- witch hunts as practices of securitisation and biopoliticisation

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Abstract

In northern Ghana there are seven witch camps, hosting people accused of witchcraft and chased out of their communities. Witch hunts are widespread in Africa and much has been written on African witchcraft cosmologies. But the subject of witch hunts is still under-theorised. This thesis is an attempt to understand and theorise the practice of witch hunts and the existence of witch camps.

The thesis examines why witch camps continue to exist in northern Ghana on the basis of securitisation theory and practices of biopoliticisation. Drawing on two months of fieldwork, the thesis finds that witch camps are products of an institutionalised state of exception pertaining to witches and that they have a double security function. Witches are constituted as threats to society and witch hunts are practices of security. Witchcraft accusations are securitising acts in which the general dangerousness of witchcraft is fixated in the body of the accused. This results in a biopoliticisation thus uncoupling the accused witch from society and reducing her to bare life and a legitimate target of violence. At the witch camps accused witches can seek refuge from the community's retributive violence; the camps provide protection for accused witches. But confining accused witches to the witch camps also becalms public anxiety and fears of witchcraft aggressions. The thesis thus suggests that in order to discontinue the existence of witch camps, collective fears of witchcraft attacks must be relieved.

1. Introduction

> The people gathered outside the accused witch's family house had actually come to subject me to “instant justice.” It was a shock to realise. I never imagined that I could be subjected to violence. But people feared that I would bring back the “witch” whom they had banished and chased away with stones. The group gathered at the house did seem to be in a state of panic and emergency. They were yelling. Their body language and facial expressions revealed that they were angry and perhaps even hostile. But it never crossed my mind that it could end in assault. It felt unreal. Had I become a witch?
>
> I started imagining what would have happened if they had gone through with the assault. Would they have beaten me and thrown stones? Would anybody have tried to protect me? Would I have had to run for my life? Would I have made it out safely? I was afraid; afraid that if the people saw me, they would become agitated again; afraid that the mere sight of me would be enough to spark new panic. I was not willing to take that risk. I decided to leave town. Like the women that I met at the witch camps, I decided to seek safety by escaping.

Researching witch hunts can be dangerous. As shown above, for me it involved risks of being branded a witch or a supporter of witches and becoming a legitimate target of violence. This is a risk that many people in northern Ghana are forced to live with. Witch hunts are not uncommon in northern Ghana, nor in many other places in Africa. Many people, especially women, have been maltreated due to suspicions of witchcraft. Some are banished from their community. Some are tortured. Some are brought to a witch camp by their relatives, never to return to their village. Some choose to flee their village and seek refuge in a witch camp in fear for their lives. Some never make it to the camps. They are lynched before managing to escape. And for many of those who make it to the camps, a life in grave poverty and inhuman living conditions awaits.

Spread across the northern region of Ghana are seven witch camps; settlements where only people accused of witchcraft and their dependants live. People settle in these camps after being accused of practising malevolent witchcraft and banished from their homes, often by their own families. The settlers are confined, not by fences but by fear; fear of the retributive violence they might be subjected to if they attempt to return home.[1] The combined number of people living in the seven witch camps is not documented. The uncertain estimates vary between two- and six-thousand

1 Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 17-18

inmates and accompanying children.[2] And nothing suggests that the influx into the witch camps is reaching a standstill or that witch hunts are turning into ancient history. A recent case from a suburb of Tamale, the capital of the northern region of Ghana, suggests the opposite. In September of 2012 a group of angry people went around the community with a list of suspected witches. They wanted to put an end to a series of deaths in the community which were attributed to witchcraft attacks carried out by people on the list. Houses were searched and those on the list were forced to come out. Forty suspected witches were gathered for a "send-off party."[3] People started throwing stones at the alleged witches with intent to kill. At the last minute, the community chief interfered and stopped the action. The lives of the accused witches were saved, but they no longer felt safe in the community.[4] This was supposedly the third incident of witch hunts in Tamale that week.[5]

Due to horrid stories such as this one, the Government of Ghana has proclaimed an intention to eradicate the practice of witch hunts by developing legislation declaring witchcraft accusations illegal and closing the witch camps.[6] But these initiatives might not be sufficient to combat witch hunts. They might rather fail to take into account the logic behind violence against alleged witches and the witch camps. The inmates at the camps are not welcome in the community that banished them. Witches are perceived as a threat to society, a threat which can be contained through the witch camps. Closing the camps might therefore provoke a killing spree targeted at the alleged witches. The persistence of the witch camps must be understood and accounted for in policies aimed to curb witch hunts.

1.1 Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the logic behind the witch camps of northern Ghana and their persistence. The research question guiding the thesis is as follows:

> *On the basis of securitisation theory and practices of biopoliticisation, why do witch camps continue to exist in the north of Ghana?*

The question of why witch camps exist will partly be answered through an analysis of how witch

2 THUDEG and Anti Witchcraft Allegation Campaign Coalition (AWACC), "Witch Camp Report," 2011, 2
3 "Forty People Accused of Witchcraft Almost Butchered to Death in Tamale," *Ghana Nation*, 3 October 2012, localised at http://news1.ghananation.com/headlines/277721-forty-people-accused-of-witchcraft-almost-butchered-to-death-in-tamale.html
4 Ibid
5 Ibid
6 Clair MacDougall, "Ghana aims to abolish witches' camps," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 September 2011, localised at http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2011/0915/Ghana-aims-to-abolish-witches-camps

hunts take place. Witch camps consist of a number of people, who have been accused of witchcraft and banished from their community. How people are banished as witches must therefore be analysed in order to examine why witch camps exist. This will be done through securitisation theory. Witchcraft accusations will be seen as a range of similar securitisations anchored in a general state of exception pertaining to alleged witches.

Securitisation opens a space for action that would not otherwise be legitimate. As seen above, in witch hunts the actions legitimised include violence and lynchings. These operations will be analysed as a politicisation of human life, a biopoliticisation, which materialises in the witch camps. Witch camps will thus be identified as locations born out of a state of exception where accused witches that are perceived as dangerous can seek refuge from community's retributive violence.

Based on the identification of witch camps as materialisations of a state of exception, I will discuss why the camps continue to exist and what can be done to discontinue the biopoliticisation of accused witches. I will argue that closing the camps is a treatment of symptoms rather than cause and that long term changes must take into account the fears of both the accused witches and the communities that banish them.

As the research question indicates, the study is restricted to the northern region of Ghana. Witch hunts occur in all of Ghana, as well as in most of Africa, but the witch camps are unique to northern Ghana. Many different tribes inhabit the northern region of Ghana but the witch camps cut across tribal lines. There might be slight differences in the witchcraft cosmologies and practices of witch hunts among the tribes. However, since the witch camps are a common feature, this study is not restricted to a single tribe.

1.2 Relevance of Study

Witch hunts impact the lives of many people across Africa and in northern Ghana many people are banished and forced to stay at the witch camps. Thus it is important to develop knowledge of the subject. There are a number of authors, who provide good descriptions of the witchcraft cosmology and events connected to witchcraft in Ghana, such as Palmer,[7] Akrong,[8] and Dovlo.[9] Some, such as

7 Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010)
8 Abraham Akrong, “A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana,” in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007)
9 Elom Dovlo, “Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana,” in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007)

Kirby[10] and Schauber,[11] have looked into the uneasy relationship between witch hunts and human rights. Goody,[12] Drucker-Brown[13] and Adinkrah[14] have linked Ghanaian witch hunts to notions of legitimate violence and the subordinate position of women in Ghana. However, as argued by Niehaus, most works on witchcraft and witch hunts contain rich descriptions of indigenous beliefs but are devoid of theoretical analysis.[15] The field is therefore in need of more theoretical analysis of witch hunts.

In this section I will justify the relevance of this study and argue why it is relevant to study witch hunts and camps as a practices of security and biopoliticisation. I will begin by reviewing selected literature on witchcraft in Africa. I will then explain how my approach departs from the works reviewed and why this novel approach is relevant.

1.2.1 Works on Witches in Africa

One of the most cited works on witchcraft is Evans-Pritchard's classical anthropological study from 1937 on witchcraft among the Azande in central Africa. Evans-Pritchard described how the Azande attributed all types of misfortunes to witchcraft[16] without hunting for the witch. Only if witchcraft was deemed to incur illness would the responsible witch be sought out and asked to withdraw the witchcraft. Retribution only took place if death was brought upon the victim since otherwise the witch was also a member of the tribe.[17]

Newer works show that witchcraft continues to be present in contemporary African societies. Geschiere argues that discourses on witchcraft are intertwined with modernity.[18] Based on fieldwork

10 Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009)

11 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007)

12 Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970)

13 Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993)

14 Mensah Adinkrah, "Witchcraft Accusations and Female HomicideVictimization in Contemporary Ghana," *Violence Against Women* 10 (2004)

15 Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics, Exploring the Occult in South African Lowveld* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 1

16 E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 63-83

17 Ibid, 33-35

18 Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft. Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, trans. Peter Geschiere and Janet Roitman (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1997)

in Cameroon, Geschiere argues that due to its "polyinterpretability"[19] witchcraft continues to be relevant in modern Africa. He shows that witchcraft continues to spread fear both as a levelling mechanism of the weak and as an accumulative force explaining how some people become "scandalously rich and powerful."[20] He also shows how law courts have starting convicting alleged witches in order to guard themselves from being perceived as protectors of witches.

In an anthology collecting works on modernity and its malcontents in Africa, the Comaroff's also state that "witches are modernity's prototypical malcontents."[21] The works in the anthology argue that witchcraft has a dynamic and versatile signifying potential. Thus it provides a viable vocabulary for describing the world both in African villages and beyond to those who fight for scarce employment in African towns and cities.[22]

Writing on South Africa, Niehaus shows that witchcraft related killings have been on the rise the last decades. On the basis of structuralism, Niehaus links witchcraft to social inequality. He argues that witchcraft accusations are used as "a means to defend, protect and reinforce social inequality."[23] According to Niehaus, in eastern and southern Africa witchcraft is especially viewed as a levelling force in which the weak gain help from unseen forces to balance wealth. Thus it is often subordinate, relatively deprived insiders who are subjected to witchcraft accusations and killings.

Also based on findings from South Africa, Ashforth has identified a nexus between witchcraft and security.[24] By introducing the concept of spiritual insecurity, Ashforth describes the insecurity felt by individual people living in a world with witches. Spiritual insecurity involves a sense of exposure to invisible forces in a context where poverty, disease, political oppression and violence are widespread. Ashforth shows that people view the risk of spiritual attacks as ever present and that they go to great lengths to secure themselves against these insecurities; for example, by buying protection from a diviner.

19 Ibid, 10
20 Ibid
21 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Introduction," in Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff eds., *Modernity and Its Malcontents* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), xxix
22 Ibid, xxv
23 Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics, Exploring the Occult in South African Lowveld* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 112
24 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)

1.2.2 Witch Hunts as Security

Witchcraft might be a language about misfortunes and interpersonal tensions,[25] a poly-interpretable[26] phenomena with versatile signifying potential[27] as suggested by Niehaus, Geschiere and the Comaroffs. Thus the number of witchcraft accusations might rise and fall according to other societal circumstances. However, theories such as these seem to suggest that witchcraft accusations are functional scapegoating mechanisms[28] or means of power. But witchcraft is not an epiphenomenon of other realities.[29] The practice of witch hunts is not only a passive reflection of other phenomena. Witch hunts are independent constructions of social reality and they actively construct social reality.[30] Witchcraft can independently induce communal fear,[31] which is central in this thesis.

