to street gathering the youth to advance to PR's house. The police were alerted about the incident and intervened in time. They came in big trucks to take PR and his family to the Bochum police station. At the beginning PR refused to leave but on insistence by police and given the assurance that his property would be protected as he had to leave it behind, he agreed to move to the Bochum police station. The same night the angry mob attacked his house, looting what they could carry from the house, chopping down the trees and setting his trucks and tractor alight. Everything was either reduced to ashes or taken away.

A docket in terms of the Witchcraft Suppression Act was opened and the accused arrested. As PR was waiting for the trial of the SANCO members, he moved from Bochum police station to his village of birth, Ga-Hlahla Village. He erected a tin house of two by two metres for his wife and four children to stay in and turned the driver's seat of his 1400 Nissan delivery van into a bed in which he slept for a year and a half. He started life afresh from nothing. They had destroyed his property but not his skills, entrepreneurship and his will to 'till the earth and subdue it' (Gen 1:27). He was forty-years old and the next
subsistence income he would get, according to him, was twenty-five years in the future when he would turn sixty-five and qualify for social pension.

Back at Chief Seakamela SANCO started a rumour that they had evicted PR because he was a self-confessed witch. He had confessed, they claimed, that he was a witch who employed zombies to assist him in his flourishing business. He had also bewitched Mpaše and turned him into a zombie. After receiving the news from SANCO in January 1997, I traced PR to Ga-Hlahla Village to confirm the rumour. PR dismissed the rumour as rubbish and absurd, but was demoralised and had just joined the Afrikaner Nationalist Party. For him the ANC had caused the existing chaos in the country.

6.4.1.4 The Dark Side of PR's Life

PR had a dark side to his life as well. At all four villages where he had lived, he had not left peacefully. According to the informants, people at the next village later got information from the previous village about his behaviour that might have prejudiced him unduly. But wherever PR had been, he had dumped his former wife and married a new one at the village where he had settled. As soon as his love for his new bride diminished, he dumped her and moved to the next village and got another one. He had married and dumped as many wives as he had moved from village to village. This kind of behaviour is seen as morally unacceptable although it cannot be punished by the tribal courts. However, witchcraft accusation could deal with it.

It is true that basic communities like rural villages in the Northern Province do not have systems to curb this kind of behaviour. This kind of social problem is solved arbitrarily and is left entirely to those who want to pursue the perpetrators. According to civil law a man who gives children to a woman can be made to pay maintenance. But among basic
communities it is not pronounced which method is effective except imposing a minimal fine of R100 or more for damages. This amount is paid once to the parents of the daughter. With severe droughts in the area, the high level of unemployment, explosive overpopulation, ever increasing malnutrition, and the consistent struggle to provide ones family with a meal every day, families with children without fathers are placed in extremely circumstances.

The unfortunate part of this way of conflict management is that people may be accused of a crime they have not committed while strange methods of redress may be as well applied. Victims will, in the majority of cases, never know their real crime. Those who accuse and prosecute them are usually inspired by the wish to eliminate such a person from society by unconventional means because conventional ones cannot have the desired effect. Nevertheless, Africans believe that accusing someone of a controversial crime, such as witchcraft, is not only covert but justifiable on religious grounds as well.

6.4.2 Observation

Four years after the incident the victim was still saying in sadness, if he knew the art of lethal magic he was accused of, none of those who had accused him would still be alive. He would have bewitched them all and wiped them from the face of the earth. He bemoaned the fact that he was innocent, while his enemies were still alive and well.

The police eventually came to investigate the case but, because of poor investigation, it was eventually dropped in the magistrate’s court due to a lack of sufficient evidence. The Bochum police station would not allow me to peruse their files. According to the station commander no post-mortem was carried out to determine the cause of the death of the young girl. The police at Matlala police station took the same stance. From my observation the police concurred and approved the community’s actions against the alleged witches. The
Matlala police station commander further indicated to me that in his home village they had similar incidents and he was not in a position to deny the existence of witches. The Bochum police displayed a similar attitude. A policeman appointed to run the witchcraft unit was himself a diviner and strong supporter of the drive to eliminate witches.

6.5 Mantheding (Kalkfontein) Case

6.5.1 Background Information

Kalkfontein trust farm is situated 40 km north-east of Pietersburg. The farm lies within 29° 40' and 29° 46' longitude and 23° 43' and 23° 49' latitude and its boundaries and adjacent farms are delineated explicitly with camps properly fenced. The inhabitants are Northern Sotho people under the jurisdiction of Kgoshi Dikgale. There are about 5 000 people living on the farm.

The area lies in the sub-arid northern plateau sub-region with hot summers and cold winters with some frost. The summer rainfall is estimated at 340-360 mm and the winter rainfall at 70-80 mm (Thabamoopo Report 1987:1). The elevation ranges from 1200 to 1350 m, while the soil is moderately fertile. However, conditions of overgrazing, stock overpopulation, soil erosion, a high level of unemployment, and illiteracy are prevalent as in the other regions discussed.

6.5.2 Mantheding Incident 1995/96

The Mantheding witchcraft incident of 1995 was spurred on by the death of Mrs X of Matlakala's family. Mrs X was a widow who had lost her husband in a bus and train collision in 1986 at Sebayeng level crossing about 30 km east of Pietersburg. Her husband
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was working in Pietersburg and he was the only breadwinner. According to my informant the woman was in love with one of accusers in the case.

On a certain afternoon Mrs X was coming from the nearby bush carrying a sheaf of firewood. She was struck by lightning and died on the spot. Mrs X’s death arose a fair amount of sympathy and a spirit of vengeance among the residents of Mantheding. Ten years earlier she had tragically lost her husband and her life too ended in a tragic way. The village dwellers called a tribal court to look into the incident and sniff out the witches.

At the induna tribal court a resolution was taken to consult a renowned diviner, Xhirinda, in the Lowveld near Giyani. Each family was ordered to contribute R10,00 for travelling and diviner costs. According to my informants, the list of suspected (responsible) witches was already compiled. The name of Mr DM (Accused Number One) had already been mentioned at the tribal court. It had been alleged that he was seen coming from the direction of the flash of lightning at the time of the incident.

According to my informant, Dr Xhirinda refused to attend to the request of the delegation from Mantheding by telling them that he was no longer a practising diviner. He referred them to his apprentice who in turn could not help them. On their way back home the delegates to the Lowveld agreed to tell the tribal court that the list they had was compiled by the diviner, but later, when the diviner was confronted by the police, he disclosed that the delegates had come to him with the list for his authorisation. He further alleged that he had sent them to his apprentice who in turn had also refused to help them.

Back home the delegates produced a list they claimed came from Dr Xhirinda. Five suspects were pointed out. They included the following persons:
On the day on which the results from the diviner were to be announced, the Mankweng police were ready to intervene as they had been tipped off about the occasion. As the police were visibly standing a few metres away to strike if anything went wrong, nothing violent was done to the accused, but they were instructed to leave the village as soon as possible.

The police invited the South African Council of Churches to come in and assist to defuse the situation. I formed part of the South African Council of Churches’ delegation and was requested to address the crowd on two occasions. Until the police threatened to arrest the ringleaders reconciliation was impossible, but when the perpetrators realised the seriousness of the case and that they would be charged, they gave in and agreed to accept their victims back in the village if they too would agree to drop the charges they wanted to lay. The matter was put to rest on those conditions.

6.5.3 Profile of the Victims

DM was a prosperous subsistence farmer who could not be matched in the community. He was nicknamed Skelm (the Afrikaans name used for a deceitful person). My informants told me that he had got the name because of adhering to the principle of hard work and being totally uncompromising. During years of drought in the area he would travel long distances to fetch grass for his cattle. As a result of his determination and will to work hard his cattle did not die during droughts and his fields yielded good crops.
My informants further said that the Mohlapamaswi clan were traditionally members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), but that Daniel Mohlapamaswi belonged to the rival Church, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) of Modise. Needless to say, most of his accusers were his relatives from the ZCC. The informants indicated to me that members of the ZCC generally believe that members of the IPHC are witches because their leader, Modise, had broken away from the ZCC before he started his church. The same could be said of Mr DM because he had joined the IPHC and was a difficult person to work with.

SM (niece to Monyepao) was a friend to MR (niece to Talakgale). According to my informant, both women drank heavily and led a loose life as far as morality was concerned. Both their husbands were working in Gauteng and only come home in December when their firms closed for the Christmas holidays. These two women were alone at home most of the time. It was, moreover, alleged that the husband to one of the women was in love with the woman struck by the lightning. Apart from their immoral life that was repugnant to the community, these two women bore the stigma of using magic to eliminate women who led upright lives. The fact that the husband of one of the women had an extra-marital relationship could not be held against him but against his wife since in the African traditional view, a wife is viewed as the source of trouble under such circumstance, while her husband is pardoned if he makes love to another woman. But if, in the view of the community, the same immoral woman uses magical means to eliminate the woman with whom her disgruntled husband has fallen in love, she exposes herself as public enemy number one.9

NK was the eldest daughter to Mamaregane. Her father was accused of having struck lightning in 1959 when Masekwameng’s son was killed by lighting in the same village. She was accused of having inherited the art from her father as she was the eldest daughter although my informants were not aware of anything particular in her life that made her vulnerable.
Apart from the fact that SK was a foreigner to the villagers and a member of the ZCC, little else was known about her. Immediately after the incident she moved from the village, so I could not trace her to listen to her side of the story.

At the time of my investigation, the four accused were back in their village, leading normal lives. According to DM, the first accused, he was wrongly accused as the culprit had since been identified. The explanation of this statement, according to my informants, was that, in terms of the tradition of the people, any person who dies or becomes mad immediately after a mysterious event is seen as a culprit responsible for the incident. Moreover, it is believed that the spell sent by the bereaved families after the death of their loved ones would find their witches and kill them mysteriously. In the case of Mantheding, one woman died and one man became mad immediately after the incident, so they served as scapegoats for the disaster.

6.6 Zebediela Episode

6.6.1 Hlakano (Smugglers Union) Case

The village Hlakano is one of the fourteen villages forming the greater Zebediela tribal and trust farm falling under the jurisdiction of Kgoshi Kekana. The Sotho word hlakano means a meeting place, a place of many people. The English name for the farm is Smugglers Union that has a similar meaning since people have been illegally 'smuggled' into the area from outside areas. There are Shangaan people from the Lowveld, Malawian people who settled there as immigrant labourers to work at the Zebediela Orange Estate, Muslim people from East Africa, as well as Northern Ndebele and Northern Sotho people who form the larger part of the community. The area is densely populated.
6.6.1.1 Situation and Description of the Land

The land is situated 29° 15' to 29° 30' longitude and 24° 38' latitude, 50 km east of Potgietersrus and 60 km south of Pietersburg. The area has an estimated rainfall of 420-450 mm in summer and 80-90 mm in winter. The summer temperature ranges from 22-23° with a minimum winter temperature of 3-4°. The elevation ranges from 880-1040 m above sea level.

The transport service between Potgietersrus, in the west, Pietersburg in the north, Roedtan in the south, and Lebowakgomo in the east is good. The four towns are connected by tarred roads that pass through the area, while the sick go to Groothoek hospital that was established in 1956 as a missionary hospital. The Zebediela police station is situated within the area. Most of the citizens in the area work on the Zebediela Orange farm as labourers and on the adjacent farms belonging to white people. Subsistence farming is practised by a few people who own pieces of land. There are about forty-two (42) hand, wind and engine pumps in the whole Zebediela area with a total population of 250 000 consisting of 21 560 families (Agriculture Report).

6.6.1.2 Hlakano Village Conflict

The conflict at Hlakano village was triggered by a stroke of lightning. A standard one pupil belonging to Mothoa’s family was struck by lightning and a certain Jackson Kekana was pointed out as a witch. He was driven into his own house by the mob and the house was set alight. The police came and rescued him but he later died from burn wounds at Groothoek hospital.
6.6.1.3 Events that Led to the Eruption of the Dispute

The sketch below was constructed to show the family tree and relationships. According to the informants, the family tree could be traced back for two generations. It started with Makaya Kekana who married two wives, Raisibe Kekana (niece Mothoa) and Rosina Kekana (niece Koma). Makaya and Raisibe’s first son, Jackson, was the victim in the case. Makaya had five sons who were all married but his third son, Tompson, passed away in 1992 at his prime and was survived by his wife. In 1954 his first son, Jackson, got married to Fancinah Kapo of Mapela village - some seventy (70 km) kilometres away. According to my informant, the family had wished him to get married to his cousin from the Mothoa family (maternal uncle). Because of his marriage to a foreigner both Jackson and his wife were never popular with Mothoa’s family.

The matter was further complicated by the actions of Jackson after the death of his younger brother, Thompson. Jackson took Thompson’s wife as his second wife. This angered his brothers and distant relatives. He was working for a construction firm in Johannesburg and his first wife was working in a kitchen in a white suburb. Occasionally, Jackson would come home to Zebediela to visit his brother’s wife. According to Northern Sotho custom an elder brother can enter into a levirate marriage but in his case, he should have left that to the younger brother of the deceased.

Jackson had another longstanding dispute with his second brother, Phillip. Phillip claimed that Jackson had taken his beast and refused to return it although he was privileged to have a job in Johannesburg. The relations deteriorated further when Jackson’s wife picked up a quarrel with her neighbour, Kotana Sithole (female), and her HyBW, Ngwanakale. Kotana Sethole was a friend of Thompson’s widow. Sethole was also fed-up with the relationship
of Jackson and the wife of his brother. This involved situation led to widespread tension and suspicion which became irreversible.

The quarrel between Jackson's wife and Kotana Sethole first started with their daughter-in-law, Violet Kekana. Violet was married to their only son, Sunboy Kekana. During their absence in Johannesburg, Sunboy and his wife took charge of their parents' house at Hlakano village. Kotana Sethole's goats got into Jackson's yard. Violet Kekana chased them away by throwing stones at them and the incident angered Kotana Sethole who retaliated by throwing a stone at Violet. The stone hit Violet on the foot and she was taken to Groothoek hospital. She opened a police case and Kotana Sethole was arrested for assault and found guilty at the local magistrate's court. Relations went from bad to worse.