Wæver suggests that conflicts are often not driven by want but by fear.[32] Violence is often not motivated by rational calculations of gain and loss but by existential fears about survival of the community. This thesis will suggest that the same applies to witch hunts. Witch hunts and witch camps are not only means for reinforcing social inequality. They are also about deep rooted societal fears. Ashforth's concept of spiritual insecurity[33] partly captures this fear. Ashforth captures the individual fears of spiritual attacks and private practices of countering this fear. My focus is on collective practices of countering a shared existential fear. Whereas Ashforth approaches witchcraft as a social security issue, I will approach it as a societal security issue. Social security is about economic and social justice issues concerning the individual whereas societal security is about protecting a collective from an existential threat by extraordinary means.[34]

25 Isak Niehaus, "Witchcraft and the South African Bantustans: Evidence from Bushbuckridge," *South African Historical Journal* 64(1) (2012), 57
26 Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft. Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, trans. Peter Geschiere and Janet Roitman (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 10
27 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Introduction," in Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff eds., *Modernity and Its Malcontents* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993)
28 René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (London: The Athlone Press, 1986)
29 Isak Niehaus, "Witchcraft and the South African Bantustans: Evidence from Bushbuckridge," *South African Historical Journal* 64(1) (2012), 57
30 Harry G. West, *Ethnographic Sorcery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 53
31 Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 70
32 Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 30-31
33 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005)
34 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 20; 120

By approaching witch hunts and witch camps as practices of security and biopoliticisation, this thesis will contribute a new interpretation of why alleged witches are persecuted and why the practice is difficult to combat. The term security gives an understanding of why there seems to be a need to eliminate alleged witches, either by physically killing them or by geographically driving them away from the community.[35] The concept of security also gives an indication of the logic behind spaces of protective confinement such as the witch camps. This thesis will show, that those who are confined embody perceived threats to the moral fabric of society thus making them legitimate targets of violence. Hence spaces of protective confinement are consequences of safety seeking practices.

1.3 Outline of Thesis

The thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter Two presents the methodology used in this study. I will account for the quasi-ethnographic approach to in my fieldwork in northern Ghana, the research material resulting from the approach and the limitations. In Chapter Three I will set up a theoretical framework for studying witch camps and witch hunts as a practice of societal security. I will combine securitisation theory with Agamben's theory on the biopoliticisation resulting from states of exception. In Chapter Four I will describe the Ghanaian witchcraft cosmology and the history of witch camps as well as present four cases of witch hunts that I encountered during my fieldwork. These cases will be analysed as instances of securitisation and biopoliticisation in Chapter Five where I will also argue that witch camps are results of an institutionalised state of exception. In Chapter Six I will discuss the difficulty of and strategies for discontinuing the state of exception pertaining to accused witches. In Chapter Seven I will summarise conclusions and answer the question why witch camps continue to exist in northern Ghana.

35 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 118

2. Methodology

The empirical material of the thesis was gathered during approximately two months of field research in the northern region of Ghana. Before embarking on my fieldwork, I tried asking a Ghanaian friend some questions about witchcraft cosmologies in Ghana. His initial response was: "Normally, I do not talk to white people about this." In Ghana witchcraft is considered a taboo and is not to be spoken of openly.[36] It is against this difficult background that my methodological approach was developed.

The methodology used could be characterised as interpretivist quasi-ethnography. In this chapter I will account for what this methodological approach entails, the practical conduction of the field research, and the empirical research material resulting from this approach. I will start by outlining the main purpose and assumptions of interpretivist epistemology, explain why this study is based on the interpretivist epistemological stance and the consequences thereof. In the second section I will delineate the quasi-ethnographic fieldwork. I will give an overview of the field sites and informants, how these were accessed and for what purpose. I will also describe some of the practical and ethical challenges. In the third and last section I will outline the material gathered and discuss the usefulness of this material as well as the limitations.

2.1 Interpretivist Epistemology

The aim of interpretivism is to create an understanding of human behaviour.[37] The basic assumption in the interpretive epistemological stance is that human beings operate in a socially constructed reality and that human behaviour reflects this reality.[38] It is essential that the researcher approaches the world views of the people researched in an open manner. The researcher should not "pass judgement on those who believe in sorcery any more than upon those who believe in rational-choice theory."[39] As stated in the introduction, the aim of the thesis is to analyse and assess why witch camps continue to exist in the north of Ghana. This demands an understanding of and an inquiry into the culture in which witch camps exist. It is essential to understand the world views of those people who are involved in the banishment of alleged witches, the alleged witches residing in the

36 Field notes by author, 10 April 2012
37 Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004), 13
38 Ibid, 14
39 Edward Schatz, "Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics", in Edward Schatz ed., *Political Ethnography, What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 13

camps, and people working with these camps. It is because of this quest for understanding that the epistemological stance of this thesis can be characterised as interpretivist.

One of the main assumptions in interpretive research is that results of social inquiry are situational and contextual. The objective of the researcher is to gain access to what people take for granted and interpret actions and social views from their point of view.[40] However, the researcher also has a certain personal history, gender, ethnicity, age, religion etc. that should not be ignored.[41] As stated by Geertz, interpretivist data consist of "our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to."[42] The researcher makes her own interpretations of what her informants are doing and why and she systematises these into a theory.[43] As a consequence, the relationship between researcher and those who are researched has a fundamental impact on the truth claims stemming from the research.[44] The truth claims surface through interaction between researcher and those researched. Thus the empirical validity of interpretive research cannot be tested or proved.[45] The quality of such research is measured by the scientific ability to produce an understanding of the lives of strangers.[46] Results are particular interpretations,[47] which are essentially contestable.[48]

2.2 Quasi-Ethnographic Approach

The interpretivist epistemology is here translated into a quasi-ethnographic approach. Quasi-ethnography is a form of qualitative inquiry which, in line with the interpretivist epistemology, seeks to understand culture and human behaviour and inform culture bound social theory.[49] Quasi-ethnography uses some of the same methods for gathering cultural knowledge as ethnography. But quasi-ethnography separates itself from the typical ethnographic process[50] in the time scale of

40 Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004), 14
41 H.L. Goodall Jr., "What is Interpretive Ethnography?", in Robin Patric Clair ed., *Expressions of Ethnography* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 58
42 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 9
43 Ibid, 15
44 Edward Schatz, "Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics", in Edward Schatz ed., Political Ethnography, What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 13
45 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 23
46 Ibid, 16
47 Ibid, 23
48 Ibid, 29
49 James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Wadsworth Group, 1979), 10-11
50 Tomas Martin, Andrew M. Jefferson and Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, "Introduction. Sensing Prison Climates: Survival and Transition" in Andrew M. Jefferson, Chris Garces and Tomas Martin eds., Thematic Section: Prison Climates in the South (Under review), 11

immersion and the frequency of visits to field sites.[51] The quasi-ethnographic approach is often used when studying spaces of confinement and structural exclusions where the researcher is faced with entry and exit barriers at the field sites that hinder ethnographic immersion.[52] As will be described below, in this study the barriers were structural, geographical and ethical.

Ethnography typically entails immersion in the social life of the studied people for a period of at least one year[53] where ethnographic interviews are conducted at least six to seven times with each informant.[54] As mentioned, the quasi-ethnographic approach departs from this standard because of hindrances to such immersion. Conducting research on sensitive and emotional topics can be challenging.[55] As will be elaborated in the sections on field sites and ethical challenges, studying witchcraft and camps is not only difficult because it is a taboo. The study of witchcraft accusations and banishment also involves experiences of violence and grief. Because of the nature of the studied subject, informants were difficult to access and returning to a field site many times to do in-depth interviews with informants and observations of actors in their daily lives was not feasible. Furthermore, some of the sites studied were remote and logistically difficult to access. Safe food and drinking water were not available. And at the witch camps I had to obtain permission before entering. For all these reasons deeper immersion through multiple field visits was neither practical nor safe. This explains why most field sites and informants have only been visited once, twice, three or four times. However, in the quasi-ethnographic approach

> access is a sliding scale, not a binary. […] The political ethnographer strives for the *nearest possible vantage point* to study a given problem. Interviews that fall short of participant observation, or participant observation that falls short of the ideal location, are the stuff of real-world research compromises. Nonetheless, the political ethnographer will make every effort to achieve proximity and intimacy as a route to knowledge.[56]

Because the subject of witchcraft was sensitive to the informants and they were reluctant to

51 Lisa Murthag, "Implementing a Critically Quasi-Ethnographic Approach", *The Qualitative Report* 12(2) (2007), 194

52 Tomas Martin, Andrew M. Jefferson and Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, "Introduction. Sensing Prison Climates: Survival and Transition" in Andrew M. Jefferson, Chris Garces and Tomas Martin eds., Thematic Section: Prison Climates in the South (Under review), 10-11

53 H.L. Goodall Jr., "What is Interpretive Ethnography?", in Robin Patric Clair ed., *Expressions of Ethnography* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 56

54 James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Wadsworth Group, 1979), 51

55 Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman, "There and back: surviving field research in violent and difficult situations", inChandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman eds., *Surviving Field Research. Working in violent and difficult situations* (Routhledge, 2009), 234

56 Edward Schatz, "What Kind(s) of Ethnography Does Political Science Need?", in Edward Schatz ed., *Political Ethnography, What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 307

participate in more than one interview, I conducted interviews with a series of different informants who possess similar knowledge[57] and triangulated between different sources and types of informants.[58] As elaborated on in the section on field sites and informants, I conducted interviews with a number of people involved in witchcraft accusations and coupled this with informants who were banished due to witchcraft accusations and with representatives of organisations working to ensure rights of accused witches.

The methods used in ethnography such as participant observation, qualitative interviews, and collection of relevant documents and newspaper articles[59] are the same as used in the quasi-ethnographic approach. The hindrances outlined above hampered methods such as participant observation in certain settings. Therefore I mostly resorted to interviews but took note of environment, body language etc.[60] Because the objective was to gain an understanding of the informants' lives, the interviews I conducted were semi-structured and unstructured qualitative interviews, thus giving great leeway to the informants to unveil their worlds to me.[61] The interviews were a combination of factual, conceptual, narrative and discursive.[62] I was asking combined narrative and factual questions about the events that took place when somebody was banished, and conceptual clarifications when such categories as “bad person” were mentioned and searched for discursive establishments of identities. The kinds of questions asked each type of informant are further accounted for below.

2.2.1 Field Sites and Informants

Multiple entry points, field sites and informants were used for studying the notions of security linked to witchcraft in northern Ghana. As is common in field research, the informants were sampled through a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling.[63] In the following I will describe the informants of the study and the knowledge generated in collaboration with them.

57 James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Wadsworth Group, 1979), 52
58 Johan Pottier, Laura Hammond and Christopher Cramer, “Navigating the terrain of methods and ethics in conflict research”, in Christopher Cramer, Laura Hammond and Johan Pottier eds., *Researching Violence in Africa, Ethical and Methodological Challenges* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011), 15
59 Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004), 291
60 Michael V. Angrosino, “Recontextualising Observation. Ethnography, Pedagogy, and the Prospects for a Progressive Political Agenda”, in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 729
61 Ibid, 319-321
62 Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2009), 150-158
63 Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004), 304

This includes the types of questions I asked the different informants and observations conducted.

The first set of informants were from organisations that contest the practice of witch hunts. The organisations were the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home). CHRAJ is an independent institution constitutionally mandated to monitor the human rights situation in Ghana, investigate violation of rights and take actions to remedy such.[64] CHRAJ investigates reported cases of witchcraft related violence and mediates between the parties and arranges public education sessions to combat witchcraft accusations and violence. GO Home is an initiative of the Presbyterian church of Ghana and attends to the basic needs of alleged witches and their dependants residing at Gambaga witch camp. The project helps to repatriate people recently banished from their communities and to reintegrate alleged witches that have stayed in Gambaga for some time.[65] I gathered documents used in the work of these organisations, observed their work with alleged witches and interactions with the general public, and asked questions about the employees' attitudes towards witchcraft and alleged witches as well as their work experience. This gave an insight into the stigmatisation of people working to better the lives of accused witches and the difficulties and dangers faced in trying to implement their rights. During much of the fieldwork I was perceived as belonging to the personnel of these organisations and I can therefore use my own experience to validate these insights.

I used CHRAJ and GO Home to access the second type of informants; accused witches at the camps. The witch camp in Gnani was entered through CHRAJ and I was accompanied by a CHRAJ officer who also functioned as my translator. The first stop at this camp was by the shrine where the chief priest and custodian of the camp was performing a ritual. I interviewed the chief priest about the rituals performed when an alleged witch enters the camp and obtained his permission to move around the camp and speak with the inmates. While at the camp I and the CHRAJ officer were accompanied by the chief priest's son. He showed us around but was also present while interviews were conducted with alleged witches and his presence might have inhibited the accused witches. I interviewed a number of women and one man accused of witchcraft, and sampled some families for interviews through these informants.

The camp in Gambaga was entered through GO Home. Together with an officer from GO Home, I obtained permission to enter the camp as a GO Home volunteer from the combined community chief and chief priest of Gambaga. I could move around the camp quite freely together with a

64 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Articles 216-230
65 Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home), “The history of the camp,” Unpublished

translator or a GO Home officer during the days I spent in Gambaga. I interviewed a number of women in the camp, including a newcomer and one that, after staying at the camp for some years, had been integrated back into her old community and later re-accused and sent back to Gambaga. Together with the GO Home project I also went to a village nearby Gambaga and interviewed a former resident at the Gambaga camp who, with help from GO Home, was reintegrated in the village.

In both Gnani and Gambaga I observed the structures of the camps and the interactions between the inhabitants. I interviewed the accused witches and asked questions about the events that transpired before their banishment, their sentiments on the accusations and banishment, their experiences with staying at the camp, and whether they would like to leave the camp and perhaps move back to their old communities. In the case of the re-integrated accused witch, I also asked about her experience with reintegration and how the community was treating her after her return. From this I gained insight into the alleged witches' experiences of biopolitical exclusion and lack of personal security.

The third group of informants were members of the accused witches' families and communities; i.e. the people who participated in the witchcraft accusations and banishment. I visited and interviewed four communities that had banished a woman and sent her to Gnani witch camp. Two of these communities were sampled through interviewees at the camp, one with the help of the son of the chief priest in Gnani, and one through recent complaint archives of CHRAJ. The communities were localised with help from CHRAJ. A CHRAJ officer went to all these field sites to inform informants prior to my visits. The officer came along on all first visits to introduce me and interpret. I returned to some of the sites with a different interpreter. I asked these informants questions about the events that transpired before accusation and banishment of the alleged witch, the process of banishment, perceptions of the accused, the relationship between accuser and accused, earlier conflicts the accused might have been involved in, what difference it made that the accused witch stayed at the camp, and the prospects for re-integration of the accused witch. I also spoke with them about daily life in the community and how other types of problems were dealt with in the community. This provided me with knowledge of how and why the accused witch was perceived as a security threat to the community, how the camps constrained this threat, and how witchcraft is differentiated from other types of anxieties and troubles.

The fourth group of informants were residents in a compound house which I accessed through a personal contact and stayed in during the latter half of my fieldwork. Compound houses are the most common living arrangement in northern Ghana. All the families of banished witches lived in

some form of compound house. A compound contains multiple homes that are facing a common courtyard where residents cook, do laundry, socialise and pray. The homes and courtyard can typically only be accessed from outside the house through a single gate. The residents are often related. But even when residents are not blood relatives, they might treat each other like extended kin. At the compound house I conducted traditional participant observations. I cooked, did laundry and lived in the same space as my informants. Participant observations were conducted quite regularly from late afternoon until evening since most residents were in the courtyard during that time of the day. But in line with the interpretivist epistemology where the researcher engages in the research interactively, I also conducted observations if something out of the ordinary happened. I observed how the residents practised kin relations, assisted each other, and dealt with conflicts. I was thus able to observe the inclusive nature of social relations under normal circumstances, which members of accused witches' families had spoken of during interviews.

2.2.2 Practical and Ethical Challenges

Language was one of the main practical challenges during the field research. English is the official language in Ghana but most informants spoke only Dagbani or one of the almost fifty other local languages in Ghana. Therefore I used interpreters during interviews. During the field work I used four different interpreters; a CHRAJ officer, a GO Home officer, and two whose only function was to interpret. Reliance on interpreters makes research vulnerable to added layers of meaning, misunderstandings and biases.[66] For example, it can be difficult to know if a question or statement is translated correctly or if the interpreter is probing. My research might have been especially vulnerable to these added layers since I used many different interpreters and trust could not develop with each. Furthermore, two of the interpreters functioned as informants, gatekeepers and interpreters. Perhaps due to role confusion they often analysed the responses of other informants for me or answered the question I was trying to ask the interviewee. But by clarifying whom I was speaking with, I managed to obtain the interviewee's views on the issue at hand. Furthermore, through the spontaneous analysis given under role confusions, I gained a deeper knowledge of the world views of the CHRAJ and GO Home officers. While conducting participant observation at the compound house, I did not have access to a translator. Most of the residents spoke English but they

66 Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, “The Interview, From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement”, in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 707

often spoke Dagbani when conversing amongst themselves. Therefore a significant proportion of the social interactions were inaccessible to me. However, when people spoke Dagbani I became more attentive to body language and physical surroundings.

Language is not only a means of communication. Cultural reality is also constructed and expressed through language.[67] Therefore relying upon interpreters can make it difficult to access the culture of the informants. This was made even more difficult by the fact that many of the informants spoke of events that had been traumatic experiences. It was difficult to interrupt the narrations in order to translate and the interpreters thus had a tendency to summarise. In order to try and access the cultural setting, I often asked the interpreters whether the phrasing used was a direct interpretation of what the interviewee said. Recording some of the more formal interviews also helped in remembering formulations which resembled the original as much as possible. However, not all interviews were recorded as recording sometimes made interviews appear as interrogations rather than conversations.

I encountered many ethical challenges in the fieldwork. During the field research and interactions with informants, I sought to uphold the basic ethical considerations of informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm.[68] During the first meeting with informants, I made sure to ask the person introducing me to explain my purpose and to give informants the option of anonymity. Even though most informants did not express a need to have their identities concealed, all informants and small villages have been given pseudonyms in consideration of their safety and social standing. Because witchcraft is considered a taboo, speaking of it with an outsider might result in reprimand[69] and reprisals. Organisational representatives are only mentioned by name if quoted for statements made during public events.

Participation in research should also be voluntary and free of coercion.[70] Even though they participated voluntarily, some informants did not seem comfortable with the research. Witchcraft is often related to death and suffering and some informants visibly relived the grief when speaking about the events leading to banishment of an alleged witch.[71] In order to avoid distressing these

67 James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Wadsworth Group, 1979), 17-20

68 Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, "The Interview, From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement", in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 715

69 Senaba's family, interview by author, 18 April 2012

70 Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman, "There and back: surviving field research in violent and difficult situations", in Chandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman eds., *Surviving Field Research. Working in violent and difficult situations* (Routhledge, 2009), 229

71 Field notes by author, 24 April 2012

informants further, I chose not to visit them again. Some of my informants might also have participated for reasons other than interest in the research. As mentioned, the communities that had banished a woman due to witchcraft accusations were accessed with help from CHRAJ. The people in these communities might therefore have perceived me as being directly affiliated with this watchdog of human rights. This may have induced both fears and hopes. For example, both the accused witches at the camps and their families in the villages perceived me as somebody who might provide them with aid. As noted by Ross, a moral dilemma arises when informants perceive the researcher as someone who can provide aid while the researcher is rather taking knowledge.[72] Many of the informants used our time together to speak about their hardships and to inform me that my help would be appreciated. I found that listening and acknowledging the needs of my informants without promising relief was the best response.

Protecting myself and my informants from harm[73] was a challenge. As mentioned in the introduction, the research could at one point have ended in physical assault. At a community that had banished a woman due to witchcraft accusations, I was met by a group of people who wanted to subject myself and my informants to "instant justice." CHRAJ had informed residents of the accused witch's former house of my expected arrival. Rumour had spread to the surrounding community and some members of the community feared that I would bring back the accused witch. Therefore they were waiting outside the house ready to attack when I came to conduct the interview with the accused witch's family. I noticed the crowd of people and a tense atmosphere but I did not realise the seriousness of the situation. During the entire interview, people kept trooping into the compound house angered and yelling.[74] Both I and my informants tried to reassure people that I was only interested in understanding what had happened in their community and somehow physical aggression was avoided. A few days later I met with one of the informants from the house at the local market. During that meeting the informant kept repeating that people had been ready to attack.[75] It was only then that I realised the danger I and my informants had been in. I left the town in order to avoid the risk of violence against myself and my informants, who were in risk of being considered guilty by association.

72 Amy Ross, "Impact on research of security-seeking behaviour", in Chandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman eds., *Surviving Field Research. Working in violent and difficult situations* (Routhledge, 2009), 183

73 Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman, "There and back: surviving field research in violent and difficult situations", in Chandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega and Johanna Herman eds., *Surviving Field Research. Working in violent and difficult situations* (Routhledge, 2009), 229

74 Sanaba's family, interview by author, 12 April 2012

75 Senaba's family, interview by author, 18 April 2012

2.3 Usefulness of Material

The approach described above has enabled me to develop my own humble interpretation of why witch camps continue to exist in northern Ghana. The knowledge achieved during the fieldwork is produced through the relationships with the informants interviewed and the actors observed. Thus the knowledge is contextual, narrative and pragmatic.[76] In spite of structural, geographical, ethical and language barriers to access, the end result is empirical material which displays a certain kind of logic in witchcraft accusations and banishment, especially when supplemented by other authors' descriptions and analysis of the witchcraft cosmology and witch hunts. The material suggests that people are accused and banished as witches with reference to community security and that witch camps are a reflection of these security concerns.

However, in all cases interviews were only conducted after witchcraft accusation, banishment and violence had taken place, although in one community only approximately two weeks had passed between violence and when the interviews took place. The time lags make it difficult to establish whether security concerns were used as legitimation before the events took place or if they have been attached to the cases after the otherwise illegitimate acts had occurred. Language and discourses are especially important in securitisation theory, where security is viewed as a discursive practice. But no researcher can ever be sure to witness a witchcraft accusation and banishment from beginning to end. The manner in which legitimacy is assigned to the emergency measure after adoption serves as a good indication of why it was adopted in the first place and it is in this case the "nearest possible vantage point"[77] for studying witch hunts.

76 Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2009), 17-18

77 Edward Schatz, "What Kind(s) of Ethnography Does Political Science Need?", in Edward Schatz ed., *Political Ethnography, What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 307

3. Security Theory

The empirical material gathered during the fieldwork in Ghana suggests that those accused of witchcraft are perceived as a security threat to the community and that witch hunts and witch camps are means for dealing with this insecurity. Therefore witchcraft accusations, banishment and violence against accused witches will in this thesis be analysed as a practice of security.

The theoretical foundation is a combination of securitisation theory, developed among others by Ole Wæver, and Georgio Agamben's theory on how biopoliticisation and the camp are made possible by a state of exception. In this chapter I will delineate this theoretical approach. I will begin by outlining the ontological underpinning in which security is primarily seen as a social construction rather than an objective category. Afterwards I will describe the two main theories used. I will start with the shared origin and common features of the theories and how they supplement each other by dealing with different aspects of security. I will then elaborate on the observations of each theory. I will conclude this chapter with a visual fusion of the two theories.