When Jackson and his wife came home for the Christmas holidays they found the situation between their children and their neighbours beyond reconciliation. Each couple was just looking for an opportunity to strike back. Apart from Sethole's family, Jackson had made many enemies with his neighbours and kinsmen. His brothers and their wives were not happy with him while his maternal uncle was angry with him as well. But Jackson was successful in terms of local standards as he had fixed employment in Johannesburg and his wife was also working. Their relative success increased the hatred of their adversaries.

On the day of the Hlakano witchcraft incident, Jackson had gone to Pietersburg to do some shopping. On his arrival home that afternoon he received the news that his nephew from Motoa's family was struck by lightning and had died on the spot. He and his wife immediately went to Mothoa's family to convey their condolences. On their arrival at Mothoa's family, they were told that they should not try to deceive the people because they knew what they had done. As they were stunned by what they heard the young people started singing the song 'Witches must be burnt'. Jackson and his wife returned to their
house to inform their mother, Raisibe, about the shocking news they had got from Mothoa’s family. The following day the youths converged at their house and ordered Jackson to enter his grass-thatched house in which his aged mother was sleeping. The youths then poured petrol on the house and set it alight. He and his mother were severely burnt but the police rescued him and he was taken to Groothoek hospital where he died after a couple of days. His mother died instantly. On his deathbed Jackson said to his wife that she should not stay with his people after his death.

After Jackson’s death his wife encountered another ordeal. Her husband’s younger brother, Phillip, came with the claim that Francinah was not a lawful wife to his brother and she had no right to arrange his funeral. The police sided with Phillip and ordered that Jackson’s body be buried by his brothers. Francinah applied for a court order from the local magistrate and she was given the order to bury her husband. Jackson had married his wife according to black custom but before his death he had changed it to a civil marriage. His brothers were not aware of the change in his marital status. Finally, Jackson’s wife left her husband’s people to settle on Helena farm - about a hundred kilometres (100 km) from Zebediela where she was living on an old-age social pension at the time of the interview.

6.7 Witchcraft, Generational Interpersonal Relationships and Legitimisation of Individual and Collective Persecution

In the last part of this Chapter I wish to draw on some theoretical approaches discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five as a way of summarising data collected in the five cases mentioned above. In this regard three statements will be considered: 1) witchcraft is something real in human experience; 2) witchcraft is an imaginary crime; 3) an explanation of witchcraft accusations seen through the lens of theories on society.
6.7.1 Witchcraft is Real in Human Experience

In Chapter Two of this study I argued that witchcraft ideas are as widespread on earth as is humanity. I have, however, conceded there that there are basic communities in the world in which witchcraft beliefs do not occur. Mayer (1954:4) found that among the Australian Aborigines and the Bushmen of South Africa the belief in witchcraft does not exist. This does not imply that these societies do not have interpersonal conflicts, but merely that they have their own ways of solving them. Although they believe in magic, a person is never accused of witchcraft.

Among other communities, such as the Northern Sotho of the Northern Province, the witchcraft idea is real and it is clear, as seen from the cases discussed, that it must be related to something real in human experience. The objective of this study is thus to find out what the basic reality is that underlies witchcraft beliefs. By ‘reality’ I do not refer to a physical fact but social and psychological reality. My contention is that witchcraft beliefs and their resultant persecution are a response to social and psychological strains. The more exactly we identify those strains, the better we can understand and prescribe remedies to correct them.

From the cases discussed above one thing is clear: people believe that the blame for some of their suffering rests upon a peculiar evil power, embodied in certain individuals in their midst (Mayer 1954:4). The witch is thus held to be a person in whom a distinctive illness dwells, whereby in mysterious ways he/she harms his/her own fellows.

The following basic beliefs are held about witches:
First, a certain category of persons, especially women, have recognisable and particular signs that single them out to be pointed out as witches. These people may bear physical stigma, like red eyes, have a reserved personality, be stingy or quarrelsome (Mayer 1954:5).

Second, certain misfortunes are ascribed to witches. These include natural calamities such as death, illness, drought or natural disasters (Stadler 1994:88). However, the context of the misfortune is always apparent.

Third, belief has it that witches turn against their own people and kinsmen; they do not harm strangers or people from far away (Stadler 1994:90).

Fourth, they are spurred on by envy, malice or jealousy against individuals, rather than being in pursuit of material gain as such (Mayer 1954:5).

Fifth, witches reverse all normal standards. For instance, they eat their own children, dig up corpses, go naked in the night instead of being clothed, meet at particular spots to plan their evil deeds, and enjoy practising their art.

In addition, it is clear that different witchcraft incidents have different stimuli. Anxiety, tension, suspicion, rumours, as well as strain between kinsmen and neighbours seem to be among the chief contributories to the emergence of witchcraft accusations. Many events and situations create anxiety, tension and feelings of insecurity. Death, illness, natural disasters or rapid change in society can create anxiety and stir emotions that may evoke persecution of some individuals in the society.

The routine response to death is a funeral, the routine response to sickness is medical treatment and the routine response to famine is the provision of food. The idea of witchcraft is employed on occasions when these routine responses alone do not provide emotional relief (Mayer 1954:5). Events thus create unusual anxiety and stress when they are viewed as unnatural or uncanny: they appear to counteract the ordinary course of events. Moreover,
when events seem to be related to supernatural powers, they need supernatural explanations. These subjective factors may have profound implications if concerned with myth and religious beliefs.

In Chapter Four of this study I discussed some of the aspects of African cosmology in order to let the readers understand the functions of the societal system as a response to human suffering and anxiety. This background information enables us to indicate in this section how the problem of evil manifests itself in the constitution of societies as evidenced by the cases reviewed.

The discussion of African cosmology clearly revealed that Africans ascribe the origin of evil to ancestors and witches. If an African thinks that his/her misfortune was sent by an ancestral spirit, he/she construes it as a moral sanction called upon by some misconduct of his/her own. But if an African thinks that misfortune comes from another human being he/she would immediately jump to the conclusion that such a person has an evil heart. However, it is blasphemy to accuse the ancestors of any wrongdoing, but by blaming witches for the evil, Africans escape the need or temptation to blame the ancestors. Blaming witches for misfortunes exonerate Africans from being responsible for them and enhances a feeling of importance - they also draw the attention of the witches. If one has cultivated ones fields in the usual way, one may blame a witch for the failure of the crop, and so be saved from blaming oneself. If illness does not respond to treatment, one may blame a witch, and so be saved from doubting the worth of medical knowledge and practice. If the weather is extremely unfavourable, one may accuse the witches of being happy because it hurts other people.

Western Christians speak of natural disasters such as drought, tornadoes and floods as 'Acts of God', meaning that no human being can be blamed for them. In the same way people
blame witches for these disasters, thereby soothing their dissonant feelings of guilt. By attributing witchcraft to someone else one elevates oneself to a position of good because witches are regarded as bad. Moreover, it is reasoned that because one is being bewitched, one is not a witch because witches do not bewitch each other. As such, witchcraft serves as a cosmological device, accounting for suffering that people may not be able to explain otherwise, and providing an alternative path for the sufferer to follow when he/she can no longer cope with existing anxiety.

6.7.2 Witchcraft is an Imaginary Crime

In the African context, society creates the image of a witch, and pins it onto particular individuals. A witch is a social outcast, a person whose personality does not fit into the society. Witches are, therefore, always sought among people in a particular relationship. Although a witchcraft case may end in collective persecution involving the whole community, it usually begins as a case between two antagonistic or mistrusted individuals. In this study we have repeatedly pointed out that witches and their accusers are nearly always people who are close together. In typical cases the alleged witch is a neighbour and perhaps a kinsman of the accuser who has not been getting on well with him/her. Witches and their accusers are individuals who ought to like each other but do not. Painful tensions arise because one individual cannot feel towards the other as expected. By societal standards one ought to get on well with ones kinsman, neighbours, co-wives, and sisters-in-law. When failed relationships cannot be improved through reconciliation rupture sets in. When a person thus complains that someone else is bewitching him/her, a warning is sounded that tensions and strains have reached a level where reconciliation is no longer possible. The witchcraft accusation, therefore, serves as a device that enables people to clothe their animosities in the guise of an offence committed against themselves (Mayer 1954:13).
Witchcraft is a convenient device that can be used against one's enemy because of its effectiveness. Once a person names another person a witch there is virtually no chance that the two persons may be reconciled. People who do not reconcile and smooth out their relations with their neighbours and kinsmen will follow this course. It is also true that witchcraft accusations reveal the nature of a relationship. It helps the accuser to avoid the laborious and time-consuming legal procedure of fighting his/her enemies. If well-planned, the victims stand very little chance of escape. Moreover, witchcraft accusations do not need legal proof, so the belief can be kept private without fear of being proven wrong. As such, they can remain duels between two people.

In addition, public condemnation of those who are regarded as witches can serve the purpose of scapegoating while the public collective persecution of supposed witches has a cathartic function: it purges the community of certain anxieties. It lets people feel that they have found a public enemy who made things difficult for them, that they have identified and destroyed an enemy. They resultanty feel relieved because they have removed a 'thorn from their flesh'. But public persecution of supposed witches cannot satisfy everybody, hence individuals may still have their own witches on their minds.

We may conclude by remarking that a community ridden by witchcraft related feuds and duels is a sick society. Witchcraft phenomena are indicators of communities experiencing painful stress. In a normal society with all its needs and wants met witchcraft epidemics are effectively under control. For a society to function smoothly without conflicts manifesting themselves in witchcraft disputes, safety valves must be provided. Some of these control outlets are effective tools for the management of social change, for curbing poverty and population explosion while simultaneously providing a purpose-driven agenda or vision for the society, and aiding in effective interpersonal management. I will return to this point in
the next chapter when I will suggest a number of ways for controlling and managing witchcraft phenomena.

The title of this study is 'Moloj ga a na mmala' (a witch has no colour). The implication of the title, as argued in the first chapter, is that supposed witches and their victims look the same to the public eye. What should be remembered here is that witchcraft pointing is about a sensation of distrust, hatred, envy or jealousy. It is the externalisation of inner feelings that can no longer be suppressed. A witch embodies those behaviours that society disapproves of since the values of a witch are diametrically opposed to those of society. A witch is thus a figure of a person who has become a traitor to his/her own people.

Human societies, groups, communities, families, and households all in one way or another make demands on the loyalty of all their members. People in intimate relationships must work together, not against each one another, if a common purpose is to be achieved. Anyone who does not subscribe to these basic norms runs the risk of being declared public enemy number one - a witch (Mayer 1954:17). Depending on the treason charges against him/her by the group a witch may be outlawed and banished from the group.

In addition, witches are sought among those people who have failed to demonstrate their loyalty. A woman who fails to give tokens of goodwill to her in-laws, neighbours or kinsmen, who is reserved, stingy, confrontational or uncommunicative, a withholder of gifts, unhospitable, and yet greedy is the embodiment of a witch. All four cases in this study demonstrate these weaknesses on the part of the female victims. Women married into extended families often find it almost impossible to merge their interests and loyalties with those of their marital homes. In their hearts they keep some private personal loyalties to their home of origin. They thus conform to the image of enemies within the gates (Mayer 1954:19).
Witchcraft-hunting is an external manifestation of a feeling that basic values and interests are being threatened. It is closely related to the question of material interest, values and the safety of the society. Witchcraft accusations are likely to erupt when natural disasters threaten community material interests, or when culture contact threatens the community’s way of life. It is a reaction to a community’s feeling of insecurity. It is unlikely to disappear even from developed communities, unless radical feelings of insecurity and threats imposed by poverty and natural disasters are adequately addressed.

6.7.3 Myth as a Vehicle for the Legitimisation of Collective Persecution of Victims of Witchcraft Accusations

Communities have always tried to understand why certain things happen and others not. For example, people have wanted to know why the sun rises and sets and what causes death. They have also wanted to know how the earth was created and how and where humanity first appeared. In early times or in basic religious communities of the world stories were ‘invented’ to explain natural events. For example, the Greeks had a story to explain the existence of evil and trouble. The Greeks believed that at one time all the world’s evils and troubles were trapped in a box. They escaped when the box was opened by Pandora, the first woman. Such stories are myths which are aimed at explaining how reality became what it is today.

Girard (1982) asserts that myths play a part in legitimising collective persecutions by using the myth of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* to prove his assumption. By proceeding from the simple to the more complex argument Girard shows that all myths must have their roots in real acts of violence against real victims. In the myth of Oedipus a plague was ravaging Thebes. Near Thebes, Oedipus encountered a monster called the Sphinx. The Sphinx killed everyone who could not solve her riddle which Oedipus duly solved. Girard links this to his first stereotype of a generalised loss of difference. Because Oedipus had solved the Sphinx’s
riddle, she killed herself since she was no longer unique. Here the absence of difference has led to violence. People want to be unique and different. But this desire of wanting to be different can pose a threat to the society. An equilibrium must, therefore, be maintained.

Oedipus discovered that he had killed Laius, his father, and married his mother, Jocasta, crimes that eliminated difference. Upon discovering what he had done, Oedipus blinded himself, his mother killed herself and he was banished from Thebes. A lack of difference is, therefore, to be plague-stricken. In order to end the epidemic, the abominable criminal must be banished. The logic of persecution is explicit here.

The third of Girad’s stereotypes has concerns the signs of a victim. Oedipus limped. This hero from another country arrived in Thebes unknown to anyone, a stranger. Finally, he was the son of the king and a king himself, the legitimate heir of Laius. Oedipus managed to combine the marginality of the outsider with the marginality of the insider. He was both a stranger and an all-powerful monarch.

The more signs an individual victim bears, the more likely he/she is to attract persecution. Oedipus’s infirmity, his past history of exposure as an infant (Laius had ordered that the baby be put to death), his situation as a foreigner, a newcomer, his limping, and royalty, all made him vulnerable to be a victim of persecution. Where myths are regarded as a historical document stereotypes of persecution become reality. Myths enable naive persecutors to make sense of their brutal actions. The persecutors portray their victim exactly as they see him: as a guilty person even before he/she is tried - but they cannot hide the objective traces of their persecution. Behind the myth there is a real victim, chosen not by virtue of the crimes of which he/she is accused, but because of all the characteristics of a victim specified in the mythical text that are most likely to project on him the paranoid suspicion of people tormented by a plague.
In the myth, as in witchcraft trials and killings, the accusations are truly shrouded in mythical imbalances: parricide, incest, or the moral or physical poisoning of the community. The accusations and eventual persecutions are characteristic of the way in which frenzied crowds conceive of their victims. But these very accusations are put alongside criteria for the selection of a victim. Myths are, therefore, vehicles in the process of identifying a victim for persecution during a social crisis. Persecutors believe they have selected their victims because of the crimes they attribute to them, that in their eyes make them responsible for the disasters to which they react by persecution. But victims are actually determined by the criteria of persecution that are faithfully reported to onlookers, not because they intend to inform the onlookers but because they are unaware of the spiral web in which they are trapped (Girard 1982:27). Their account usually corresponds (1) to the real circumstances of the myth conveying it, (2) to the characteristic traits of its usual victims, and (3) to the results that normally follow collective violence.