3.1 Security's Social Constructivist Ontology

What can legitimately be labelled security? Most scholars of security agree that security is about threats, danger and struggle for safety[78] and security has traditionally been defined as "pursuit of freedom from threat."[79] But the conceptualisation of security has been heavily debated the last few decades. The study of security has previously been restricted to military threats against the state. However, concepts such as human security have contributed to an expansion of the conceptualisation of security in many academic circles. Security has been broadened to go beyond military threats and include different kinds of threats; for example, environmental scarcity and degradation, epidemics, overpopulation, nationalism and mass refugee movements. The referent object of security has also changed. The state is no longer the only legitimate referent object. Groups or individuals found within the state are also recognised as referent objects of security.[80]

However, this conceptualisation does not capture the security practice of witch hunts. The re-conceptualisation of security to include new types of threats and referent objects of security reflects a search for what security really is. But the nexus between witchcraft and security that is central

78 Maria Stern, "Naming In/security – Constructing Identity. 'Mayan-Women' in Guatemala on the Eve of 'Peace'" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, 2001), 21
79 Barry Buzan, *Peoples, States and Fear* (Brighton, Weatsheaf Books Ltd., 1983 [1991]), 18
80 Paris Roland, "Human Security. Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?", *International Security* 26(2) (2001), 97

here is based on an ontology in which security is not an objective fact but a social practice. The world does not present itself in the form of ready-made categories.[81] Meaning or reality is rather constituted socially and through language and it is always contextual. This implies that security is vernacular; ever changing and site-specific.[82] Threats and insecurity are not objectively given entities waiting to be discovered. As stated by Wæver: "Security is […] not a question of assessing some objective threats and when they 'really' endanger some objects."[83] Security is instead understood as a socially constructed concept. Threats and security are viewed as intersubjectively produced. What constitutes an existential threat depends on shared understandings of what constitutes danger to security.[84] Security is hence about perceived threats, determined in a context by actors, but never one actor alone.[85] When security is an intersubjective process, the meaning of security cannot be derived analytically or philosophically. Instead the meaning of the concept of security lies in how it is used.[86] All threats and referent objects can be matters of security as long as the case is endowed with collective signification.[87] Witchcraft may therefore be a threat on the security agenda in one context or culture, even though people of other cultures would object to the existence of such occult powers. And therefore witch hunts can be studied as a practice of security. Studies of security are about identifying what is perceived as a threat to security in a certain social setting and which consequences this has. What matters is whether something is presented as a threat to security.

3.2 The Practice of Security

In distinctive ways both securitisation theory and Agamben attend to the issue of security with inspiration from Carl Schmitt and what he termed "the exception." The exception is a situation which cannot be "codified in the existing legal order, [it] can best be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like. But it cannot be circumscribed

81 David Campbell, "Poststructuralism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kruki and Steve Smith eds., *International Relations Theories. Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204
82 Nils Bubandt, "Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds," *Security Dialogue* 36 (2005), 276
83 Ole Wæver, "Concepts of Security" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Institute of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 1995), 13
84 Ralf Emmers, "Securitization," in Alan Collins ed., *Contemporary Security Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 113
85 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 30-31
86 Ibid, 24
87 Lene Hansen, "The little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absense of Gender in the Copenhagen School," *Mellennium – Journal of International Studies* 29 (2000), 304

factually and made to conform to a preformed law."[88] The state of exception is thus constituted by existential threats and derogation from rules that normally apply. Securitisation theory deals with how such a state of exception emerges. By coupling Schmitt's thinking on exception with J.L. Austin's speech act theory,[89] security becomes defined as a discursive practice. Through discourse an existential threat is identified and thus suspension of normal rules may take place.[90] The derogation from normal rules is Agamben's starting point. His work theorises on what the normally applying rules are replaced with in the state of exception. Drawing on Foucault's notion of biopower, "power over life and death,"[91] Agamben shows how the state of exception is characterised by a biopoliticisation of human life.[92] According to both securitisation theory and Agamben, the state of exception can become permanent[93] and thus difficult to distinguish from the normal.[94]

3.2.1 Securitisation

According to securitisation theory, security is about fear and survival.[95] Based on the heritage from Schmitt, security is "when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object. […] The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them."[96] An issue is presented as an existential threat through the process of securitisation. Securitisation can be defined as a speech act performed by a securitising actor claiming an existential threat towards a referent object. The speech act must be accepted by a relevant audience in order for the extraordinary means to be adopted as a response to this existential threat.

Witchcraft accusations are here analysed as such acts. According to Wæver, a speech act is performative when "the utterance *itself* is the act."[97] This is what Austin termed an *illocutionary* act,

88 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985), 6
89 J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)
90 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 21
91 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 136
92 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)
93 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 27
94 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 69-105
95 Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 31
96 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 21
97 Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in Ronnie D. Lipschutz ed., *On Security* (New York: Columbia

which means that something is done *in* uttering a sentence.[98] In uttering a sentence an existential threat is established. Thus securitisation is often referred to as a self referential practice.[99] However, as described above, the speech act must also be accepted by an audience. Securitisation demands an intersubjective establishment of a threat thus allowing for emergency measures. Therefore, securitisation must also include *perlocutionary* acts.[100] The perlocutionary act is what is achieved *by* uttering a sentence.[101] It is a response to the speech act,[102] e.g. the adoption of emergency measures in order to deal with a threat. Witchcraft accusations will be analysed as both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts; both as constitutive of the witch as a threat and as allowing steps to be taken in order to deal with the threat.

In his speech act theory, Austin identified certain felicity conditions for a successful speech act.[103] Likewise Wæver identifies certain facilitating conditions for a successful securitisation. These conditions fall into two categories; the internal, linguistic conditions and the external, contextual and social conditions.[104] The internal condition of successful securitisation is that the speech act follows "the grammar of security."[105] As already indicated and analogous to Schmitt's state of exception,[106] a security discourse contains three components; existential threat, referent object, and emergency measures. The existential threat is something or somebody[107] presented as challenging the survival of a referent object.[108] The referent object is that which people wish to preserve. The securitisations analysed in this thesis have an extended family, village or community as referent objects, whose existence is presented as threatened by witchcraft. Thus they are cases of societal security. This is a form of identity security where an "imagined community"[109] needs preservation

University, 1995), 55

98 J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 120

99 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 24

100 Thierry Balzacq, "A theory of securitisation: origins, core assumptions, and variants", in Thierry Balzacq ed., *Securitization Theory, How security problems emerge and dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011)
Paul Roe, "Is securitization a 'negative' concept? Revisiting the normative debate over normal versus extraordinary politics," *Security Dialogue* 43(3) (2012), 254

101 J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 120

102 Thierry Balzacq, "A theory of securitisation: origins, core assumptions, and variants", in Thierry Balzacq ed., *Securitization Theory, How security problems emerge and dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011), 5

103 J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 12-24

104 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 32

105 Ibid, 33

106 Roxanne Lynn Doty, "States of Exception on the Mexico-U.S. Borderr: Security, "Decisions," and Civilian Border Control," *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007), 131

107 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 135

108 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 24

109 Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London:

from a threat to the moral breakdown of the community.[110] Even though securitisation theory normally deals with societal security for larger groups, in Africa the referent objects of societal security can be smaller groups such as the extended family, village, clan or tribe[111] since identity is organised around these groups. Emergency measures are, as mentioned, an abandonment of normally applying rules.[112] If the issue at hand is intersubjectively accepted as a security threat, the community will commit or at least tolerate actions by an individual that would not otherwise be legitimate.[113] The emergency measures resorted to during witch hunts are banishment, violence and perhaps killing of the witch. As elaborated on below, these emergency measures reflect what Agamben would call a biopoliticisation of human life. As will be seen, banishment of a community member is not used when handling other forms of conflict. But in relation to alleged witches, communities often participate in or at least tolerate the banishment and violent acts towards a certain person with a reference to witchcraft.

There are two main external conditions for a successful securitisation. The first one is the social capital of the actors. The securitising actor needs to be in a position of authority[114] in order for the speech act to have the potential of legitimising extraordinary means for dealing with the threat constructed in it. The audience also needs to be in a power position enabling them to provide the securitising actor with whatever is sought through the securitising act.[115] As will be seen later in this thesis, witchcraft accusations must be supported by men in order to gain significance as securitisations. And the audience able to provide extraordinary means are often traditional public authorities such as chiefs and family elders. The second external condition for securitisation is the nature of the threat. Successful securitisation is more likely if the threat presented in the speech act is generally perceived as threatening.[116] Some threats are especially recognisable as dangerous. When a threat is persistent or recurring, the sense of urgency and the extraordinary measures become institutionalised.[117] Under such circumstances everyday safety seeking practices contain a security potential, and the boundary between the normal and the exceptional becomes blurred.[118] In

Verso, 1983)

110 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 119-121

111 Ibid, 126

112 Ibid, 21

113 Ibid, 31

114 Ibid, 33

115 Sarah Léonard and Christian Kaunert, "Reconceptulizing the audience in securitization theory," in Thierry Balzacq ed., *Securitization Theory, How security problems emerge and dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011), 61

116 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 33

117 Ibid, 27

118 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D.

that case, certain words become master signifiers, which automatically induce a logic of danger and make argumentation redundant.[119] This might imply a number of securitisations following similar logic, in which a given threat becomes embodied rather than constructed anew. I will later argue that the word "witch" is such a signifier in the Ghanaian context and that certain people, elderly women, are especially recognisable as the signified embodiments of the threat.

Securitisation theory views securitisation as negative.[120] As will be argued here, securitisation might imply a biopoliticisation of human life, thus making human rights inaccessible for those accused of witchcraft. Securitisation theory argues that securitised issues should be desecuritised, which means "shifting of issues out of emergency mode."[121] The rationale behind desecuritisation is that "both security and insecurity are sub-sets of the securitised situation: security is when a threat is accepted but counter-measures trusted, whereas insecurity is the situation of threat without sufficient counter-measures."[122] Therefore, unless an issue is desecuritised, people will continue to search for counter measures. The purpose of desecuritisation is to reduce fear and enimity.[123] Desecuritisation will be discussed as a potential measure for ensuring humane living conditions for alleged witches.

3.2.2 Biopoliticisation

Lene Hansen has suggested including the body as an epistemological focus in securitisation theory.[124] According to her, "insecurity can be spoken through the body, [therefore] it becomes obvious that the body often is a crucial target for those seeking to discipline 'deviant behaviour'."[125] As already mentioned above, when an exception has become institutionalised and lasting, securitisations using the master signifier of the threat often fix the threat and insecurity in new bodies.[126] Since certain bodies start to represent an existential threat, emergency measures are

Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 156

119 Paul Roe, "Is securitization a 'negative' concept? Revisiting the normative debate over normal versus extraordinary politics," *Security Dialogue* 43(3) (2012), 255

120 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 29

121 Ibid, 4

122 Ole Wæver, "Fear and Forgetting: How to Leave Longstanding Conflicts through De-securitization" (Paper for Research Seminar at CAST, Revised version of keynote speech at National Conference on Peace and Conflict at Lund University, 2008), 3

123 Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 24-31

124 Lene Hansen, "The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School," in *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 29 (2000), 300

125 Ibid, 302

126 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 131

targeted against these bodies in what Risør terms violent closures to insecurity.[127] The person deemed dangerous is quickly faced with material or personal security concerns.[128] I will later show that this is also the case for alleged witches.

Agamben can be said to deal with consequences of securitisation targeted at the body. To Agamben the imposition of a state of exception is a sovereign act in which bare life is produced. Bare life becomes separated from qualified life and excluded from the moral community. Bare life is a "life devoid of value,"[129] the life of *homo sacer*, "who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed.*"[130] Homo sacer is banned, abandoned by law, exposed and threatened. Nobody is obliged to protect his life.[131] He is a figure towards whom everyone is permitted to act as sovereigns, deciding over life and death.[132] Killing him causes neither homicide nor celebration.[133] The biopolitically excluded might be subjected to violence, torture and perhaps even death with moral impunity.