In conclusion, while agreeing with Girard’s analysis, we affirm that the myth of Oedipus is not just a literary text, but a mythical text based on the justification of collective persecutions such as those in witchcraft trials. As mythical texts are not historical, it is dangerous to treat them as if they were historical. On the contrary, genuine historical evidence plays no important role in deciphering representations of collective persecutions. The question of historical realism is normally asked when representations of witchcraft trials are evoked because the mythical crosscurrents and undercurrents inform the persecutors. The nature and disposition of the persecutors determine who must be singled out as a witch because of his/her stereotypes. Without this basis it is impossible to explain why and how the persecutors would refuse to listen to any legal and historical arguments that refute their claims.
An analysis of the interpretation that automatically results in the identification of stereotypes of persecution is necessary in order to understand the nature of witch persecutions. The following story told by one of the people accused of causing lightning to strike in Mantheding Village in 1995 has relevance here.

Harvests were bad, the cows gave birth to dead calves; no one was on good terms with anyone else. Mohlapamaswi’s beasts were doing well. He woke up early in the morning to cut grass on the farms of white farmers to feed his beast. He donated a wire fence to a local school. All fortunes appeared to be on his side because his beasts, children and fields were doing well. A woman (a widow) carrying firewood from her field was struck by lightning. All sorts of things were said about Mohlapamaswi. How did he succeed? He should be using human flesh as muti to flourish, he is responsible for the lightning that has struck the woman. One day the fellows - under the leadership of Mohlapamaswi’s brothers from Gauteng - took it to a diviner. The diviner was told who the victim was before he could divine. Mohlapamaswi was picked out as the victim. The diviner told the police how Mohlapamaswi was picked out (Informant Raphesu).

An unbiased reader would understand that the victim did not do what he was accused of but that everything about him marked him as an outlet for the annoyance and irritation of his fellow brothers and citizens. No one will suggest that it is an innocent incident or a figment of the imagination. But we can sense a form of cultural schizophrenia in the story. Here the persecutors were trapped by an external influence prompted by jealousy shrouded in myth. Myth can be involved in a social crisis as presenting a lack of differentiation. Myth usually encourages a catastrophe by juxtaposing what has occurred during a social upheaval and a similar mythical story.

All crimes that witch-persecutors attribute to their victims can generally be found in myth. In pre-literary communities these myths corresponded perfectly to the societal stereotypes. In the myths there appear formidable chief characters who are criminals and who are treated
as such. Because of this they incur a punishment that is usually attributable to victims of collective persecutors in real life. In the majority of these myths stereotypes have marks that identify them as suitable for selection as victims for collective persecution. The whole range of victim signs can be found in myth, a fact often missed because of the focus on the victim’s ethnic or religious minority and even the absence or presence of differences.

In groups people are subject to sudden variations in their relationships, for better or worse. If they attribute a variation to the collective victim who may, in turn, facilitate the return to normal, they will deduce from their belief a transcendental power that will bring them alternatively both loss and health, punishment and recompense (Girard 1986:44). This belief is manifested through the acts of violence instigated by the victim as the mysterious instigator. The causality of the scapegoat is imposed on the victim with such force that even death cannot prevent it. Where group relationships have deteriorated and that is blamed on a victim, the group will commemorate the social ills in conformance with the illusory mythical belief that the scapegoat is omnipotent and has facilitated the cure.

6.7.4 Explanation of Witchcraft Accusations through the Lens of some of Theories on the Functions of Society

6.7.4.1 Belief in Witchcraft Serves a Particular Purpose in Societies

From the case studies discussed in this chapter it became clear that witch-hunters justify their actions by posing to be working in the interest of the whole community. They see themselves as working for the protection and preservation of cultural norms, morality and values and regard themselves as custodians of what is good for the community while they see their actions as ensuring the orderly continuance of the society by punishing those who are intent on destroying the fabric of the society through their ill conceived craft. Both ‘grave-diggers’
and youth 'gangs' mobilise communities against individuals perceived to be outcasts and malicious characters who are free to cause havoc in the community by destroying lives.

The underlying notion here is that all parts of the society are interrelated, and must all contribute to the smooth functioning of the whole community. This is even evident in their demand, in the case where a diviner must be consulted, when the members of the community are compelled to produce money for consultation with a diviner. The witchcraft incidence, although concerning one individual at the start, is later taken over by the mob as its societal responsibility.

My contention is that in any witchcraft discourse social structures should be treated and studied as part of the total sum. Even social factors that can be treated as external to individuals do exert control over them. Individual behaviour is, to a large extent, governed by social pressures. Sometime a dissident is named, isolated, sanctioned or persecuted under a wrong charge, a form of social control that minimises individual freedom and autonomy. Victims are those who stand up and claim their rights. In this context witchcraft accusations serve as sanctions and control of individual conduct and autonomy but are a form of slavery.

6.7.4.2 Projection Theory

Rapid social changes, natural disasters and mysterious death, illness and other happenings that cannot be explained exact pressure on communities. They press them for explanations and solutions they cannot readily provide. The intense search after remedies takes a heavy psychological toll, for they bring with them a deep sense of insecurity and despair. But whenever people find themselves feeling helpless and driven to the limit of their understanding, they have to deal with what can be profound feelings of helplessness and victimisation that may unleash tremendous anger and rage. When people experience this
type of victimisation and utter helplessness, they naturally seek to relieve it in any possible
way, and one of the convenient methods frequently employed is to transfer it to another
person who might be delighted about the situation in which they are (Levack 1987:107). The
ideal object of such projection is the witch, a person who personifies evil as it is defined in
contemporary society. In this indirect way the idea of the witch gives both the individual and
the community an opportunity to gain reassurance regarding their own control over their lives
and circumstances.

The relief of guilt through projection onto another person can easily lead to witchcraft
accusations and prosecutions. In the five cases discussed it was clearly shown that many
accusations arose when individuals failed or refused to provide economic assistance to
people who needed it. Macfarlane (cf Levack 1987:107) found a similar situation in
sixteenth and seventeenth century England. This also holds for a person who must aid others
when he/she regards it as a burden. He/she may rationalise and project his/her feelings on
a person who needs support as to relieve him/herself of a burden. In that way the guilty
neighbour projected his/her guilt on to the witch. A witch thus acted as a relief valve for one
who felt guilty or vulnerable by not doing what is required of him/her.

In studying youth insurrections in Sekhukhuneland in the mid-1980s, Ineke van Kessel
(1993:594) observed that the youth were confused about the role they should play. They
found their resistance of Bantustans leaders, chiefs and other collaborators of the apartheid
government ineffective. The rural youth realised that their popular mobilisation and
resistance in the 1980s was not as predominant as that of their counterparts in urban areas.
When these youngsters regarded their ineffectiveness as a failure when compared to the
effectiveness of their ‘comrades’ in the townships, they often projected their weakness on
witches. In proceeding against the supposed witches, the ‘comrades’ did not act alone but
in conjunction with many other members of the community. The witches thus became not
only the objects of the projected weakness of the ‘comrades’ but ‘expiatory victims’ of the entire community that was striving to establish a new community free of the yoke of apartheid.

Witchcraft accusations that are made against certain people can be regarded as projections of the accusers’ weakness or guilt. The process is, however, collective as well as individual. Sometimes the supposed witches themselves manifest a deep sense of sin and guilt (Levack 1987:108). This happens when accused witches become intensely aware of their sinful enmity towards others. Such people experience internal guilt and the conviction that certain acts they committed were out of vengeance. Sometimes people who are overwhelmed by internal guilt go to the extent of confessing their evil contemplations against others. Such people, who have not really committed the deeds but only harboured such thoughts, confess their guilt as witches. In the eyes of their accusers they become self-confessing witches. Monter (cf Levack 1987:108) claims that in the seventeenth century in France and Switzerland there were people who were dominated by internal guilt to the extent that their acts of charity were gratuitous.

Religion thus binds the members of society together and enables society to apply sanctions against deviants. It is true that some of the collective witchcraft accusations are triggered by dissidents who threaten consensus and stability in the society. But this study reveals that witchcraft accusations occur mainly among kinsmen and close families. It would appear that the functionalist perspective is not quite relevant in the explanation of witchcraft accusations among small groups of people, such as in the Northern Province. But the works of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and René Girard - philosophers who can be classified under functionalism, structuralism and even symbolic interactionism - assist in explaining some of the actions found in witchcraft persecution. In the following section I will explicate how these theories are relevant to the study.
In all five cases studied there was a struggle for a prized object or value and efforts to defeat the opponents in achieving the desired goal. Conflicts arose because benefits and rewards were limited. Individuals had to compete in pursuing scarce resources. Each person tried to subdue the other(s) as much as was necessary to achieve his/her goals. Because of the conflict that existed among neighbours and kinsmen anxiety, tension and frustration developed. The outlet found in those cases was witchcraft accusations to restore the balance in the groups. But because of inherent evil in human hearts there will never be harmony and equilibrium among humans as there will always be tension. The solution to this problem lies in the individuals involved to become aware of the innate nature and forces that control their behaviour.

Underpinning witchcraft accusations are contesting ideologies fighting for space. There are sets of cultural beliefs that legitimate or justify the interests of particular classes or groups. ‘Grave-diggers’ and youth groups, as we have argued earlier, try to usurp power from discredited tribal chiefs by employing witchcraft hysteria. They often struggle with the opposing group for power or prestige as was the case with the Marobjane episode. These ideologies serve the purpose of defending territorial gains made in the previous struggles for dominance. In the situation of contestation brutal force is sometimes used. Witchcraft accusations and their resultant killings are sometimes the results of the strivings of groups for domination – be it political, cultural, economic or social.

Human existence is a process in which people act towards or respond to others in a mutual and reciprocal way. In this interaction humans communicate through symbols, that is, through words, gestures, and objects that stand for or point to something else (Schmidt
1988:120). These symbols are vehicles of meaning. According to Mead (cf Popenoe 1998:75) the understanding of these symbols are essential for healthy interpersonal relationships. People act toward something according to the meaning they attach to the symbol while the understanding of the symbol depends on the result of prior social interaction between the parties involved. The meaning of symbols is shaped and influenced by the context in which they are used. The role the symbol plays in the interaction depends on what the other person assumes it means or points to. Misunderstanding or even distortion of the symbol occasioned by the interpersonal relationships can be catastrophic for the parties involved. A smile by a rich person who failed to give support to the poor neighbour when he/she was in need may be interpreted as an insult or ridicule. In practical terms such behaviour is punishable. Sympathy unaccompanied by concrete deeds when it is essential to do so may mean the opposite of what it is intended to mean – mockery. Charity to a community that may give undue recognition to the giver may be construed as boastfulness.

Symbols in themselves mean nothing but the context in which they are made gives meaning to them. In a stressed poor community a good intention may result in social conflict if not properly managed. In the last case study discussed earlier we have observed that the action that could be interpreted as generosity in some communities was understood as an insult to the community. In that case one of the charges against the witchcraft victim was that he had donated fencing wire to the community school. His adversaries interpreted his action as a deliberate attempt at receiving a reward from the community in evil ways. According to the exchange theory, an interaction based on reciprocity is based on good relationships. It is thus difficult for people to cooperate where there is mistrust and suspicion. Where there are hostile relationships, the opposite of cooperation is likely to ensue for a prized object or value since the defeat of an opponent is thought to be essential to achieve the designed goal. As such, the social interaction theory explains the witchcraft discourse in the Northern Province.
6.7.5 Concluding Observation

At the end of each interview each victim was asked whether he/she still believed that witchcraft existed. Some replied in the affirmative while some expressed doubt. Those who expressed doubt substantiated their position by adding that if people accused of witchcraft were like them then witchcraft does not exist. Those who replied in the affirmative said that they believed in the existence of witchcraft because they were born into a society which believed in witchcraft. They could not negate the society’s belief but they, including all male and female diviners, had never seen a single witch in their lifetime. They did not find anything wrong with their belief in witchcraft despite the fact they had never seen one. But they all conceded that many people are accused of witchcraft solely out of jealousy, hatred and tensions in the society. From this observation witchcraft remains an unproven crime supported by societal belief.

In this study one of the most fruitful observations is the investigation of the relationships of the people who were accused of bewitching one another. Two main categories must be distinguished. That is, cases in which relatives bewitch one another and cases in which non-relatives are involved. In all the cases discussed only one case - that of Avon farm - involves non-relatives. It could be explained, as has been done, why non-relatives were involved. But the rest involved kins living in extended networks of families. The Northern Sotho people maintain that witches mainly injure those with whom they are in close contact - that is, relatives and neighbours - and that it is difficult to bewitch a stranger.

The most prolific single source of witchcraft is conflict among co-wives, brothers and sisters, living in extended families, lovers competing to win the love of a man, neighbours envying their competitors and relatives failing to manage impressions they have been creating to one another. These factors explain why a community suffering severe scarcity of resources is
more prone to witchcraft accusations than those in urban areas where people lead more individualistic and busy lives. In other words, witchcraft is a reflection of tensions within the framework of cultural mechanisms for control and the creation of a ‘utopian egalitarian’ society free from evil and tension. The causes of witchcraft accusations should, therefore, be sought in the whole configuration of institutions and social values: the permissible or approved conduct, the interposition of the hierarchy of clan, age and rank among competing individuals, the compromises and reconciliations that are insisted upon, and the extent to which mental and physical anguish for personal liberty is allowed and curtailed. Cultural patterns and values, as well as stress put on individuals within the social systems, must be carefully studied and modified where necessary to allow human freedom within society.

White anthropologists have concluded that witchcraft is a reflection of the intense hatred that the black person’s mind is capable of (Krige 1943:169). It is true that blacks for the most trivial reasons attribute many crimes to witchcraft. But Europeans have committed crimes that have left blacks appalled at the evil European minds are capable of. What is true is that humankind is capable of conceiving and thinking of unimaginable evil given the conditions and time to do so. Moreover, the evil that humanity can produce is historically conditioned. Scarce natural resources, cultural limitations and frustrations caused by living conditions and misfortunes that may befall a person may drive him/her to extreme limits. Illness, suffering and death may compel people to seek the cause in the direction of jealousy, hatred and scapegoating that are encapsulated in witchcraft accusations and used to provide emotional satisfaction to the bereaved (Krige 1943:270). Witchcraft also serves to explain the differential incidence of misfortune or death that cannot otherwise be explained to the bereaved family or community.
ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Life Stock Unit is equivalent to one beast of five goats/sheep.

2. A hair-shaving ceremony is held immediately after the funeral where the heads of relatives are shaved. It partly determines the length of mourning period because after a certain period when the hair will have grown to a particular length the mourning will be ended by another hair-shaving ceremony. The death of NR was preceded by the death of her brother, Nare, who had died mysteriously as well.

3. All the accused in the case believed that J, Gauta’s husband, had consulted with diviners and sent the spell that later killed Gauta - his wife.

4. In rural areas graves for their dead are dug by ‘grave-diggers’ normally known as diphiri (wolves). They are called wolves because they are working with the soil as wolves are also involved with the soil as they get heir food from left-overs from lions. Lions’ left-overs are wrapped in soil and are not regarded as decent food.

5. Generally diviners use bones to sniff out witches or to diagnose illness. Some use water in a clay dish that serves as a mirror. It is believed that after taking a certain drink the complainant would start seeing his/her witches in the mirror or water.

6. E was a competitor of Gauta and was being initiated to become a diviner. E’s husband was a blood brother to Gauta’s husband.

7. Malusi could not get her 1993 school report when the school closed because she had lost a school textbook lent to her. She found the book around February 1994 so she could send her cousin to the principal with the book in order to release her school report. Malusi and her cousin JS were in the same standard.

8. Severe headache is normally associated with hypertension and is usually not ascribed to witchcraft. But when it leads to death it is viewed as something else. Death, especially the death of a young person, stirs emotions and may have serious consequences.

9. According to Sotho practice and belief a harlot or troublesome wife is disciplined by being left by her husband and by allowing him to make love to others, this belief is premised on the notion that it would make the deserted wife feel jealous and insignificant and cause her to repent and accord her husband the respect he deserves.

10. The informant told me that after the lightning had struck, Kotana went to the Mothoa family to tell them that she had found Jackson in Gompies River cleansing his body from the medicine he had smeared himself with in order to strike the lightning. It is a common belief among the Northern Sotho that a person who strikes lightning would run to the nearest river after the incident to cleanse himself. In this case Kotana gave the assurance that she had seen Jackson in the river and that was served as proof of his guilt.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

7. CONTAINMENT OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS IN POST-COLONIAL SOUTH AFRICA - AN EXPLORATION

7.1 Introduction

You look but you do not see. You touch, but you do not feel. Without sight or touch ... one can learn a great deal. But you must learn how to hear or you will learn little about our ways (Stoller 1989:115).

This study argues that in South Africa witchcraft discourse has increasingly permeated all social structures - politics, sport, business, institutions of formal education, and judicial systems. However, the unwillingness of many of these structures to acknowledge the threat posed by witchcraft can cause the country to lose everything it has gained in its peaceful transition from apartheid to a democratic state. Currently, the country is compelled to implement different strategies in the articulation of ideas for containing witchcraft accusations. The purpose of this study has been to investigate how discourses on witchcraft are produced, sustained and applied to society by examining particular relations to power, gender and stress generated by social factors. This need necessitated the foregoing detailed and critical inquiry.

My goal in this study has been to resist the temptation of telling spectacular witchcraft stories either for inciting, entertaining or romanticising African culture, a temptation that can be quite strong when dealing with a topic that is inherently imaginative and has the potential for speculating. However, the focus of the study has been to unravel the causative factors of witchcraft accusations and to devise measures for containing them and allowing the affected communities to lead normal lives. For this reason, I now propose a rationale why witchcraft
accusations should be contained or managed and the methods through which that should be done.

There are three broad categories why witchcraft accusations should be contained in South Africa. First, witchcraft accusations and their resultant violence and killing are an embarrassment to the democratic ANC led government. Second, witchcraft accusations stifle development and economic progress and third, they cause untold suffering, agony and enmity to both the victims and accusers.

7.2 Witchcraft is an Embarrassment to the Government

The ANC led government has been heralded as a true model of democracy in Africa by the whole of the Western world. Its constitution is generally regarded as the one of the best in the world - especially its Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, witchcraft violence has established itself as one of the vices South Africa has become known for after its peaceful transition to a multiparty democracy. It was soon clear that Mandela’s magic and acumen could not prevail over the occult. It must have been embarrassing to the former President and his party when most influential papers worldwide, such as the Washington Post (October 22, 1994), carried reports of gruesome multiple killings - especially by burning in South Africa. The headline of this particular report read: “The South African Blacks Gain Freedom, ‘Witch’ Killing Rise Sharply”. Just before the first democratic election of 27 April 1994 many Blacks had laid all blame for the “black on black violence” on Mr FW de Klerk’s shoulders. Currently the ANC has to find a way of explaining the witchcraft epidemic under its rule as it has become difficult to blame others any longer.

Horror stories of people being lynched or forced to undergo the witchcraft ordeal in South Africa that appear in most television news programmes and newspapers in major Western
countries are indeed an embarrassment. The image of the newly established democratic country has thus constantly been tarnished. It goes without saying that this negative situation should be contained and changed for the good of the country and its people.

7.3 Witchcraft is Antithetical to Development Goals of the Country

After April 1994, the South African government has become increasingly aware of the threat to peaceful development posed by witchcraft violence in the Northern Province, the political rivalry in KwaZulu-Natal and the religious fanaticism in the Western Cape. It has become clear that government does not have a hold on the mental models that of behaviour that is perceived as antithetical to its development strategy. Global competitiveness can only be enhanced by political and religious stability encapsulated in law and order in the country. It is for this reason that Advocate S Nthai, Member of the Executive Committee for Safety and Security of the Northern Province, made a passionate call on churches and all leaders to help combat witchcraft (Kgatla 1995:95). Moreover, it was widely reported in local papers that people could not aspire to excel in their entrepreneurial skills because of the fear of being accused of being witches. As this anti-developmental belief may have serious economic results, curbing witchcraft had to be high on the government’s list of practices it had to allow its rural development agenda to have an impact on its people.

In remote areas, such as Venda in the Northern Province, evidence was being circulated that suggested that in front of any successful business or impressive house there was always a skull signifying that a person had been sacrificed for it. Such signs reflected the perception of danger to successful businessmen since they as well as poor people were in danger of being accused and killed. A situation has thus developed where no one is currently sure of what to do or not to do for ones livelihood. The fear of being accused thus necessitates the finding of immediate solutions to these pressing problems.
7.4 Witchcraft Causes Suffering Among its Victims

Most witchcraft accusations emanate from the ‘home’ and the family, thus where people spend most of their time together as relatives, friends and kinsmen. People believe that the strongest attacks come from within the family circle - the first persons to be suspected of witchcraft are those living close to the complainant. Witchcraft, therefore, epitomises the sad fact that jealousy and aggression exist within the intimate circle of the family where solidarity and trust should reign supreme (Ciekawy & Geschiere 1999:5). The eminence of this phenomenon puts a large degree of stress on everyone, because the fear of being pointed out as a witch and the consequences that may follow such an accusation keep people in a constant state of agony. Rumours, gossips and slanderous talk frustrate and render victims utterly helpless. Under these circumstances people remain uncertain as to who could be the next victim and are unsure about what to do to avoid being accused. This potential of witchcraft for selecting its victims among kinsmen serves to frighten the vulnerable in the society. The weak thus see witchcraft accusation as a subversive weapon used by the powerful to induce submissiveness in them as fear is universally used to traumatised people to conform to the ideology of the powerful.

7.5 Some Suggested Measures to Contain Witchcraft

Any measure suggested to combat witchcraft accusations and their related violence should be informed by authentic and reliable analyses of the causes of the plague. If the recommendations to contain witchcraft are not grounded in sound theoretical findings such recommendations remain wishful thinking. Although, it does not mean that if some reliable findings on causative factors of witchcraft accusations are established correctly recommendations for their containment will be self-evident, but the reverse is most unlikely to be attained.
Scholars in the social sciences, especially those working in Anthropology, have suggested various solutions to combat witchcraft accusations and violence that are associated with them (Louw 1941, Fisiy & Geschiere 1991, Gluckman 1956, Marwick 1970, Meek 1950, and Ralushai 1996). These suggestions for the containment of the phenomenon are varied but can be grouped into four broad categories, namely the education of those trapped in the belief, the control of the belief by instruments of the law, religious proselytisation, and the death of Satan. These remedies thus all refer to the humanisation of society that would lead to the liberal and sceptical view that regards witchcraft as superstition. These four broad theories on the containment of witchcraft accusation are now analysed.

7.5.1 Educationist Model

This model was clearly espoused by Advocate Seth Nthai, MEC for Safety and Security of the Northern Province, when he said: "The killing of people suspected of practising witchcraft portrays the Northern Transvaal Province as still backward and inhabited by people trapped in beliefs belonging to the dark ages" (Sowetan 10 March 1995).

An educational solution advocates for concerted efforts by government on a variety of educational programmes aimed at liberating people trapped in the belief (Ralushai Commission of Enquiry 1996:60). In a simplistic form the model suggests the organisation of workshops, political rallies, media programmes, and school curricula to address the situation. People holding this view believe that the problem lies within African culture that is closed to the outside world and civilisation. The functions performed by colonial 'repugnancy clauses' that served as gate-keeping during the reception of 'native laws and customs' are behind this view. Education is viewed as a liberating tool that would change the African mentality to became receptive to civilised standards and belief systems, while the Judeao-Christian view of education is held as the messianic model.
Most of the literature on the efficacy of education for combatting witchcraft reveals that an insight into the natural causes of diseases and other misfortunes shows Africans that their fear of witchcraft is unfounded (cf. Louw 1941:250). This view also implies that missionaries are, for the most part, responsible for running out education programmes. According to this view, education should deal with the realities of African social and economic life. According to Raum (cf. Louw 1941:252), education must mainly deal with the improvement of agriculture and such conditions that would lead to the economic betterment of Africans. This view thus purports that the agents of education are supposed to be religious teachers and missionaries in public schools. Modern technologies are also recommended as a means of education. Without going into the details on how modern technologies should be employed in the process of education, the Ralushai Commission (1996:86) cited mass media (printed or electronic), workshops, symposia, and conferences as examples of means of mass education. Implicit in this point of view is the assumption that Western knowledge imparted to African children in school can systematically erode their superstitions to the point where they apply standard patterns of causality. This idea poses the question whether one should seek solutions for witchcraft accusations in Western logic or in African experience.

My research findings reveal that most black South Africans, although well versed in Western culture and science, still believe in and fear witchcraft forces. They live and are socialised in a cultural framework that provides them with a mindset that structures their relationships with other members of the community. As such, witchcraft beliefs still control their lives despite the education they have received.

There are numerous flaws in the South African education model although its intention is found. It is always assumed that people who are sceptical about witchcraft are educated while those who believe in it are not. Thus the sceptical are seen as liberated and free and
the believers as primitive and backward. Another false assumption inherent in the model is that education by its very nature is antitoxinal to witchcraft. Education is, therefore, often prescribed as a solution without going into any finer details about how it should be planned and executed. The education model is normally given in concluding sections of books or articles written on the subject. Such books are frequently written in haste and thus often lack careful consideration of the solutions proposed. Details on how it should be done are normally lacking. In the next sections some concrete steps on how the education model should be used are given.

7.5.2 Legal Machinery for Combatting Witchcraft

There are two views on applying legal mechanisms for containing the carnage, namely a colonial legacy manifested by witchcraft suppression laws and post-colonial legacy that negates the colonial legal system.

7.5.2.1 The Colonial Legal Establishment

The colonial legal establishment, especially in territories that fell under British Colonial rule - such as South Africa - had little understanding of the nature of witchcraft problems. Colonial courts consistently refused to admit metaphysical statements in court as tangible proof. It was difficult for the colonial courts to see how an act of witchcraft unaccompanied by some physical attack could be brought within the principles of their common law (Fisiy 1999:148). This outright rejection of witchcraft accusations in court was based on witchcraft practised as premised on and substantiated by a prescientific understanding of events. Colonial courts concluded that witchcraft threats were metaphysical and not physical and as such did not constitute a punishable offence. Witchcraft accusations were thus dismissed as being grounded on delusions that could not be proven by a cause-effect relationship (:148).
In the eyes of many Africans the outcome of witchcraft trials was that witches were constantly freed by colonial courts and those who fought the practice punished since aggrieved parties who took the law into their own hands and punished witches in self-defence were convicted for their acts.

It was part of the courts’ mission to inculcate in the people principles of rationality and the civilising virtues of Western culture, a course of action that would develop the African people (cf Fisiy 1999:149). The bottom line of these laws was that, in the absence of any direct cause-and-effect rationality, the law punished the person whose reason does not control his/her passion (Seidman 1967:140). Colonial judges thus sought to impose the common law standard of the reasonable person on Africans. The African people thought that while education administrators and missionaries were fighting to eradicate witchcraft in their fields their counterparts, the colonial judges, were setting witches free (:1140).

To summarise, the colonial role in refusing to endorse any conviction on witchcraft accusation was seen as an ambivalent exercise. The accusers thought that alleged witches who were charged before these courts were simply set free while the victims thought that they were saved from an innocent death. The reliance on direct causation to establish legal proof caused the colonial courts to be viewed as allies of the alleged witches and enemies of their persecutors. The colonial legal machinery frustrated the colonials because while it saved some innocent lives, it drove the practice underground, where numerous trials were secretly conducted. But on the surface it served the positive purpose of thinking first before one could accuse and attack ones kinsmen on the basis of witchcraft. This discussion has made it clear that a balance should be found between the two ambivalent situations in any effort to contain witchcraft accusations.
7.5.2.2 The Post-Colonial Legal System

The post-colonial legal system that was designed to counteract the colonial legacy is not prevalent in most African countries, including South Africa, although the sentiments for its introduction are echoed in our country. Cameroon’s post-colonial example is given here to illustrate the point. The Cameroonian model marks a systematic break with the colonial courts where witchcraft practices were not demonstrable in court for lack of evidence. The logic behind this reasoning was that if witches were tried and sentenced in court the act would serve as a deterrent to the witch-to-be and therefore contain the phenomenon. The new approach seeks to integrate local interpretations of witchcraft accusation into the state-run justice system. Judges involved in these trials are empowered to enlist the support of traditional healers as expert witnesses in trials to convict alleged witches. What the Cameroonian government failed to realise was that witches and traditional healers share a common stock-in-trade: they both rely on metaphysical forces for their practices. Courts of law can easily be used by their competitors in the trade to discredit each other. This poses the serious question as to whether such a criminal justice system serves as a tool to combat witchcraft or to intensify it? It would appear that in all probability subjective evidence would be given to legitimise the traditional healers’ trade that is severely discredited even by Africans themselves.