To Agamben the segregation of the camp also produces the biopolitical body.[134] Based on Nazi death camps but translating into mundane spaces such as airport waiting areas,[135] Agamben identifies a nexus between the exception and the camp.[136] The camp is a space materialising the exception, which is opened when the exception begins to become indistinguishable from the norm.[137] In other words, the camp is produced when a securitisation and biopoliticisation have been institutionalised. Hence the camp is also a "limit zone between life and death," in witch people become completely stripped of their humanity and remain only biologically alive.[138]

127Ibid, 132
128Steffen Jensen, "Security and violence on the frontier of the state," in Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio eds., *Violence and Non-Violence in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2007)
129Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 81
130Ibid, 12
131Ibid, 23
132Ibid, 53
133Ibid
134Ibid, 98
135Ibid, 99
136Ibid, 96
137Ibid, 96-98
138Ibid, 91

3.3 Securitisation - Biopoliticisation Interplay

Combining securitisation with Agamben's theory on the consequences of states of exception, gives a theoretical foundation for analysing both how a state of exception applying to accused witches is constructed and the consequences thereof.

As mentioned, securitisation is a process denouncing something or somebody as an existential threat to society thus allowing for the derogation of normally applying rules and imposition of emergency measures. When combined with Agamben's theories, it becomes clear in instances where certain people embody the existential threat, the absence of rules results in a politicisation of human life; biopoliticisation. Securitisation produces bare life; life that is abandoned by law. This implies that the body containing the threat might with moral impunity be subjected to violence and perhaps killed. The interplay between securitisation and violence will be used to analyse witch hunts and their institutionalisation in the witch camps.

4. A World with Witches

Witchcraft is a central element in the societies of Ghana; the inhabitants appear to be living in what Ashforth termed a "world with witches."[139] The separation between the spiritual and public spheres is blurred and the entire social fabric is infused with practices rooted in spirituality and witchcraft cosmologies.[140] The presence of witchcraft impacts daily routines and social relations. And sometimes it erupts in accusations targeted at individual people deemed to be witches.

The objective of this section is to shed light on a world with witches. As mentioned in the previous chapter, witch hunts will be analysed as a form of societal security, in which culture plays an important role. I will therefore in the first section shortly describe elements of Ghanaian culture important to witch hunts, namely the witchcraft cosmologies and the history of the witch camps. This will also contextualise the four cases of witchcraft accusations and banishment, which I will describe in the second section of this chapter on witch hunts. Based primarily on narratives of witchcraft accusers, I will describe events that have led to banishment of four women. These four cases of witch hunts are anchored in but not a direct result of the witchcraft cosmology and they will serve as a basis for analysis in the next chapter.

4.1 Danger Lurking at Every Corner

Witchcraft cosmologies are integrated elements of the Ghanaian societies. For most Ghanaians, illiterates as well as highly educated, the phenomenon of witchcraft is taken for granted as something which is pre-social. Witchcraft is not treated as superstitional but as a fact of life, a reality without any doubt.[141] It is often alleged that in Ghana everyone believes in witchcraft. If someone should claim that they do not believe in the existence of witchcraft, they are presumed to be lying.[142] For most people in Ghana, a world without witches is incomprehensible. Even those, who work to better the lives of people accused of witchcraft, admit to believing in witchcraft.[143]

139 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 63

140 Mensah Adinkrah, "Witchcraft Accusations and Female HomicideVictimization in Contemporary Ghana," in *Violence Against Women* 10 (2004), 331

141 Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 53

142 CHRAJ officer "A", interview by author, 27 April 2012
Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 61

143 CHRAJ officer "A", interview by author, 27 April 2012
CHRAJ officer "Y", interview by author, 4 April 2012

In this section I will describe the witchcraft cosmologies and witch camps of northern Ghana. A cosmology can be defined as "the knowledge of a given society about the composition of the universe and the place of human kind within it."[144] Cosmologies consist of normative and spiritual knowledge integrated in society and social behaviour. As Durkheim's social facts,[145] cosmologies are products of human interaction but the existence is taken for granted and treated like a thing in the society where it applies. Cosmologies often contain mythical narratives and rituals enacting these narratives.[146]

This section will first proceed with a description of the world with witches, how witchcraft might become dangerous and the notions of subjectivity anchored in the witchcraft cosmology. I will then outline the history of witch camps in Ghana, their significance as well as the cleansing rituals performed at the camps.

4.1.1 The Witches' Feast

The Ghanaian witchcraft cosmology is characterised by a two-dimensional world view. The first dimension is the seen world, which is the physical and material dimension. The other dimension is the unseen world, which is the spiritual dimension. These two dimensions are interdependent and people live in both worlds simultaneously. By maintaining harmonious relations with both worlds, life is fostered. The goal of people's life passage is to increase life in the seen world. By living productive lives in the seen world, it becomes possible to attain fullness and continue life in the unseen world. This implies that the two worlds spill into each other and disharmony in one world can cause life to end in the other.[147]

In Ghana it is common to distinguish between good and bad people in the seen world.[148] Spirits from the unseen world can likewise be both benign and destructive. Thus witchcraft has potential for both good and evil, but it is mostly associated with evil intentions.[149] Since the seen and the unseen world are tied in with each other, the evil spirits from the unseen world can attack people in

144Juan M. Ossio, "Cosmologies," *International Social Science Journal* 49 (1997), 549
145Émile Durkheim, *Den sociologiske metodes regler*, trans. Esbern Krause-Jensen (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2000 [1895]), 47-85
146Juan M. Ossio, "Cosmologies," *International Social Science Journal* 49 (1997), 552
147Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 59-60
Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 43
148Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012, 01:04:10-01:07:50
149Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 68

the seen world through their spiritual self. According to the witchcraft cosmologies, witches *chop* or feed on human bodies and blood in order to survive. Witches gather for ritual meals at night where they devour their victims.[150] Therefore they attack people spiritually. The witch captures the human body through the spiritual soul or shadow of the victim. The physical body of a person suffers illness or pains in the body part exposed to spiritual attacks. If a person's spirit is attacked by evil spiritual forces, the physical person might die. Witchcraft is thus considered to be a life negating force. By disrupting the spiritual life of a person, witchcraft can also disrupt the physical life of this person. However, life negating forces are not just a threat to the individual but they defy the principle of life itself. It is a form of contamination that can spoil a house or village.[151] Therefore witchcraft

> not only threatens the individual life of the victim, it also threatens the integrity and life of the family, and in a broader sense it threatens the community and society as a whole, and, indeed, it finally threatens the principle of life itself.[152]

Since witchcraft attacks can have such fatal consequences, people are always careful and on the watch for signs that the enemy is on the loose. Mysterious or unexpected events are often interpreted as spiritual attacks.[153] People are cautious of eating food prepared by a stranger or someone who dislikes them since it might be poisoned with "local medicine."[154] The term medicine might refer to both prophylactic and poisonous substances, which operate both physically and metaphysically.[155] Medicine might thus be dangerous substances infused with spiritual force. Ackee fruits might also be poisoned with local medicine and transformed to resemble a kola nut;[156] a nut otherwise endowed with positive symbolism, such as peace, friendship and unity.[157] Furthermore, the witch might hide her medicine in reptiles such as lizards or frogs or "throw" it at her victim

150Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 56
Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 59-60

151Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 60

152Ibid

153Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 45-49

154Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 238

155Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993), 534

156Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 237

157Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things. Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 112-119

from afar.[158] Thus people can never be certain that they are safe from witchcraft attacks. Illness and death are signs that someone might be disrupting your destiny. For example if somebody has a continuous or chronic headache, it might be a sign that witches are playing football with the brain of that person[159] and that untimely death might follow.

Just as it is important to maintain harmonious relations between the seen and the unseen worlds, it is also important to maintain harmonious relationships with other people in order to avoid spiritual attacks. The witchcraft cosmology thereby has a disciplinary function constituting subjectivity and performing social control. Individual identity construction in Ghana is socio-centric;[160] subjectivity only exists by means of the community. It is only through the community that a person can prosper. This is expressed by a Ghanaian proverb stating that "once you are born, both your enemy and your benefactor are born with you."[161] Members of the community have power to temper with the individual's life passage, often through spiritual means. Thus causality is agentive and in case of misfortune people search for the cause outside themselves. This also implies that value of a person becomes measured in their contribution to fostering life. Those who do not contribute are deemed as useless;[162] those who cause disruptions and disharmony are evil witches.[163]

4.1.2 Witch Camps

Sometimes the fear of witchcraft attacks erupts in witchcraft accusations; somebody is denounced as a witch who is responsible for calamities, death and suffering in her community and might thus be publicly sanctioned.[164] If witchcraft is discovered to be on the loose and the source is localised, it becomes possible for the community to restrain this evil force. The threat of the witch can be eliminated by killing the witch or banishing her from the community.[165] When the witch is banished, she is often sent to a witch camp.

158Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 237

159Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 56

160Ibid, 60

161Ibid

162Field notes by author, 8 May 2012

163Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 62

164Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 229

165Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 118

As mentioned in the introduction, there are seven witch camps in northern Ghana. The Gambaga camp was the first one of its kind in Ghana. The Gambaga camp is said to have been founded in the early twentieth century by an imam who took pity on an old woman, who was about to be executed by a group of people.[166] The imam appealed to the group not to kill the woman and instead leave her in his custody.[167] The imam brought the woman to his home where he performed a Muslim cleansing ritual to rid her of the witchcraft so that she could return to her community.[168] After this many alleged witches sought refuge at the imam's house. But reintegration turned out to be difficult and the number of those waiting to go back increased. The responsibility of caring for the group and performing cleansing rituals was thus transferred to *Gambaran*,[169] the combined community chief and traditional priest of the community.

All of the seven witch camps that exist in northern Ghana today are managed by chief priests and located at witch hunting earth shrines. The witch camps are perceived as a viable alternative to killing the witch because they are attached to these shrines.[170] The shrines are believed to be able to tell whether somebody is a witch and to prevent witches from using their powers.[171] When a person accused of witchcraft comes to the shrine, the chief priest of the shrine slaughters a white fowl and throws it into the air. If the accused is found innocent by the spirits of the shrine, the fowl falls on its back. But if the spirits of the shrine find the accused one guilty, the fowl lands on its front. If the fowl lands with the beak in the ground and the accused witch is found guilty, a second fowl might be slaughtered. The second fowl determines whether the attacks have been carried out in collaboration with the ancestors or if the witch has practised her powers through a physical object such as a frog, which then needs to be found and destroyed. After the slaughtering of fowls the witch can drink a concoction that will cleanse her of the witchcraft. If a guilty witch has denied her aggression, the gods will kill her through the concoction. Following this cleansing ceremony, the accused witch might return home.[172] But if the community does not want her back, she settles in the

166Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 66-67
Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home), "The history of the camp," *Unpublished*, 1

167Ibid

168Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 67

169Ibid

170Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 52

171Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 58

172Field notes by author, 11 April 2012

camp where the spirits of the shrine look after her. The earth shrines are thus powerful spirits that control the witches and become violent and vengeful if the witch tries to resume her evil activities.[173]

4.2 Witch Hunts

In the following I will recount four cases in which women have been accused of possessing malevolent witchcraft and disrupting the lives of people around them. Based on these accusations all four women were banished from their community and sent to Gnani witch camp. The accounts are primarily based on the accusers' narratives.

4.2.1 Vivid Nightmares

When I came to the village of Tallongo, only two weeks had passed since a suspected witch and her family had been chased out of their home and out of the village. But it all began more than a year earlier when one night a young man called Alhassan had a nightmare. In the nightmare he saw a woman from the village chasing him because she wanted to kill him. The woman was Ayishetu. When morning came, Alhassan went to his father and told him about the dream. The father was at first unsure what to do about his son's dream. But later the same day father and son went together to the chief's palace to report Ayishetu for spiritual attacks on the young man.[174]

Ayishetu was out farming when the chief summoned her to his palace. Without knowing why she was summoned, Ayishetu hurried to the palace where she was presented with the accusations. Ayishetu told the chief that to her knowledge she did not possess any witchcraft nor had she any intentions of harming Alhassan.[175] But the chief sent Ayishetu to a shrine to test whether the accusations against her were true. The shrine found Ayishetu guilty of witchcraft aggression.