The ‘expert advice’ of the traditional healers places the courts squarely within the very witchcraft paradigm they are trying to fight. There can be no good or bad witchcraft differentiating the traditional diviner from witches for, by definition, witches get their magic powers from diviners. In fact, all diviners are potential witches. In a competitive world they are adversaries to one another and by definition witches to each other.
The study undertaken by Macfarlane (cf. Levack 1992:61) - a detailed account of witchcraft in Essex - collaborates with our findings in the Northern Province of South Africa. In nearly every case cited in this study a denial of charity is the cause of the witchcraft accusation.

The breakdown of traditional caretaking patterns of the community intensified by increased pressure on available resources as the population grows, has become major cause in witchcraft accusations. Fisiy (1999:158) is correct when he argues that the persistence of the economic crises confronting communities, is often responsible for the collapse of community-based safety nets. It thus amounts to genocide to let a person who is trapped in a situation of witchcraft give 'expect evidence' against those he/she perceives to be his/her adversaries.

The attempts by some African states to come to terms with the complex cultural discourses associated with witchcraft beliefs by imposing a homogenising criminal law framework could be indicative of the inability to provide basic security to their citizens as this pseudo legal tool becomes the last line of resistance. Where forms of street justice characterised by lynching, 'necklacing' and arson are prevalent the state authority might have collapsed. In an attempt to give itself credence, the state could give those who are powerful the status of 'expert advisers'. Nevertheless, the reign of violence executed in the name of popular justice reflects a much deeper cultural crisis than the collapse of law and order. Under such circumstances, witchcraft discourses are often used as an explanatory device for why things have gone wrong in a society as these discourses explain away patterns of fortune and misfortune (Fisiy 1999:159).

Fisiy (1999:160) argues that in the case of the Cameroonian judges, who accept witchcraft proofs stemming from the fact that the courts are now presided over by native people, the judges have as their ultimate guide their conscience. When they are personally satisfied that
a good case has been established, they do not hesitate to convict the accused. The results of this approach are the fuelling of witchcraft cases because malice, jealousy and hatred are given recognition in the society and those who harbour these negative feelings are given the opportunity to practise them, which in turn simulates feelings for further witchcraft accusations. Such a state can easily become a write-off in the community of civilised nations.

7.5.2.3 Religious Proselytisation as a Means of Controlling Witchcraft

The editorial heading of Review, a Pietersburg weekly paper, of 2 December 1994, carried a statement by Advocate Nthai (MEC for Safety and Security, Northern Province) entitled: “Church has failed to curb the witchcraft killings”. At a political rally held at the University of the North, Nthai, challenged the churches to make efforts to fulfil its historic mission. According to Nthai, it was easy for the churches to eradicate witchcraft beliefs by its ‘historic’ mission of converting people from their religion ridden with witchcraft beliefs to one free of them.

In Chapter Two of this work we argued that the Church is not blameless when it comes to the promotion of witchcraft discourse as some of Satan’s rebels encourage the discourse of witchcraft. There we argued that during the Reformation and the Inquisition many people died in the same circumstances people are currently dying in the Northern Province. At that time heretics and Satan worshippers were regarded as witches. But the churches, especially from the traditions of pentacolism, revivalism and pietism, attempted to eradicate out beliefs in superstition and indeed succeeded to keep them under control for some time.

After or during periods of severe political and economic crises religion - specially under fundamentalists - can become increasingly popular and provide certain temporal solutions
to secular problems. During periods of crises churches in the spectrum of Pentecostal -
charismatic and African initiated denominations are known to have held special spiritual
revivals that have tended to eclipse and supersede other societal crises. By propagating
success, health, wealth, a diminished fear of death, and promising solutions to problems
experienced by people at grassroots level, they attempt to shift the mind set of the ordinary
people. Because of their limited interest in typically African forms of cosmology, the
Pentecostal Churches succeed in swaying many people by their vigorous evangelistic
campaigns especially at grassroots level, to abandon their traditional stereotypes.

Because of their bold stance against the powers of darkness and their conviction in their
ability to mobilise people on a mass basis they can directly speak to the conscience of large
numbers of people and address their spiritual problems.

7.5.2.4 The Death of Satan - Change of Paradigm

Scarre (1987:54-63) contests the idea that the decline or containment of witchcraft
accusations in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century was the product of common
sense by stating that the decline of a belief in the active presence of the Devil among the
people determined the decline of witchcraft beliefs. The new paradigm gradually displaced
the old and made people see the world in a much less personified way than their ancestors.
If there was no Satan, it then followed that there could be no witches. This new way of
thinking about the world of science was introduced by Descartes (1596-1650), Galileo
Galilei (1564-1642) and others (Bosch 1991:263). Two scientific approaches characterised
this scientific revolution: empiricism³ and rationalism.⁴ Both these approaches operate on
the premise that human reason had a certain degree of autonomy (Bosch 1991:263).

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Underlying this optimistic view of human beings and their ability was the greater stress placed on personal responsibility for human action and an increased sense of individualism. The new rational thinking made people lose their grip on the imagination to the point where doubt became scepticism. This conscientisation propelled by the autonomy of humanity and freedom of thought finally converted the belief about Satan and witchcraft into firm disbelief (Scarre 1987:61).

The new Age of Reason vis-a-vis the Age of Magical Forces came to mean that the human mind was viewed as capable of knowing all phenomena in the world. Operating within a subject-object scheme, the new age separated humans from their environment and enabled them to examine it objectively (Bosch 1991:264), thereby causing nature to cease to be a source of wonder and instruction to humans, thus becoming the object of their study.

This spirit of rationality caused feelings of emancipation and the autonomy of individuals. Where the prevailing spirit in the Middle Ages dictated that the community took priority over the individual, the emphasis in the Rational Age was on individual freedom and autonomy. Individuals were encouraged to pursue their interest and happiness, so that the individual experienced him/herself as liberated from the tutelage of metaphysical powers without any reference to supernatural forces in their daily lives.

On the whole the new movement did not deny religion a place under the sun but it radically relativised its exclusive claims to authority and superiority. Reason took the place of faith or belief as a point of departure. Where faith in God or the gods had previously determined the human way of life, in rationality prominent scholars of the time, such as Freud and Marx, declared religion to be an illusion. Durkheim even suggested that every religious community was only worshipping itself (Bosch 1991:269). Humans were regarded as having matured,
thereby no longer needing God. In these anthropocentric world-views beliefs in supernatural forces were annulled while religion was divorced from reason.

In this environment of entire rationality and reason beliefs such as those in witchcraft and magic had little space in which to exist. People who held those views would be labelled as being primitive. But in discussing the impact of the Age of Reason on human life it is important to hasten to say that this view of reality did not remain unchanged and unchallenged for long. Rationalism and empiricism increasingly proved inadequate to supply convincing answers to all the questions asked about human existence and experience while people remained victims of fear and frustration. However, the Age of Reason served its purpose and resolved some problems since in the Western world witchcraft beliefs did not altogether vanish from the scene but were effectively curtailed. People would go on with life experiencing a sense of freedom and creatively. Moreover, because individuals were liberated and independent, they could make their own decisions about what they believed. They followed their reason and took sensible decisions. Coercion, intimidation and mob psychology could not exist without being challenged and exposed for what they were.

As this chapter deals with suggestions to contain witchcraft accusations, one of the crucial questions to be asked is whether the scenario as it existed at the end of the witchcraft craze in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century could be recreated in the present South Africa? Moreover, does modern South Africa have the capacity to shake off the manifestation of witchcraft accusations through ushering in rationalism and empiricism? The answer to these questions is that it is unlikely that South Africa will go the same route given the complex situation that finds itself in. Seventeenth century Europe had space and energy to go the route of the Enlightenment. As the society was liberating itself from the tutelage of the Middle Ages the new paradigms of science, a new voyage of discovery and emancipation from religion provided more challenging prospects. The world was wide open
for individuals to experiment with new ideas and develop novel thoughts. Discovering sea routes to far off countries and colonising new countries to add resources to their depleted ones made a life of adventure challenging and interesting.

By contrast, people in the Northern Province are entrapped in poverty and illiteracy while there is no space for discovery and meaningful progress. It will be futile to attempt to change their world-view to embrace rationality and empiricism in their witchcraft discourse. Contributing to their dire condition are the inhuman political policies they were subjected to over the years causing them to develop a profound sense of self-hatred, helplessness and utter frustration. As such, applying logic and reason to solve some of their societal problems is entirely impossible as they have been plunged too deeply into the habit of shifting blame onto others for their own failures and problems.

7.5.3 Transformational Paths for the Containment of Witchcraft Accusations

The cruelty and misery caused by witchcraft accusations have been so tragic that everything possible should be done to contain this practice. Providing improved education, medication and better social and racial conditions should, nevertheless, help to reduce inhumanity to other human beings (Parrinder 1963:207). This section thus focuses on some transformational paths for the containment of witchcraft accusations.

We must always keep in mind the obsessions and fears of those who have been accused of witchcraft accusations, as well as their suffering: sleeplessness, homelessness, public ostracism, torture, and death. It may be stated that they often lead a life comparable to that of animals fearing other animals of prey.
In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the inhabitants of the Northern Province are trapped in a state of poverty, illiteracy, broken relationships that developed from a sense of self-hatred, as well as dissolution which leaves no space for the discovery of meaningful progress. It will be a futile exercise to change their world-view to embrace rationality and liberate themselves from destructive beliefs in witchcraft without addressing their social, cultural, economic, religious, and political conditions. It is hard for people filled with rage, self-hatred and helplessness to engage in self-development without at first radically improving their state of object poverty. Since scapegoating is one way of trying to cope with stress and as witchcraft accusations are expressions of frustration, lasting solutions should be found for these problems.

The way in which we understand the nature of the problems of these people and also what cause them, is extremely important, because it tends to determine how we respond to their plight. The purpose of this section is to try to integrate the best pathways for containing witchcraft accusations. I have explored a few proposals for containing witchcraft accusations. For instance, I have repeatedly argued that witchcraft accusations are mainly a problem of broken relationships that have been primarily occasioned by the squalid conditions these people are living in. Since poverty is an important source of witchcraft accusations we must define poverty and prescribe ways of curbing it. It is only after having analysed poverty and how it affects relationships that we will be able to state what the government, the Church, non-governmental organisations, and community leaders should do to address witchcraft accusations. We should immediately state that poverty is not the sole factor for witchcraft accusations. But poverty creates conditions favouring the development of tensions, the breaking of social cohesion, stress, poor mental judgements, illness, and death in basic communities. These factors in turn play a crucial role in the escalation of witchcraft discourse.
7.5.3.1 What is Poverty?

Poverty has been defined in various ways and with increasing sophistication. But for us poverty is a deficit, a lack. Poor people do not have enough to eat, a place to sleep, no clean water. Their land is poor, there is no water for irrigation, their fields are depleted of all organic materials, the roads are inadequate, and there are no schools for their children (Myers 1999:65). Furthermore, poor people do not have the necessary skills to solve their daily problems. Poor people may not understand what is meant by proper nutrition, the importance of family control or child spacing, how to cultivate their lands, and run small businesses. The effects of poverty in society include humiliation of the poor, making the poor dependent and allowing the rich to act rudeness and indifferently to the poor (Narayan 2000:266). In addition, poverty results from many interlocking factors that confine poor people's experience, especially hunger, a lack of material supply, social insecurity and ridicule by the powerful (Narayan 2000:35-42).

In the communities where this research was conducted the people do not have access to clean water for themselves and their animals, as well as arable land on which to graze their livestock and produce food since the land is of poor quality as it is sloped and highly eroded. There are no irrigation facilities and fertilizes for their lands to enable the inhabitants to cultivate their agricultural products. Resultantly, the average parents cannot provide for their families.

My contention in this study is that poverty is responsible for the lack of social cohesion without which no community can survive. By social cohesion I refer to the connectedness and interrelatedness among individuals and social groups that facilitate collaboration and equitable resource distribution at household, community and state level (Narayan 2000:220). Social cohesion as important to a community as water is important to fish. It enhances social
stability and ease material and psychological stress. At community level social cohesion provides security and a sense of belonging, regulates behaviour, improves social relations, and eliminates misunderstandings and suspicions. Because of the decline of social cohesion in the communities where this study was undertaken, friendliness, neighbourliness and kinship have been seriously affected to the extent that witchcraft accusations are easily made.

As I have argued elsewhere, poverty is responsible for a general feeling of lawlessness and normlessness. When community safety nets are stretched out too thinly and there is insufficient material support to keep the community intact, community cohesion begins to break up and pave the way for opportunism, corruption, looting, and arson. Such communities are often characterised by mistrust, suspicion, fear of the unknown, and slanderous gossip between neighbours (Narayan 2000:226). In the absence of accountability lawlessness degenerates into crime.

But in our description of who should be viewed as poor we should not assume that the poor are merely passive recipients, incomplete human beings that we can make complete and whole by what we offer to them. The attitude of seeing the poor as passive recipients of charitable goods demeans and devaluates the poor who should never be seen as defective or inadequate. Likewise those who intend helping the poor should never see themselves as messiahs. Such an attitude will not help us or those we intend helping because it is snobbish.