When Ayishetu returned to the village, the chief decided to banish her from Tallongo. The chief told Ayishetu that according to the rules and regulations of the community, somebody who failed the test of the shrine and was deemed to possess malevolent witchcraft could not stay in the community.[176]

Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), *Human Rights Education Material*, 2009

173Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 52

174Ayishetu's accusers, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 01:45-02:32

175Ayishetu's family, interview with author, 5 April 2012

176Tallongo Chief, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 04:33-06:08; 11:14-12:10

Tallongo Chief, interview by author,, 18 April 2012

A number of people have been accused of witchcraft in Tallongo. Even the chief and the family accusing Ayishetu of witchcraft had experienced a wife or someone else from their household being banished due to witchcraft accusations.[177] This time it was Ayishetu who was found guilty of witchcraft and thus had to leave the village like the others before her.

Approximately one year after the banishment of Ayishetu, the young man who accused her of witchcraft died. He had been ill since the week after his dream of Ayishetu.[178] A couple of months after his death, Ayishetu returned to Tallongo to visit her family and take care of her husband. Ayishetu's nearest relatives did not believe that she was guilty of witchcraft aggression and they were therefore glad to receive her in their home. However, the village chief was not as welcoming. He summoned Ayishetu's husband and let him know that he wanted the village to remain peaceful and that therefore Ayishetu was not welcome back in the village. But Ayishetu's husband refused to send his wife away again.[179]

Four days after the return of Ayishetu, the house where Ayishetu stayed together with her family was under attack. A group of people from the village torched the thatch roof of the house forcing Ayishetu and her family out to the compound yard. Then they threw rocks at the house and into the compound yard.[180] Ayishetu believed that the group of people wanted to kill her and her children too.[181] The entire family had to escape the village. They ran to the nearest town where they reported the attacks to CHRAJ. A CHRAJ officer went to Tallongo where he warned the inhabitants that they would be in trouble with the law if they continued their attacks on the family. But CHRAJ also recommended Ayishetu to be relocated[182] because CHRAJ was not capable of deterring the villagers from attacking Ayishetu if she stayed in Tallongo. Ayishetu's family decided to bring Ayishetu to Gnani witch camp.

4.2.2 Poisoned People

When I met Senaba at Gnani witch camp, she looked battered by life. The rain storm from the previous night had taken a toll on her small hut. The thatch roof had been partly destroyed and there

177 Ayishetu's accusers, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 33:48-29:12
Tallongo Chief, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 10:43-11:13
178 Ayishetu's accusers, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 08:23-09:06
179 Ibid, 09:08-10:41
Ayishetu, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 04:14-05:11
180 Ayishetu's family, interview by author, 5 April 2012, 08:01-09:21; 13:08-17:15
181 Ayishetu, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 07:15-09:17; 17:29-17:59
182 CHRAJ officer Y, interview by author, 5 April 2012

was still a puddle of water on the floor. Sanaba sat huddled on the floor, her head turned away and her gaze was firmly directed at the ground. She looked shy and derived of her dignity. But this perception of Senaba was not shared by her family and the community from which she had been banished. They told a story of a dangerous woman who would go to great lengths in order to get what she wanted.

When I approached Senaba's former home in Yendi, an assemblage had gathered outside the house. As earlier described, these people had come to make sure that Sanaba would not come back to the community and they were ready to resort to violence.[183] In the courtyard of the compound house and with a number of interruptions from yelling people outside and inside the house, I met Razak. Razak was head of the household. He had inherited this position after the deaths of family members who outranked him. These family members had allegedly been victims of Sanaba's witchcraft aggression.

Razak told me that before Sanaba was banished, she had killed three residents in her family house. Her first victim had been man with whom she was quarrelling. The house had an extra room which was used as a guest room for visitors. Senaba had wanted to occupy the extra room in addition to the one she already had. But the man, who was then head of the household, had disagreed. He did not grant Sanaba permission to take the room. He rather wanted the room to be used for common purposes. Razak said that this had made Senaba angry. She threatened to use all means possible in order to make the entire house her own property. Within two weeks after this argument, the man passed away.[184]

Razak said that shortly after the first man had passed away, a female relative living in the house had died too. Senaba had continued to fight for the spare room in the house but the female relative had agreed with the deceased head of household that the room Senaba wanted should be reserved for guests. Senaba and the woman got into a physical fight about the room and Razak had to separate them. After this incidence the woman started having nightmares about Senaba. Within a few days she fell sick and died after eating soup that Senaba had prepared for her. Razak and the other residents in the house believed that the soup had contained a local medicine.[185]

After some time Senaba started quarrelling with another man living in the house. According to Razak, the quarrel had started when the man's wife caught Senaba stealing firewood. The man

183Senaba's family, interview by author, 12 April 2012, 57:20-59:10
184 Ibid, 04:55-09:33; 19:19-21:32
185Ibid, 09:34-11:57; 21:33-24:32

confronted Senaba and the confrontation turned into an argument. The argument escalated when the man had asked Senaba why she was so quarrelsome and why she always had animosities with somebody in the house. The man told Senaba that her behaviour was not considered as good behaviour. According to Razak, Senaba became offended and felt that the man was unjustly siding with his wife. Senaba had thus told the man that "he would see," which is an explicit threat in the Ghanaian context. And after a short time the man fell sick with fever. Razak said that the man was brought to the hospital where he started to recover. But when he was taken back home, his condition soon worsened again and within two days the man passed away. Before the man died, Razak and the other inhabitants in the house found out that Senaba had given the man some porridge after he returned from the hospital.[186] They suspected that the porridge had contained some medicines.

After three untimely and mysterious deaths, all following arguments with Sanaba, the residents in the house started to fear that Senaba was behind the casualties. Therefore they went to the area chief to complain about Senaba and accuse her of witchcraft. The chief sent Sanaba to Gnani to undergo the test of the shrine. Sanaba failed the test. She was found guilty of having bewitched and killed three people with the use of local medicine, either by putting it in their food or in some other unknown way. Therefore she was no longer welcome in her home in Yendi and she was left behind in Gnani witch camp.[187]

But one day Senaba ventured back to the family house in Yendi. Razak told me that she wanted to pick up her belongings and bring them with her back to the witch camp in Gnani where she was now residing. According to Razak, Senaba came while her family was absent from the house. But other people from the community saw Senaba. They became angry, came out of their houses and mobilised an attack on Senaba. The mob threw stones at Senaba and she was forced to flee in order to save her life.[188]

4.2.3 Warning of the Frog

More than a decade ago Rafiatu was banished from a small village known as Saratinga, where a frog had revealed that she was behind the tragic deaths of three children in her family compound house. Rafiatu's many years at Gnani witch camp registered on her body. She was thin, her hands were wrinkled hands and her eyes had seen more hardship than most people. She looked fragile and

186Ibid, 11:59-18:03; 25:50-30:34
187Ibid, 18:04-19:19; 33:35-36:20
Senaba, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 00:11-04:14
188Senaba's family, interview by author, 12 April 2012, 59:57-01:01:37

dispirited. She knew that she would likely spend the rest of her days at the camp.[189]

Those who banished Rafiatu had passed away many years ago, but some people in the community still remembered the calamities which transpired before Rafiatu was sent to Gnani witch camp. Two of these were of Rafiatu's nephews, who still stayed at the family compound. They told me that Rafiatu came to live with her family in Saratinga after being banished from two communities due to witchcraft suspicions.

The nephews told me that Rafiatu had been staying in a village together with her husband when children and young adults in the village started dying mysteriously. The villagers believed that Rafiatu was behind these deaths and there were rumours going around the village about Rafiatu's nightly spiritual attacks. Rumour had it that Rafiatu had been caught red handed in a murder attempt. One night the naked body of Rafiatu had travelled to a house in the village where a boy was sleeping. The boy was going to be the next victim of spiritual assaults. But a man who had even stronger witch powers than Rafiatu had seen her actions and frozen her body by the boy's bedside. The next morning everyone could see Rafiatu still standing naked by her target.[190] Due to these rumours, Rafiatu had to flee the village together with her husband and children and relocate in another community. But soon people in the new village started having nightmares in which Rafiatu was chasing them. As a preemptive measure Rafiatu was told to leave the village.[191]

According to Rafiatu's nephews, the family in Saratinga thought that the witchcraft accusations against Rafiatu were lies. Therefore they took her into their house like family should and she became a highly respected member of the household.[192] But then three children in the house fell sick and died, some after eating food prepared by Rafiatu. After the death of the third child, Rafiatu was in her room preparing the corpse for funeral. Some family members came into the room and on the floor, next to the corpse, they saw a frog. The family became suspicious that Rafiatu had killed the children using witchcraft that she had planted in the frog. They took their suspicions to a soothsayer who confirmed that Rafiatu was to blame for the death of the children.[193] When it was confirmed that Rafiatu was a witch who used her spiritual powers to harm others, the residents of the family house took action. They alarmed a family leader in a nearby town, who then came to Saratinga. Without any violent attacks, Rafiatu was sent to Gnani witch camp.[194]

189Rafiatu, interview by author, 11 April 2012
190Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 16:19-19:14
191Ibid, 03:46-07:33
192Ibid, 00:08-03:27, 13:43-16:04, 19:48-21:50
193Ibid, 00:08-03:27, 07:35-13:42
194Rafiatu, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 00:24-02:47

The inhabitants of Saratinga did not protest against Rafiatu's banishment. Rafiatu's nephews said that Rafiatu was a “bad person” and therefore, she needed to stay at the witch camp in Gnani. At the camp Rafiatu could no more “throw the killing” because if she tried to do so, the “shrine would not forgive her.” She would be killed.[195] According to the nephews, the mysterious deaths in Saratinga had stopped after Rafiatu's banishment.