The poor are the people who live in a 'cluster of disadvantage' (Chambers 1983:103). Their households are usually poor, they are physically weak, mentally vulnerable, culturally marginalised, politically powerless, and religiously dysfunctional. They are living in 'a poverty trap' (:139). Materially their households have few assets. They have no land, livestock or wealth. Physically the poor are weak and lack strength. They are susceptible to cultural demands such as intimidation and scapegoating. Because of these weaknesses,
they are religiously dysfunctional and societal misfits. They live under fear of spirits, demons, ancestors, and politically dominant groups. They thus need a transformational programme to change their truncated version of reality. Because of these factors, we should study human history, not to find out what went wrong but to discover who they are (:138). Helping the community means allowing it to express its anguish, fears and needs and to chart possible paths for a better future. We also have to attempt to find a way of how to join them in their search for authentic liberation from the debilitating environment.

7.5.3.2 Government's Role in the Containment of Witchcraft Accusations

Elsewhere we have argued that witchcraft accusations are largely occasioned by stress, a state of helplessness, anxiety, and frustration that often take place in a situation of broken relationships and mysterious beliefs. Poverty is usually at the centre of all these problems. To curtail the conflict the government must attend to the questions of material poverty, physical weakness, the social causes of poverty, the mental causes of poverty, and broken social relationships. A heavy-handed approach of legal suppression will merely cause the belief to go underground and operate at an invisible level. The only solution is, therefore, to rather gain the people's confidence and cooperation to help solve their problems.

People need food, shelter, water, and security - in fact an environment that supports life. People need resources like land, money, livestock, water, roads, schools, work, and other necessities of life to lead a stable life. They need an imaginative programme that will infuse their lives and inform their vision with hope. If these things are absent, poverty will be the result. Then distortion of social relationships, stress and anxiety with resultant social conflicts are bound to occur. Economic and political power as well as cultural progress should be restored to the people since people want to be in control of their destiny and
future. Transformative programmes initiated by the government should have these elements built into them.

Bragg’s (cf Myers 1999:95) developmental strategy for transformation is helpful here. He lists nine (9) characteristics of transformation and calls them transformational frontiers:

- Life sustenance, or the meeting of basic human needs.
- Equity, meaning equitable distribution of material goods and opportunities.
- Justice within all social relationships, including equal participation of all.
- Dignity and self-worth in the sense of feeling fully human and knowing humanity is one.
- Freedom from external control, oppression or exploitation; a sense of being liberated from all forms of dehumanisation.
- Participation in nationbuilding for common cause.
- Reciprocity between the powerless and powerful within the community; each has something to learn from the other.
- Cultural fit that respects each individual and treats all people as creative beings.
- Sound policies on health care.

The government can embark on these frontiers through its ministries. Various departments can design responsive programme to address the lot of the people along these lines. We cannot go into detail about each department, but it suffices to say that each programme government departments embark on must be informed by the values stated above.

A governmental developmental programme that measures up to these transformational frontiers, properly managed, would go a long way to curb social violence in the society. At present, economic activities that are life generating are concentrated in the big cities like such
as Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, and Durban. Developmental initiatives are done around urban or sub-urban areas and there is virtually nothing being planned for the large percentage of South Africans living in the rural areas. There are, therefore, very few attempts on the part of the government to meet basic human needs in these areas. There is no equitable distribution of material goods and economic opportunities. Education provided to the rural children is still backward, often provided by unqualified teachers with a very low morale. There are no effective in service training programmes for these teachers. Teachers are poorly trained and mentally unprepared to really assist rural children to develop meaningfully, while there is a lack of facilities to create conducive conditions for authentic education.

People in the rural areas are desperate to be given justice and freedom. In having to share the resources of the country reciprocity between city dwellers and poor rural people, is not maintained. The government has yet to create an enabling environment for people to exercise its collective interiorised sense of self-hatred. Large sums of money are needed to drive the projects to address these debilitating conditions. Where the government will get the money from is another question. But the issue is whether the government is aware of these problems and is determined to address them. Government’s understanding of these issues and its commitment to address them will inform the kind of programmes and projects it will put in place. The following programmes may be undertaken by various government departments to address the carnage.

7.5.3.3 The Department of Education, Sport and Culture

A healthy relationship with ones fellow human beings is important in every community. This is an important transformational factor. Many people in the country have suffered from the disempowerment resulting from the apartheid system which told them lies about themselves.
The quality of relationships within communities and between their members can be brought about by a well-planned educational system.

In addition to the effects of the apartheid system, is the world-view of black people that legitimizes jealousy and reinforced hostility among the people. For example, in the zombie context, the oppressive dimension of belief is that a successful farmer uses zombies to plough for him/her in the night. Healing the divide between people occasioned by religious beliefs is critical to long-term change. This means that the people need to recover what is making them poor and miserable. Long-term educational programmes that are transformative and compulsory to all learners should include the following competences and be introduced by the department to address the problem:

- Knowledge of and respect for people’s basic rights to hold different views, values and beliefs.
- A comprehensive understanding of human relationships and co-existence.
- Functions of religion and myths in their lives, communities and other people. They should be enabled through learning, to relate better to others. Building healthy relationships with others, developing values that enhance interpersonal relationships, honestly, responsibility, and accountability should be embedded in the programmes.
- Holistic educational programmes that include character formation, a better self-image, and improved family and community relationships.
- Developing lifeskills in the techniques of problem solving and serving others.
- Demonstrating the role and function of religion in promoting and discouraging conflicts in society.
- Identifying and solving problems by using critical and creative thinking.
- Religion and state. Religious governance and political ethos.
- Correcting and resolving religio-economic disputes and conflicts.
The department should introduce compulsory education up to grade twelve that includes the areas mentioned above. Compulsory education is extremely expensive but its effects may go a long way to create a community that is at peace with itself. Authentic development can only take place effectively in a society that has peaceful relationships among its members.

Adult education could be introduced that will aim at changing existing world-views. Changing a person’s world-view is not easy. It means changing beliefs, values and orientations and involves changing a people’s entire life so that the community adopts a new way of life. Destructive elements within a culture should be removed and replaced by ones that empower and transform the community. Religious Education programmes on social conflict and management could be introduced at an early stage. If properly managed they contribute significantly in their formative function and moulding of relational consistence.

Changing world-views begins with listening to and learning from the agent of change. As we have argued in this study, the anti-life conflicts of witchcraft accusations have causes that are not always visible. Listening and learning that are based on good societal research are prerequisites for change. The use of force may not be a solution but may merely exerbate the problem. This means that we need educational programmes informed by authentic research undertakings. Such education should be evaluated, while its methods should constantly be reviewed. Its objectives and aims should be a direct response to real community needs. An Africanist approach rather than a Western approach to education must be introduced. The African child must discover his/her environment and experiences in that education. Learning should address the Africans’ aspirations and capture their imagination.

Compulsory education for learners and adult education should also involve economics. People should be taught how the economy of the country works and what their role is in the creation of wealth for the country. All people should be taught how to participate (together
with the rich) in the development of their country. They must be taught to reclaim, own and develop their country. Such education will reorient people and provide a sense of belonging to them.

Similarly, education should strive for more than intellectual learning. It must aim at creating a critical consciousness of societal structures and their contradictions on the process of holistic co-existence. It must stimulate social participation for total liberation from oppressive conditions (Handa 1984:16).

7.5.3.4 Safety and Security

Law-enforcement agents should, in the first place, learn the basic principle that safety and security is not dependent on them. It is a negative and unproductive view for law-enforcing agents to think that the community has nothing to offer to their safety and security. The community’s understanding of safety and security that include physical, mental, social, and religious sustainability is the ideal for which law-enforcement agents should serve and not their own understanding (Myers 1999:126). The transformational development must enlist the cooperation of those it is intended to benefit. Too often law-enforcement agents are seen as an impediment to development and security. They have separated themselves from the rest of the community and have adopted a top-bottom approach.

The correct dimension of safety and security includes basics such as life, food, water, health, and an environment conducive to conducting their business. This means a sustainable agricultural environment where people have land to plough and graze their livestock, an adequate water supply and manageable healthcare so that they may utilise their local indigenous knowledge without any external threat. To be able to operate in this environment law-enforcement agents should fully understand these basic needs. They must treat the
people they serve with the dignity they deserve and also restore their psychological well-being where it was interfered with. Community policing should develop from the bottom of the society to the top and not the other way round. Change never percolates to the bottom but when it starts from the bottom it is invariably felt at the top (Handa 1984:16-17).

McKeating (1970:79) has argued that one of the common ways for a person of coming to terms with his/her problems is by retreating into fantasy. People take flight into a world of imagination where the facts are different and problems do not exist. The Department of Education can take advantage of this philosophy and introduce in structures that would take care of the emotions that may generate conflicts. When people are watching a football or rugby match or in fact any game they are taking a mental holiday that prevents them from preoccupation by evil. Films, television, radio, and other forms of entertainment help people to escape having to face the real world by taking them into the world of fantasy for a while. They may even find it hard to return to their world again. Forms of entertainment such as sport, films, television programmes, and even work effectively transport people, in their imagination, into situations remote from their normal ones, and allow them to redefine their character.

The provision by the Department of Education of various kinds of sport, entertainment and recreational centres to the witchcraft infected communities will go a long way to contain the problem. Through sport and other forms of entertainment pent-up emotions may be released. To yell support for a local football team playing against a foreign one cements relations of the local community since sport is a kind of ritualised combat that provides relief for aggressive instincts (McKeating 1970:81). Sport helps to maintain the health of society by getting rid of harmful and dangerous emotions and tensions.
The Department of Education can also introduce dramas in the local community for the same reason. A good drama invites people into the world of the imagination - away from idling and brewing evil. Through drama people may be made to see their real problems clearly - especially as it is designed to depict problems menacing them. By putting themselves in the shoes of the characters in the play they learn something about their own lives. They feel with the characters. They feel sorry for them and understand why they act as they are doing. And in understanding them they understand themselves better.

In some plays characters can act out their own concerns, their phobias, their dilemma, their understanding and grasp of what life is about (McKeating 1970:89). In a play the actor can respond to the audience and the audience to him/her. Laughing together as an audience eliminates friction between them. Good drama carries its own conviction and thus be used in an educational tool.

7.5.3.5 The Role of the Church

Earlier on I have sounded a warning about the role the Church can play in the containment of violence orchestrated by a belief in witchcraft. Just social systems and political activism had not been squarely placed on the developmental agenda of the Church. In some circles public involvement is deemed 'too political' or 'this world otherness' while the inclusion of a radical transformational agenda can easily be branded Marxist and anti-Christ. On the other hand seeing things from below, from the side of the down-trodden, and being creative sources of transformation do not always occupy the centre of the agenda of the Church. Furthermore, the poor sometimes tend to be treated somewhat romantically. Strangely enough, there is no room for the contribution of the poor in the church agenda and it may, therefore, be concluded that the church serves its own agenda. Where the church gets involved in the plight of the poor, it plays the role of a messiah (Myers 1999:126).
Furthermore, the Church can wittingly or unwittingly play the role of a distraction, or worse, an impediment to genuine holistic transformation. The Church operates from a particular stance of faith and it can expect those whom it serves to embrace its faith before they can be served as fellow human beings. It may sometimes be required that the Church gets redeemed before it does its work. The Church must be purged from any involvement in racism - especially in South Africa - where it is just emerging from the bonds of legalised racism. The church is still painfully divided in South Africa with whites closing their church buildings to blacks on Sundays (Edwards Jr 1996:13). In a divided church very little can be achieved to assist the poor who are outside the church.

But the transformational developmental process initiated by the Church can meaningfully contribute towards containing social violence. The role of the Church in transformational development is that of a servant and a source of encouragement. Through its role as a servant of the Lord the Church can make the hostile world of the victims more habitable. The Church can only lead through the service it is rendering to the community. The role of the Church in the building of relationships can only be meaningful if its members radiate with justice, peace, reconciliation, and are continually nourishing and sustaining its people (Myers 1999:127).

The role of the Church can also be demonstrated as a source formation within the community. Church members can be an inspiration to people trapped in witchcraft accusation through their radiant life of hope and faith. Moreover the Church can serve as a sign of the values of the life to come (Myers 1999:127) and, therefore, bring peace into society. It must be a source of value formation within a community. The Church can act as a catalyst of justice, peace and hope. A Christian presence in a community can enhance the process of changing a destructive world-view to one that cares for human beings. The Church does not and should not exist for herself. She is not an inward-looking community.
but an outward movement with a purpose (Uzukwu 1996:153). She exists to give life to others - the life of the Kingdom should spread through her witness. She must inject love and hope into the heavily laden, especially into the victims of witchcraft in this world.

7.5.3.6 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)

The community knows their survival strategies. They have well established patterns for making sense out of their world and staying alive in it (Myers 1999:141). It is only in disastrous situations that they become dislocated and are unable to cope and survive. Understanding existing survival strategies is critical to any attempt to help them in times of disaster. It is important for those who assist the community from outside to see the world the way the community sees it. The existing community’s survival strategies reveal the community’s strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, resources, skills, and knowledge. These qualities can serve as bridges to build upon for further knowledge and assistance by Non Governmental Organisations. Waal (in Myers 1999:131) argues that social sustainability must include establishing the development of local organisations with a social agenda. People have, Waal argues, a need to develop a sense that, as part of a larger whole, they have rights which they should insist on. They have the right to expect that other people should respect their point of view. If this is ignored any help to them creates a feeling of dependency and helplessness and will not work.

Social coexistence has come to include a concern for building a civil society. A civil society refers to a non-profit voluntary group or associations that focus on development, environmental care, service, self-help, and church associations (Weaver 1997:208). A civil society is supposed to work for social good (:208). Social systems that may work against the very society need to be checked and evaluated. It is only where civil societies are working effectively that evil such as witchcraft accusations can be curtailed.
Evans-Pritchard concludes that witchcraft beliefs serve a useful purposes in restoring equilibrium in the community and strengthening kinship ties against enemies (Parrinder 1963:205). But as an illusory belief witchcraft has become a second rate faith. Although the belief may resolve certain conflicts or problems the solutions it brings about are never good solutions. They merely become building blocks for future problems. The aggression invited by witchcraft accusations is as harmful as anything a society can produce in the way of disruptive practices. Nadel (cf Parrinder 1963:205-206) concludes that witchcraft accusations are the kind of remedy that becomes a drug and poisons the system it wants to remedy. Where witchcraft accusations serve like a safety valve the same safety valve becomes unsafe to the extent that it serves no purpose.

In this section we have argued that governmental laws have not been able to curtail the destructive elements of witchcraft primarily because they have not received public consent. But it would be irresponsible to appeal for their repeal because imperfect as they may appear they protect many innocent lives. A balance must rather be found between their retention and replacement.

Education, we have argued, is certainly needed for the containment of witchcraft accusations. Knowledge of the process by which witchcraft accusations develop and an understanding of the soil in which it flourishes are necessary because that understanding will guide the process of remedying the problem. But we have conceded that education alone cannot wipe out the accusations.

Refined medical services will do much to reduce the stress placed on the community by witchcraft accusations. But even a good medical service will not wipe out the problem
because disease abounds in Africa and it may always be attributed to witches. Death itself is also problematic in Africa because it occurs frequently and more often than not it is ascribed to witches. Even with widespread educational and health programmes there may still be cases that demand scapegoats. Better economic and agricultural conditions will help addressing the problem, but they too may not remove the family squabbles that often lead to witchcraft accusations.

The role of the Church in South Africa has been abused. But the role of the Church as it responds to its faith in God can offer a better faith than can witchcraft. Religion based on perfect love and good morals will help people adapt themselves to the strain of modern life and can thus aid in addressing the problem.

A transformational developmental approach undersigned by all governmental departments and non-governmental organisations that is informed by the principle of a holistic character formation and the restoration of family relationships on a sustained basis will effectively address the witchcraft conflict. This process may include the following six elements, as suggested by Myers (1999):

- Walking with the poor.
- A change in world-view on life, death, poverty, justice, and consistency.
- A development of life based on hope in the future for everyone.
- A vocation of service, encompassing community, leadership and solidarity.
- A new ethical dimension to life, both private and public.
- A holistic development that includes character formation, a better self-image and improved community relationships.
Finally, true and lasting transformation occurs only when people discover one another and live in warm and peaceful relationships. For that to happen, life sustaining resources should be distributed justly. All members of the society should work for a common purpose in the spirit of shared vision and values.
ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The peaceful transition from apartheid to a democratic order is often referred to as the South African miracle and Madiba (Mandela’s praise name) magic. Many countries in the world admire the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work where political crimes are treated under the terms of amnesty and reconciliation.

2. Mandela’s magic is a coinage that refers to Nelson Mandela’s ability to manage conflicts and produce the desired results.

3. Empiricism is a school of thought that bases its knowledge on observation or the senses, not on theory. Anything that does not comply with scientific rules is left out of account.

4. Rationalism is a practice of testing all religious beliefs and knowledge by reason and logic.
CHAPTER EIGHT

8. COURAGE, COMMITMENT, CONSTRUCTION

Study without thought is useless. Thought without learning is dangerous (Confucius The Analects).

8.1 Findings and Conclusions

The central argument of this study has been the tenacity of African religious beliefs and their impact on social relations and societal cohesion. The unequal distribution of wealth and the indomitable hold of poverty on the rural communities of black South Africans have debilitating effects on the social order. These conditions play a major role in the creation, promotion and escalation of witchcraft accusations and their resultant killings. A clear grasp of the conditions and the extent to which they shape social relations by political leaders and policy makers are crucial for the containment of the problem.

My conclusion is that South Africans must begin to courageously change and transform their destructive social structures. The courage and commitment of the renewed society should become a construction drive in all spheres of life. To change the fabric of society from hatred to coexistence seems to be the cornerstone for the construction of a healthy and humane society.

Because of the cruelty and misery which witchcraft accusations cause the already overburdened poor people of the rural provinces of South Africa urgent attention is needed to save these people. Witchcraft accusations are not diminishing despite all governmental efforts to contain them. As I have argued elsewhere, at the centre of witchcraft accusations
there are jealousy, hatred, vindictiveness, and the aspiration to gain prestige through the use of magic (Larison 1989:135). The fear that one is being victimised as either an accused or bewitched is very really even today. To counter this supposed danger a large number of resources have be put into such efforts. The relevance of the study is clearly apparent when one considers the paralysing helplessness stakeholders such as the government and churches have against the carnage.

This last chapter highlights ten findings that have emerged from the content and analysis of the preceding seven chapters. Whether the subject matter of a particular chapter was a historical survey, methodological consideration, African world-view, witchcraft cases or recommendations for the way forward, the process did not start with a presumed set of answers - the answers emerged as the findings were being analysed.

Because the subject of witchcraft is so wide and complex I had to use other sociological theoretical approaches to cover as wide a field as possible. The incorporation of so many diverse theoretical approaches into the study would present a better interpretative and analytical explanation of the causes, effects and containment of witchcraft accusations. To that extent the following theoretical approaches were used as instruments to unravel the problem: the Marxist conflict theory, functionalist theory, symbolic interaction, and structuralism theory. The study was thus embarked upon by using existing sociological and anthropological theories to develop a theory suitable for generating the findings capable of shedding light on and providing solutions for the phenomenon of witchcraft. Nevertheless, a scientific approach to the study remained the focal point of the researcher.
8.1.1 Witchcraft is as old as humankind

Witchcraft beliefs are found in almost all communities inhabiting the planet earth. It is an evil that assumes different colours and names in different nations. All the nations of the world have their own forms of disputes and conflicts that arise from soured religious, political, economic, and social relations. Every community names it according to its frame of reference. Africans are generally still using the witchcraft discourse to address their problems. Religious rivalry and the tendency to blame religious opponents as agent of Satan are still found in the mainstream Churches from the West. The Catholic and Protestant wars in Northern Ireland are still ranging despite all efforts to create peace while the production of modern arms of mass destruction, the cold war between the West and the East, religious fanaticism and suicidal bombings, and many other international as well as national conflicts all have the same root as witchcraft conflicts in South Africa. Africans are in no way exceptional. They prefer to blame social evils on their enemies through witchcraft scapegoating.

The soured relations are often accompanied by mysterious natural phenomena like death, incurable disease and social crises occasioned among others by political and prolonged poverty. Humans are always trying to find solutions to their problems. Their ideological and religious grid guides them in their search for solutions. Religious convictions, mythological frames of reference, political uncertainty, social anxiety and psychological needs, and frustration often play a leading role in shaping their path in finding answers to their problems. Human attempts to cope with the challenges posed by life can be traced to ancient times. In biblical times the Israelites had to content with the same problems. The European witchcraft crazy reaffirms the fragility of humankind when it comes to coping with social relations and harmony. Religious, political and economic factors are dominant when it comes to escalations in witchcraft accusations.
One of the issues that immediately emerged as the study progressed was the desire for scapegoating among African people. Although the issue of scapegoating underscores witchcraft accusations as universal phenomena it is not limited to South Africa or Africa. All societies suffer from neuroses as do individuals (Parrinder 1963:202). To clear itself from guilt societies look about for scapegoats to blame for their own faults. Parrinder and Girard found that during the Middle Ages the Jews, and later the ‘witches’, were the scapegoats as ‘witches’ are in the present South Africa. In the twentieth century, the Nazis blamed the German defeat in the Second World War on the Jews and butchered them with barbarity (Parrinder 1963:202). All these are comparable to witch-hunting. Similar practices were found in America during the Civil War and in Russia through the tyranny of the secret police (203).

Witch-hunts still take place in all societies inhabiting the earth. They may be flourishing under different names. Social and racial conflicts abound, but in other countries there are developed techniques to handle them. The central conclusion of this study is that witchcraft accusations are found in all nations though under different guises, sometimes as the tyranny of men over women, the vengefulness of rivals, the hostility to strangers, the oppression of the weak and old, or as the lowering of morality and kindness.

The witchcraft discourse is fuelled by religious myth, gossip, slander, rumour, hearsay, suspicion, and the likes. It is self-perpetuating, foolhardy and aggressive to any opposing point of view. Fear, intolerance, superstition, and xenophobia are its vehicles. A rumour about witchcraft is easily started, spread and shared on both private and public level while the blame is always put on the victims or scapegoats. The common triggers of witchcraft accusations include the following:
Undue Accumulation of Wealth and Rapid Social Rise

According to Marwick (1965:247) this is so because one of the effects of social change is to bring new values and norms into conflict with existing ones. Another is the creation of new relationships and the fundamental modification of old ones. The social rise of an individual often opens up a sluice gate of envy, jealousy, rivalry, hatred, misunderstanding, stress, and vengeance. Once the sluice gates are opened, the stream that comes from them will most likely take on the form of witchcraft accusations.

New Bones of Contention

Most contestations that lead to witchcraft accusation in the Northern Province are found in competition, quarrels or rivalries that preceded them. Such objects of competition include issues such as the failure to discharge obligations towards kinsmen, adultery, sexual jealousy, political rivalry, and stress and strain caused by social relationships.

Many nations of the world still cling to the belief that life is rooted in antiquity and is full of mystery. Where these religious beliefs are not fading away the concept of scapegoating is hard to disappear. Parrinder (1963:202) observes that when societies are threatened by a social crisis fear and superstition develop. To clear itself from guilt societies look for scapegoats to blame for its faults. Where witch-hunts are suppressed under one name they merely re-emerge under another. In Africa and especially in the developing countries, the diseases of societies are aggravated by modern social and economic crises. Such societies are thus subjected to the growth of fear, superstition, the suppression of different views, and totalitarianism. Social and racial conflicts abound and are often resolved by applying witchcraft discourse.
8.1.2 Witchcraft Accusations – A Relational Problem

In summing up the social context in which witchcraft flourishes I have identified the following four points:

- Witch persecution is a reaction to disaster
- Witch persecution is a weapon of confessional conflict
- Witch persecution serves social and psychological needs
- Witch persecution is used to maintain social equilibrium

In this study I have looked at the relationships of people who were accused of witchcraft on the one hand and those who accused them on the other. Among the chief triggers of the accusations are factors like reaction to natural disasters, confessional conflict, social and psychological needs, and the maintenance of the social equilibrium.

The prolonged existence of these conditions leads to chronic frustration that in turn breeds aggression that subsumes a vast array of activities that may lead to violence. Because of generally unfavourable conditions the frustration-aggression tends to cause irrational behaviour like blaming one's failure on others. The inhabitants of the Northern Province usually vent it under the guise of religious beliefs in supernatural forces. In other words, where people cannot manage their frustration-aggression they replace their rational capabilities with mystical means.

When relationships between people living close together fail to hold, frustration-aggression sets in. In such a situation witchcraft accusations become a useful guise under which to address the frustration that was caused by the heterogeneity that is responsible for failed relationships. Witchcraft accusations and their resultant arbitrary kangaroo trials remain a
convenient device to deal with ones enemy without having to account to the community for ones actions. Accusations remain an acceptable excuse to the community for hurting ones neighbour whom one could not otherwise have hurt.

8.1.3 Eclectic Use of Elements

The study is a religious enquiry. Two Religious Studies and Anthropological approaches, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, are adopted but because of the limitations of the approaches and the fact that witchcraft is such a wide, complex and multifaceted phenomenon the two approaches could not adequately fathom and explain the intricacies of the phenomenon. The implementation of the eclectic use of elements appeared broad enough to analyse the problem. Various social theories were blended and synthesised to produce analyses that could provide a fertile ground for further research and debates on the topic.

These strings of theories were juxtaposed to provide a lens through which witchcraft accusations could be studied. The approach provided the benefit of looking at the phenomenon from a variety of theories like projectionism, instrumentalism, scapegoatism, neo-Marxism, interactionism, and many others. The synergy derived from the eclectic use of elements has been employed to reflect on the suggestions and way forward in the chapter on the containment of witchcraft accusations.

8.1.4 Colonial and Missionary Order

The anti-witchcraft laws applied in Europe did not find a niche in South Africa. The result was the introduction of irrelevant laws about witchcraft. The existence of witchcraft was denied on the one hand and yet its existence affirmed on the other. Laws made provisions
that denied the existence of witchcraft and in the same vein punished those who practised it. Colonial laws did not offer solutions to the problem but merely compounded it.

Moreover, colonial and missionary attacks on the office of the chief and traditional healer compounded the problem. The right of conquest both politically and religiously did not auger well for the containment of witchcraft but caused it to go underground. In their response to the situation of suppression of all African values the youth of the 1990s - usually known as the comrades - went amok. In their search for their national identity they used the same belief that was negated by the colonial and missionary masters to liberate themselves. The lesson that may be learnt from colonial and missionary actions is that no religious belief should ever be suppressed because it will explode in the faces of those who try to suppress it.

8.1.5 African World-view and Witchcraft

Black South Africans are mainly religious people. Religion in these communities is a pivotal rock by which everything mysterious is explained. The tribal songs and folktales express the religious orientations that embed their religious consciousness. There is a belief in God, the ancestors and nature spirits who are believed to be responsible for bringing evil upon human beings. There is also the belief in witches who, out of mere malice, may bring evil to people. The first category of evil could be remedied by humans correcting their conduct before supernatural forces intervene. But in the second category the perpetrators are inexcusable. They have no right to do what they are allegedly doing.

In both instances a traditional diviner (ngaka) plays an important role in determining who is responsible for the evil. The role played by the traditional healer is crucial in the lives of the people. He/she is a priest interceding for the members of his/her community, predicting
the future, providing health care and prosperity for the community, and advising the chief on all matters of common interest.

But the role played by the diviners is sometimes more controversial and decisive than it should be. The divination in witchcraft cases is extremely subjective and cannot be trusted at all. Apart from the fact that the whole practice is mystical and cannot stand any empirical scientific testing it is always done by someone with the same stock in trade with those he/she is supposed to sneak out. The whole process favours the one who drives it because his/her verdict is seldom challenged. The diviner has the first and the last word in the matter. In many cases the diviner should validate the suspicion and the expectations of the complainants as there is no system of control, objectivity and fair play. The accused is found guilty before the divination process even starts because the victim’s guilt is sought in his/her relations with those who accuse him/her. The divination process is there merely to ratify the perceptions that were existing before.

Matters are complicated by the problem of being and causality in Africa as well. In most African communities nothing happens by chance or natural laws. The world is perceived as animated with spirits endowed with powers that could be tapped by those skilled in magical art. Causal relations are thus explained and understood within the framework of supernatural powers and in the evil intentions of the witches. Supernatural events are mostly explained through mysterious events. Diviners and witches are the only people privileged to unlock the secrets of these mysteries.