4.2.4 Attacks of the Lioness

Mariam's family lived in a half, unfinished compound house. Mariam's son, Zakari, had built three unfinished houses for his family. He had never been able to complete a house because every time he came close, Mariam was accused of witchcraft and banished from the community. Zakari had not wanted to leave her at a witch camp. Therefore the entire family was uprooted every time Mariam was accused of witchcraft aggression. But now Mariam had been banished for the third time and even though it caused him great grief to leave his mother at the camp in Gnani, this time Zakari would not take mercy on her.[196]

Zakari and his wife Salamatu told me that many years ago they were living in Yendi together with Mariam. But one day Mariam was accused of making a boy in the community fall sick. The king of the Dagomba tribe, who resides in Yendi, sent Mariam to the shrine in Gnani to test whether she was guilty of spiritual attacks. Mariam failed the test of the shrine and the king would no longer let her stay in Yendi. Mariam was forced to stay in Gnani witch camp together with one of Zakari and Salamatu's daughters, whom Mariam was responsible for by tradition. Zakari had supported his mother in claiming innocence and he was therefore issued a fine and had to give a cow and some money to the king. But Zakari was not able to pay his debt to the king. He decided to leave Yendi so the king could not find him and force him to pay.[197]

Zakari and Salamatu resettled in a village together with their family. As soon as they had taken up a new residence, they brought Mariam and their daughter back from Gnani. But one day a man, whom Zakari had befriended, came to the house while Zakari was not in. When the man left again, Mariam gave him a kola nut. The man ate the nut and before he reached home he started having stomach pains. When the pains became chronic, Zakari's friend accused Mariam of witchcraft attacks. Once again Mariam failed the test of the shrine and was forced to stay at Gnani witch camp

195Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 19:33-31:02
196Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012, 39:41-42:18; 53:40-55:57
197Ibid, 24:50-37:29

together with her granddaughter.[198]

Zakari and his wife did not want to leave Mariam at the witch camp. They decided to move to Tamale and invited Mariam to come along and live with them again. Their daughter, who had lived with Mariam in Gnani, got married and moved in with her husband.[199] But even though years passed, no children came from the marriage. According to Zakari, Mariam had admitted that it was her fault that her granddaughter did not have any children. Mariam had put cement in her stomach thus preventing her from becoming pregnant.[200]

After Zakari and Salamatu had lived together with Mariam for some years, their son became ill. One day while he was doing a test at school, he suddenly felt like someone was holding back his arms. He was unable to move or finish the test. When he came home only Mariam was there and she gave him some paracetamol to relieve the symptoms. But the boy's condition worsened and he kept complaining that his heart was aching. He was brought to a clinic but the doctors could not find the cause. The boy continued to feel ill. He told Zakari that he knew he was dying.[201] Zakari suspected Mariam was to blame for his son's illness. Zakari thought that she might be angry with him and was punishing him through the son because Zakari had not sided with Mariam in a fight that she recently had with a neighbour. When Zakari tried to reprimand Mariam, Mariam warned him that “he would see” and that he “would not live to tell the story.”[202] Furthermore, Mariam was a very strong person who would never let anyone advise her about right and wrong. She was “dangerous.”[203]

Zakari took the matter to the community chief, who ordered Mariam to heal her grandson. But according to Zakari, Mariam refused and said she was a lion, attacking her grandson because he was not helping her as much as he should.[204] The lion is a symbol of the predatory witch.[205] When Zakari and Salamatu's son later passed away, the chief of the community banished Mariam. He was afraid that if she had killed her own grandson, she would continue killing other people in the community too. Community members also wanted to set fire to Mariam's room. But Zakari becalmed them. If Mariam's room was burned, Zakari would have more trouble finishing his third uncompleted house.

198Ibid, 24:50-37:29
199Ibid, 24:50-37:29
200Ibid, 24:50-37:29
201Ibid, 02:00-07:37
202Ibid, 12:33-19:12
203Ibid, 59:52-01:03:58
204Ibid, 07:57-12:30
205Esther Goody, “Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State,” in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 210

Instead Zakari promised the community to send Mariam to Gnani witch camp.[206]

4.3 Conclusion

According to the Ghanaian witchcraft cosmology, the witch is somebody who can threaten the individual, the family, the community and even the principle of life. But the danger of the witch can be contained at the witch camps. The four cases of witch hunts also show that the witch is perceived as dangerous and somebody who must be banished. Banishment occurs in a setting where the witchcraft cosmology is prevalent, but they are not direct results of this cosmology. The next chapter will show that witchcraft accusations, banishment and violence targeted at accused witches are fear based practices of security.

206Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012, 20:06-22:19

5. Security in a World with Witches

According to Agamben, "the camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule."[207] I will here suggest that the witch camps in northern Ghana are also results of a permanent state of exception constructing witches as dangerous threats to society.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question: Why do witch camps exist in the north of Ghana? Based on the theoretical model presented in Chapter Three, this question will be answered in two steps. The need for witch camps cannot be explained without understanding why and how people become banished as witches. Step one thus involves an analysis based on securitisation theory of the narratives presented in the previous chapter. I will argue that people become witches through a process of securitisation. Step two implies an analysis of the emergency means legitimised through securitisation. I will show that witchcraft accusations involve a biopoliticisation of the accused witches resulting in violent closures and the space of the witch camps.

5.1 Becoming the Witch

As mentioned above, the first step to answering the question of why witch camps exist in the north of Ghana is to create an understanding of the mechanisms and structures of witchcraft accusations and banishment. The argument of this section will be that people are denounced and banished as witches as a result of a securitising process, in which the existential threat of spiritual violence becomes personified. The accused witches become embodiments of the feared evil forces at work in the world.[208]

A securitising speech act can only be successful if it is by pronounced "in the right manner, by the right person, in the right instance and to the right audience."[209] I will start this section with the right manner. I will show that witchcraft accusations ending in banishment and violence are speech acts that follow "the grammar of security."[210] Witchcraft accusations will be viewed as a means to manage the danger of witchcraft by fixating it in the body of the accused person. In the second and

207 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 96

208 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 64

209 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 136
Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 31

210 Ibid, 33

third section I will turn to the external facilitating conditions,[211] the contextual and social factors making it possible for the witchcraft accusation to end in a state of exception. I will show how the cases of Ayishetu, Senaba, Rafiatu and Mariam fulfilled these conditions and thus ended in banishment. In the section on imposing the state of exception, I will identify the right person for making a witchcraft accusation and the right audience to set an exception in motion. The section on the usual suspects is about the right instance of personifying witchcraft through accusations. I will identify characteristics making the accused a credible threat thus causing her to become the witch.

5.1.1 Danger Management

In this section I will argue that witchcraft accusations are securitising speech acts and that witch hunts are practices of security. On the basis of the four cases of witchcraft accusations, which were presented in the previous chapter, I will show that witchcraft accusations contain the three components of security, namely existential threat, referent object, and emergency measure. However, in witchcraft accusations these components are mainly implicit as the threat of witchcraft aggression is seen as persistent and recurring. Thus the sense of urgency and the legitimisation of emergency measures have become institutionalised[212] and are contained within everyday security seeking practices. As mentioned in Chapter Three this entails that certain words become master signifiers which automatically set a security apparatus in motion without extensive argumentation.[213] I will suggest that witchcraft is such a master signifier.

One of the most basic assumptions of securitisation is that the state of exception is a situation devoid of law.[214] Through securitisation it becomes legitimate to break free from rules that would otherwise apply.[215] The securitised situation is exceptional. Based on the case of Ayishetu in Tallongo, it could therefore be questioned whether witchcraft accusations are securitising speech acts. When Ayishetu was expelled from Tallongo, the chief emphasised that Ayishetu had acted in breach of the “rules and regulations” of the community, which had been upheld by four subsequent

211 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 31-35
212 Ibid, 27
213 Paul Roe, “Is securitization a 'negative' concept? Revisiting the normative debate over normal versus extraordinary politics,” *Security Dialogue* 43(3) (2012), 255
214 Georgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 50-51
215 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 25

chiefs.[216] According to these rules and regulations, anybody found guilty of practising malevolent witchcraft would be banished from the community. The state of exception is a derogation from normal behaviour in community life. The exception thus seems to contrast with a solution resorted to by generations. This could suggest that witchcraft is captured by the traditional law of the village. It could suggest that banishment of accused witches is not done outside the limits of the law and that it is not an emergency measure for dealing with dangers threatening to break down society. However, permanent banishment is not a commonly used measure for dealing with problems in Tallongo nor in other places in the north of Ghana. It is limited to the witch.[217] Thus it is more likely that the rules and regulations are imposed because the threat of witchcraft is perceived as permanent. The rules and regulation reflect a situation in which the threat of witchcraft aggression in recurrent and a new witch might be found regularly. Norm and exception are hence no longer distinguishable.[218]

Norm and exception become difficult to distinguish because the exception is integrated in everyday life. In theory, securitisation is supported by numerous fragile threads that both presuppose and produce the enemy but it only comes into effect through the speech act allowing for extraordinary measures to deal with the threat.[219] But as pointed out by Risør, in some contexts people's everyday practices of seeking safety can contain an ever present potentiality of full blown securitisation.[220] In such a situation the extraordinary nature of security practices is often concealed by a permanent state of exception.[221] In Ghana ontological insecurities relating to witchcraft aggression serve as a basis for such everyday safety seeking practices. Ontological insecurity can be defined as "the socially constructed anxiety that shapes pertinent kinds of danger, fears and concerns for a particular community at a particular time."[222] As mentioned in the previous chapter witchcraft is a contamination that can spoil a village. It threatens the person under attack; it can destruct the very

216 Tallongo Chief, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 04:33-06:08; 11:14-12:10
Tallongo Chief, interview by author, , 18 April2012

217 Tallongo chief, interview by author, 18 April 2012
Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 27:01-31:02
Reintegrated accused witch, interview by informant, 27 April 2012: 10:59-11:50

218 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 97

219 Roxanne Lynn Doty, "States of Exception on the Mexico-U.S. Borderr: Security, "Decisions," and Civilian Border Control," *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007): 130-131

220 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 156

221 Georgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 96

222 Nils Bubandt, "Vernacular Security: The Politics of Feeling Safe in Global, National and Local Worlds," *Security Dialogue* 36 (2005), 277

existence of the extended family, community and principle of life itself.[223] This existential threat is reflected in people's reactions when witchcraft is mentioned. In Ghana every reference to witchcraft induces immediate fear. Talk of witchcraft brings about worried looks, a quick acknowledgement of the reality of witches and then a change of subject,[224] as though speaking of it makes the danger more present. This fear or ontological insecurity forms an underlying mode of emergency reflected in everyday security practices.

Everyday security practices reveal that the danger of witchcraft attacks is always present. People often act secretively; they are for instance cautious of telling others about their plans in fear that these might be disrupted by evil spirits.[225] People are always careful and on the watch for signs that the enemy is on the loose. Mysterious events are interpreted as spiritual attacks.[226] When a community member dies, the question posed is rarely *what* but *who* killed this person. All suffering is deemed as agentive and thus evil.[227] Every misfortune or death is experienced as enigmatic violence; a sign that is recognised as violence by victims and witnesses but which lacks meaning.[228] Every sick or dead body is a signifier of an occult violence only lacking the signified. The signified is found in the witch. The enigma is solved when the witch is found. The witch adds meaning to and becomes responsible for death and suffering. The witch is the evil agent of suffering. In this context looking out for the witch is a practice of security. Insecurity is managed by looking for signs of witchcraft and spiritual attacks. Security is, in other words, sought through a "fixation of dangerousness in specific bodies."[229] Thus the ontological insecurity of witchcraft can erupt in personifications of the existential threat. In a context where searching for the witch is a security practice, naming somebody a witch amounts to "doing things with words," a speech act.[230] It is a powerful weapon of securitisation which "radically changes reality,"[231] at least for the person named as the threat and the surrounding community.

223 Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 60

224 Field notes by author, 9 May 2012
CHRAJ Officer Y, interview by author, 4 April 2012

225 "'Free night calls' is spiritually dangerous – Rev. Gabriel Ansah," *Adom News*, 6 August 2012, localised at http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201207/89665.php

226 Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 48

227 William E. Connoly, *Identity/Difference* (University of Minnesota Press 2002 [1991])

228 Henrik Rønsbo, "Displacing Enigma and Shaping Communal Hegemony – Towards an Analysis of Violence as Social Process," *Dialectical Anthropology* 30(2) (2006), 148

229 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 131

230 J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)

231 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 136

Securitisation thus happens "when something or *somebody* is publically recognised and defined as a dangerous enemy whose actions (or very existence) demand extraordinary actions at the hands of the community."[232] When a threat is perceived as permanent, practices of security are not necessarily restricted to defining what the existential threat is. Designating the embodiment of the abstract threat can equally be a practice of security. Therefore, witchcraft accusations are practices of security. Witchcraft accusations can be interpreted as attempts to manage the danger of spiritual assaults by confining the danger to specific bodies. The accusers of witchcraft seem to be looking for signs of something "witchy"[233] attaching itself to a specific person. The signs can be found in innate characteristics and behaviour of the person making them usual suspects or external elements attaching themselves to the person. This is seen in the cases of Ayishetu and Rafiatu. Allegedly Ayishetu did not have any conflicts with residents in her home village.[234] But the dream of her chasing a young man in the community was a sign that she could be an evil threat. When she failed the test of the shrine, it was deemed to be certain that she could inflict spiritual violence upon the villagers of Tallongo. In Saratinga, Rafiatu was allegedly a highly respected member of the family.[235] But the three dead bodies of children and young people in the house and the frog close to the corpse that Rafiatu was preparing for funeral could together be read as signs of spiritual violence. When the family sought the help of a soothsayer, a final connection between signifier and signified was made. The children had died from witchcraft attacks, launched by Rafiatu using the frog as a hiding place for her spiritual powers.