8.1.6 Witchcraft is Gender Biased

African societies are largely patriarchal. They are ruled and controlled exclusively by men while women are expected to be perpetual minors. Accusing women of witchcraft often
reveals this bias because witchcraft accusations are usually aimed at the weak, powerless and poor of the society. The tensions that normally exist between husbands and their wives are also accountable for this bias. The contestations between male and female folks for control of the central stage of power explain the carnage. The situation is further compounded by the universal misogyny (hate and fear of women). In most African societies misogyny is expressed in proverbs. In these proverbs women are projected in derogatory terms. They lack sound judgement and are labelled the weaker sex. In tribal lessons given to young men women are often cited as example of failures.

Black women are thrice oppressed in South Africa. They are oppressed by the colonial system of apartheid, by the social system of patriarchy and by themselves in that they hate themselves and one another. Because of this triple oppression black women are highly susceptible to witchcraft accusations. They also occupy strategic positions in the family that render them more vulnerable. Their role of childbearing and being the first in the defence line for the survival of their children make them to appear as insignificant to their husbands because of the demands they make on their irresponsible husbands. The wives' insistence on the welfare of their children is often seen as nagging by the husbands. In addition, in the case where a man becomes sexually impotent the first suspect is his wife. She may be accused for the condition of her husband because she wants to create an excuse for going out with other men. A useful and convenient way of counteracting their demands and their otherness is to label them witches. Witchcraft accusations can be used as an instrument for maintaining the equilibrium between husband and wife.

Menstruation makes them different and strange to men as well. The fact that their bodies function differently from those of men makes them different and susceptible to suspicion. In Chapter Three we have discussed the myth of difference and how it promotes scapegoating.
8.1.7 How Witchcraft Accusations Escalate

The discussions in Chapter Seven are from the findings of fieldwork research in five villages in the Northern Province. The findings indicate that witchcraft accusations are hard to disappear and are self-generating and self-perpetuating. They brook no dialogue or opposition. They are easy to believe and transport but hard to stop and eliminate. Witchcraft gossips or rumours spread easily and fast among people believing in them and flourish where relationships have soured and broken down.

In our findings we also noted that witchcraft accusations can operate in the society independently from social institutions. Social institutions such as traditional healers, political organisations, churches, and legal institutions may also be part of its mobilising agents, directly or indirectly. Existential problems like illness, death and all kinds of misfortune may trigger its trail of destruction. Relationships are crucial in every community while the failure to maintain healthy relationships can lead to serious conflict and misery as shown in the chapter.

Witchcraft accusations usually point to something not right between the accuser and the accused. They normally occur among people closely related and symbolise the terror of closeness. Close knit families face the danger of witchcraft rupture and disintegration. Once witchcraft accusation erupts, the trauma of accusation leaves in its trail untold suffering to its victims. It has ripple effects starting from the nucleus of a family to spread to the public arena. Once it becomes rampant and attracts public support logic stops existing and anarchy becomes the order of the day.
8.1.7.1 Preliminary Stages in Witchcraft Accusations

The belief in witchcraft holds its ground very firmly, and of all mysterious beliefs it will probably be the last to die out. It has a definite role to play among the people who believe in its existence. Its accusations and persecutions know no boundaries and any person may fall victim to its seditious attacks. In every instance in which an attack is orchestrated there are preliminary stages before the grand plan is executed. These include the formation stage that includes a real cause of tension among the kins, gossip, naming of the victim, organising public support, annihilation of opposition, conviction of the victim, and finally the execution. These stages are crucial in order to prepare both the ground and the community for action.

8.1.7.2 The Preparatory Stage

First, there must be a real problem in the community that causes tension. It could be illness, mysterious death, starvation, or anything that causes discomfort. In the preparatory stage a victim causing the supposed evil in the community or institution is identified and labelled. The victim is normally blamed for all the tensions among the people as well as the social crisis the family or community is passing through and in that way he or she is made a scapegoat. Once a victim is identified, a rumour is started where the community support is enlisted and libellous messages are spread about the victim. The purpose of these rumours is to destroy any form of trust, sympathy and regard the community may have for the victim. Revulsive things are usually said about the victim in order to convince the community that the victim deserves inhumane treatment because of his/her supposed outrageous and anti social behaviour. Rumours, slanderous messages, gossip, and witchcraft instances associated with a particular individual(s) are spread in the community. Once the persecutors are convinced that the community is in full agreement that the victim needs a form of censorship they move in to attack the victim. The attack stage is preceded by the annihilation of any
opposition or counterattack that may come from the community and constitutes the next stage. The witch-hunters organise themselves in a form of a mafia that sow destruction in its path. Terror and instilling of fear in the community are their potent weapons and annihilation of the opposition and totalitarian rule their supreme goal.

8.1.7.3 Rumour Stage

As soon as the victim is identified and the problem he/she is blamed for is clear to some people he/she is named. A gossip is spread through all community channels to make people aware of the supposed public enemy. All sorts of ills and evil deeds will be blamed on him/her in terms of the conspiracy plan the accusers have in mind. The intentions of the rumour-mongers are usually well orchestrated and designed to injure their victim. Their victim has to be demonised and labelled as a 'witch' - a public enemy number one. He/she must be branded as a person who is a threat to all 'salvation' the community must enjoy. The named witch is presented like a raging toothache for which the only remedy is to have it removed. The removal or destruction of such a person is presented as salvation to the community.

8.1.7.4 Attack Stage

Once the persecutors are convinced that the community has internalised their lie and are in agreement with them they attack their victim. Normally a meeting where actions against the victim are to be designed is convened. At such a meeting a delegation to consult an authority on their 'suspicion of witch' is chosen and a renowned diviner is usually consulted. Because the accusers have already made up their minds who the 'witch' is the authoritative person is guided to sniff out the witch they have in mind. This is the second proof acquired to convince those who might still be in doubt after the preparatory stage. The consultant must
bear the marks of being a renowned diviner in the community. Sometimes the consultant is chosen from a distant village to give the process some credence but in the majority of the case the diviner will try his/her best to confirm the suspect the accusers have in mind.

As soon as the authentication of the supposed witch is received, a parade is arranged where the name of the witch would be is announced so that the person can be burnt or banished from the community. If the victim has property, his/her property will be looted before the hut is set alight. The report back from the person who authenticated their suspicion is a mere formality because the action has been decided upon in advance. Normally the attack stage includes the looting of the property of the victim. The motive for the looting of the property of the victim is disguised. After the looting of the property it is burnt to disguise the intention of looting. The victim is either killed or banished from the community to justify the outrage the community has against him/her.

8.1.7.5 Reconciliation

Once witchcraft accusations are carried to their logical conclusion reconciliation becomes impossible. The two parties would insist on such high demands that they would be impossible to attain. If the life of a person was lost in the process the party would demand that their loved one be returned to life before reconciliation can take place. If the property was destroyed the aggrieved party would demand his/her property back before anything could be done. Prevention is thus always better than cure in witchcraft instances.

8.1.8 Witchcraft Accusations and Poverty

Poverty is part of the social setting in which witchcraft accusations mostly flourish. Poverty is painful and frustrating as people who live in abject poverty feel helpless, humiliated and
have no options to get out of their condition. Poverty is multi-dimensional as well. The bottom line of poverty is hunger and, therefore, lack of energy and power of judgement. Its consequences are voicelessness, dependency, being the victim of circumstances, shame, humiliation, and the tendency to rely on mystical forces for help. Poverty engenders poor health, incurable diseases, squalor conditions, disintegration of community norms, and religious and social fanaticism. In South Africa these conditions have led to a worsening of social relations and the disappearance of social cohesion.

It remains the state’s responsibility to address the conditions of its citizens in the country. In South Africa, colonial legacy is the concentration of wealth in the big cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria. Although it would be desirable to balance the flow and distribution be an enormous task for the government. But a solution must be found to this problem.

8.1.9 Transformative Agenda

Any measures suggested to combat witchcraft accusations and their resultant conflicts would not be found unless they are premised on reliable analyses and grounded in authentic theoretical findings. Insight into factors causing the carnage and how it has escalated is a prerequisite for any strategy to combat it.

Poverty is at the centre of the problem. Unless poverty is addressed and eliminated the chances of success in the containment of the conflict are minimal. Poverty is responsible for many miseries that lead to a lack of social cohesion. Social cohesion enhances stability and security in any given community especially communities without resources for their sustenance. Thus any transformational path that addresses the containment of witchcraft accusations must be directed at meeting basic human needs. Life sustenance programmes
are building blocks against anarchy caused by the witchcraft plague. A broad knowledge and skills of interpersonal and social relations are prerequisites to co-existence.

8.1.10 Self-hatred and Something to Hate

Witchcraft accusations are linked to the human sense of feelings of guilt and chronic inadequacy. From time to time most people suffer from feelings of inadequacy that in turn develop into anxiety, frustration and feelings of guilt within them (McKeating 1970:11). A feeling of guilt and, therefore, of discomfort befalls a person when he/she feels that he/she has done something wrong or omitted to do something. These feelings of discomfort originate from other people’s approval or disapproval. According to McKeating (1970:12), a human being’s inherent desire is to serve the interests of other people and in turn get their approval. But when this is untenable a feeling of guilt ensues. This discomfort builds tensions, self-hatred, self-disapproval, and concentrated anxieties and if these are not properly handled they can lead to a complicated situation. This frustrating situation saps emotional energy in its victims and destroys their self-confidence. A massive sense of failure is particularly common among people who are trapped in social crises. Caught up in this type of discomfort an individual seeks to get rid of it. In his/her efforts to get rid of it a route of scapegoating may be preferred in that particular search.

Societies are also suffering from feelings of discomfort or guilt. During the apartheid struggle in South Africa black societies experienced an intense emotion of failure and suffering. They became disillusioned about their capacity to free themselves and solve their own problems. They had a passionate desire for freedom and yet freedom was not forthcoming. The concentrated anger, hatred and prejudice escalated. The evil power of apartheid rendered their capacity to reason destructive. In St Paul’s words in Rm 7; ‘The good that they wanted to do, they do not. The evil they did not want was what they did’. 
This situation is prevalent in many communities going through a crisis. The nightmare that befell black people was too big for them, too frustrating and complicated to cope with and it occasioned a real social crisis. This played on their imaginations so that they projected their inadequencies on a scapegoat. A scapegoat was identified by its different behaviour or characteristics that fit the occasions. The feeling of hatred made them feel threatened. Their life was full of dreams, fairy tales and myths. Thus, life associated with the tyranny of apartheid caused its subjects to live under a threat. Modern life is also compounding already overloaded societies with unknown and uncontrollable forces. Although there are numerous outlets for these frustrating conditions such as art, drama and folktales there are less pleasant methods of expressing them that make life unbearable to others. The society may then look for someone to blame (McKeating 1970:57) and project its anxieties and frustrations onto someone else, blaming him/her for its failures, its inadequacies, the things that went wrong. This type of response to problems sees everything as a plot - witchcraft.

Naturally human beings want to do something, love something, hope for something, and laugh about something. But if all positive things human beings can do are hard to find people would hate something. Every disliked happening is ascribed to the Red Menace or the Devil. This demonstrates the human desire for happiness, something to do, something to love and something to hope for. But failure to experience positive things evokes hatred, frustrations, disappointments, and looking for someone or something to blame.

This phenomenon is universal as we have argued earlier. The Roman Catholics practised it against the Protestants during the Counter Reformation, using the horror of heresy while and the communists exercised it against ‘counter-revolutionaries’, using the notion of conspiracy and the Church had it from the Bible which insists on total hatred of all who tempt the believers to turn away from God.
Human beings are a ready prey to this device because it is congenial to blame someone or something else for their failures and inadequacies, and to project their feelings of guilt onto others. Furthermore, human beings do this in order to establish their own identity. According to McKeating (1970:58), people establish their identity and define it by drawing a line between those who belong and those who do not; by pointing out clearly defined differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Human beings need to despise others in order to be. Society identifies the forces of evil with some group of their fellows that may be relatively easy to pinpoint and define.

In close families and relatives the sense of guilt and failure raises problems within human relationships. All human beings have qualities which irritate others. The consequence of that is conflict because where there is no conflict there is genuine encounter and harmony. Although people may manage to avoid disharmony, and overcome conflict, for people living together for the whole time - especially in trying conditions that may not always be achieved. Healthy family life is only possible if there is hard work to achieve it or an attitude of continuing sustained forgiveness. When the centre can no longer hold there is rupture.

As we have argued in the last chapter, for the community to live harmoniously in some transformed relationships individuals in that community must learn to manage their feelings of guilt and inadequacy. It cannot be done by disguising them or minimizing them. True harmony comes through acceptance and forgiveness. Acceptance and forgiveness do not pretend that the offence has never happened but it accepts the offence as a fact and refuses to allow it to ruin the relationships.

Genuine acceptance and forgiveness do not attempt to change the personality of the offender but rather understand and accommodate him or her. But what is important to the offender is to learn to forgive him/herself (McKeating 1970:73). A person has to accept his/her guilt
and failure and come to terms with them. One should acknowledge ones failures and weaknesses but still accept oneself and retain ones self-respect.

The Scope of the Study of the Witchcraft Phenomenon

This study is not exhaustive about the discourse of witchcraft accusations. There are still some areas that need further careful investigation so that their psychological effects on the society can adequately be taken into account. Too little or no attention has been paid to the following (1):

1. **Zombie Legends**

   No attention was given to zombies and how they are used by supposed witches. This belief is from antiquity and is hard to eradicate among Africans. This belief needs to be researched to determine whether the supposed transformation of dead bodies into lifeless persons takes place in the minds of people or is a hypnotic suggestion of some sort. What are the psychological factors that give rise to this belief?

2. **Witch Confessions**

   In this study very little attention was given to witch confessions and admissions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe witch confession played an important part in their legal systems. It would be very interesting to see what witches' confessions role is playing in African legal systems. More research can focus on this area.
Familiars and Tikoloshi

The role of familiars and tikoloshi in the witchcraft discourse is very important and may shed more light on the phenomenon. This study has been unable to cover these aspects. As this is a separate field stands, a fruitful study can be conducted on it.

Further exploratory studies may focus on the areas mentioned above and related ones to shed light on this social phenomenon. But my thesis has proved that for witches to exist in a society that society must possess certain structural characteristics and be passing through a particular historical phase. The problem of 'change' and 'conflict' is at the centre of human existence. I have considered aspects of human existence that require psychological, economic, religious, and sociological explanations. However, further studies may be done on these issues.

PULA (RAIN)
a) Many African people believe that there are dead bodies of people who have been brought to life again by witchcraft and these lifeless persons are employed by their masters without receiving any compensation.
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