That witchcraft accusations are indeed securitising speech acts is supported by the way the accusers, or the securitising actors, speak of the alleged witches. As mentioned, a securitising speech act contains a threat, a referent object and the legitimisation of emergency measures. The accuser needs to present the presence of the witch as an existential threat towards the survival of the extended family, community or village which, if not dealt with, will make the communality cease to exist.[236] It can be difficult to pinpoint and analyse a speech act when data has been collected after the state of exception has already come into force and the emergency measure has been meted out against the accused witch. However, the manner in which legitimacy is assigned to the emergency measure by

232Ibid, 135
233Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 64
234Ayishetu's family, interview by author, 5 April 2012, 02:55-04:00
235Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 19:48-21:50
236Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 33

the accuser can be a clue to the manner in which the speech act was pronounced. In the case of Ayishetu, members of Alhassan's family presented her as a threat to themselves and the community and thus argued that she should be banished from Tallongo and should not be allowed to come back.

> When Ayishetu comes back she will be a threat to the community, especially for the family members here [the Alhassan family, ed.], she will be a threat. So her coming back to this community, I don't share that idea.[237]

This utterance designates Ayishetu as a threat towards a referent object, the Alhassan family and the community as a whole, and identifies Ayishetu's absence from the community as a counter measure. This indicates that upon accusation the Alhassan's family presented Ayishetu as a security threat while making her absence important to the survival of their family and the community as a whole. Thus banishment of Ayishetu became justified with reference to security and since she ended up being banished and exposed to violence, they appear to have been successful in convincing other people that Ayishetu was a danger to the community. Senaba, Mariam and Rafiatu were also spoken of as threats towards the community thus making banishment a necessity. Mariam was called "dangerous"[238] and the chief of the community found it necessary to eliminate her as a threat through banishment because he was sure that otherwise Mariam would attack other people.[239] Rafiatu was spoken of as a "bad person" who could not be allowed to stay in the community.[240] And Senaba was constructed as dangerous through violence.[241] But even though many informants spoke of the danger that these women posed to the community, it did not seem to be important to explain exactly what they meant by saying that the accused witch was dangerous. This is a sign that the witch is a master signifier; that the dangerousness of the witch is taken for granted and implicit in accusations.

Because the dangerousness of witchcraft is taken for granted, emergency measures to deal with this danger are always an option. This indicates a state of exception which might already be in force but becomes targeted at specific bodies through witchcraft accusations. Thus what changes by naming the witch is not which means are legitimate for achieving security in a world with witches, but whom these means can be targeted against. Through witchcraft accusation and the fixation of dangerousness in certain bodies, banishment and sometimes violent closures to insecurity become

237Ayishetu's accusers, interview by author, 10 April 2012: 32:05-23:25
238Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012, 59:52-01:03:58
239Ibid, 20:06-22:19
240Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 19:33-31:02
241Senaba's family, interview by author, 12 April 2012, 59:57-01:01:37

possible.[242] These closures are counteractions against the ever lurking dangerousness and what kinds of action they entail will be discussed further later in this chapter. However, it is important to note that closure is only partial[243] and the danger of the witch seems to take new forms and relocate to new bodies. In Saratinga closure was seemingly achieved when Rafiatu was banished from the village and took residence at the witch camp. But elsewhere it seems as though closure is never quite reached. In Tallongo, where a number of people have been banished due to witchcraft accusations, the chief emphasised that Ayishetu was not the first one and would certainly not be the last one expelled from the community because of witchcraft accusations. It seems as though the dangerousness of witchcraft always takes residence in a new body. Even if one village has rid itself of an immediate threat, it emerges elsewhere. Thus the fear of the witch lives on making the threat of witchcraft attacks continuously persuasive. And therefore all four cases of witchcraft accusation and banishment analysed here are initiated by similar security concerns.

Witchcraft accusations can hence be defined as performative speech acts that, for a moment, confine the danger of spiritual assaults in the body of the named witch. The witch is constituted as an embodiment of an existential threat to society through two different kinds of performative speech acts. The first is the accusation itself, whether direct or indirect, which is an *illocutionary* speech act. This speech act has a certain force that is put into play in the utterance of a sentence.[244] For example, in uttering the words "the wife is to blame" in relation to a man's untimely death,[245] the speaker is radically changing reality. In a Ghanaian context the speaker is indirectly saying that the wife is a witch. Thereby, the wife is interpellated into the subject position of a witch.[246] She becomes a witch. The same applies to Alhassan describing a dream in which Ayishetu chased him, Zakari explaining that his mother admitted to being a lion, or Razak accusing Senaba of using local medicine. These statements all spark local images of the witch and thus the women become witches. Therefore the person making accusations of witchcraft is a securitising actor. The accuser reproduces the general notions of dangerousness while changing reality in the local community. One amongst them becomes a witch; someone to be feared. This points to the *perlocutionary* act, which is "the achieving of certain effects by saying something."[247] When a person is identified as a

242Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 132
243Ibid, 132
244J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962),120
245Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 74
246Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971)
Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996)
247J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 120

witch, certain consequences might follow. By stating that a certain woman is a witch, fear is evoked in an audience. This is the fear that eventually leads to adoption of emergency measures or closures as a safety seeking procedure.

5.1.2 Imposing the State of Exception

Banishment and the state of exception pertaining to a particular witch can only be imposed if the illocutionary speech act, the witchcraft accusation, is pronounced "by the right person" and "to the right audience."[248] In this section I will show that the four cases of witchcraft accusations became successful securitisations legitimising extraordinary measures because those involved had sufficient social capital. The accusers, the securitising actors, had the necessary authority for the witchcraft accusations to be recognised and the audience was in a position enabling them to impose emergency measures.

Through the witchcraft accusation a formerly private quarrel moves into the public sphere. In order to achieve political ramifications the speech act must leave the house in search of the authority figure able to decide upon the state of exception. The quarrel that starts at the house must end up concerning the entire village. In a community oriented society the misfortunes that spark witchcraft suspicions are always on the brink of leaving the house and becoming a public event. Any spiritual attack on a community member is also an attack on the community of which the victim is part. However, there appears to be a clear pattern in who moves the quarrel and the issue of witchcraft into the public sphere. Not everyone can act as a securitising actor publicly denouncing someone as a witch. Witchcraft accusations must at least be supported by men in order to become significant, since only their power and authority is recognised in the public realm.[249] This reflects the need of a securitising actor to have the necessary social power to define security; a power which is gendered.

The field research suggests that the right person to denounce somebody as a witch is not just any man but the patriarchal head of the household. Only the patriarchal head of the household can legitimately and with any form of authority commit securitising acts with reference to his household and beyond. This could be explained by the traditional perception of the compound head as a witch

248 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 136
Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998: 31

249 Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993), 546

in the sense that he has spiritual powers and is able to see who else might have these powers.[250] Zakari was the head of his household and could thus go to the chief himself to complain about Mariam. But when Alhassan had a dream about Ayishetu attacking him, he did not go to the chief's palace alone to make an accusation against Ayishetu. He went together with his father. As the functioning head of household, Razak was also the one who took the matter of Senaba to the area chief. But he was not supposed to have this role. He was "supposed to be a small boy."[251] According to the authority lines of the family, he was not supposed to represent the family in public matters nor care for the security of the family. It was only because the elders of the family had died, allegedly through Senaba's spiritual attacks, that Razak had to take on the role as head of household. And even though he was now head of the compound, he was accountable to elders living in other towns who outranked him. This is suggestive about the authority lines in northern Ghana and who can be involved in the construction of security. Even though authority might "wax and wane,"[252] elderly male members of society are generally at the top of the hierarchy. Within the family, men have authority over women, senior men over junior men, senior wives over junior wives, and older children over younger children.[253] But only the patriarchal head of household has a public political role even though junior men are often those used in combat. Security is hence practised by senior men with reference to their compound, extended family, community or village.

The witchcraft accusation needs to be pronounced to the right audience in order to achieve political ramifications. My fieldwork suggests that the right audience is public authorities such as chiefs and family elders, since these are the focal points of decision making in the local communities. They are the figures of authority who might decide upon the state of exception. According to Schmitt, he who can decide on the state of exception is sovereign.[254] Sovereignty is traditionally defined as a monopoly to exercise legitimate violence within a given territory.[255] However, the institutions practising sovereign-like authority by deciding on the limits of the moral community, have a "twilight character."[256] Their public authority is never quite consolidated. Chiefs and family elders

250Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 212

251Sanaba's family, interview by author, 12 April 2012: 01:01:37-01:02:07

252Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: An Introduction," in *Development and Change* 37(4) (2006), 676

253Field notes by author, 10 May 2012
Field notes by author, 16 May 2012

254Carl Schmitt, Political Theology, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1995 [1934]), 5

255Max Weber, "Politik som levevej," in Heine Andersen, Hans Henrik Bruun and Lars Bo Kaspersen eds. *Udvalgte tekster* (København, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2003 [1919]), 216

256Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa," in Christian Lund ed., Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007)

operate in parallel with and at times in opposition to the state or other authorities. Their authority positions reflect the focal point of collective identification, especially in the rural areas of the north where people are more oriented towards extended family and village communities than the state. Through a minimum of voluntary compliance, they are hence able to legitimately define and enforce decisions which are collectively binding for members of the community.[257] Chiefs and family elders have de facto responsibility of producing security for the community. They have the power to impose law as the case presented in the introduction showed; the community chief interfered in and stopped the violence that the forty accused witches were about to be subjected to. Thereby chiefs also have the power to suspend general law and impose a state of exception applicable to the accused witch.

Banishment was, in the case of Senaba, Mariam and Ayishetu, decided upon by the village or community chiefs, in two of the cases based on the judging of the chief priest at the witch hunting shrine. In the case of Rafiatu, who had been excluded from her community for a decade, it was the family elders based on the judging of a soothsayer who decided on banishment. This underscores the changing nature of public authority and who might decide on the state of exception. But in all cases the majority of the community accepted the decision of the public authority figure to banish the witch. In the case of Rafiatu nobody resisted the banishment and thus they seem to have passively accepted the emergency measures meted out against Rafiatu. In the other cases the community members accepted the securitised situation more actively by exerting or suggesting the exertion of further emergency measures in the form of physical violence towards the body of the accused witch or setting fire to her residency. There was only resistance in the case of Ayishetu. Her family opposed her banishment, which resulted in them all becoming targets of violence and reporting the case to CHRAJ, an independent institution constitutionally mandated to investigate human rights violations and take actions to remedy such.[258] CHRAJ tried to mediate with the villagers of Tallongo on behalf of Ayishetu's family but could not prevent Ayishetu's banishment. The chief of Tallongo was not willing to revoke the state of exception. Those banished due to witchcraft suspicions would be too great a threat to the community.

> Even if the community should say that they should all come back, I will not allow them to come back. Because when they come back to the community they will continue their activities, their bad activities, in the community. […] I bet you, if they should come back, within one week or two weeks I would hear people dying and other

257Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: An Introduction," in Development and Change 37(4) (2006), 676-678
2581992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Articles 216-230

> calamities in the community.[259]

This further highlights the twilight character of the public authorities. A number of institutions might exercise public authority within the same territory simultaneously and they might do so in conflict with each other.[260] And it suggests that the chief of Tallongo's power to practise security and impose a state of exception is greater than CHRAJ's power to oppose banishment based on witchcraft accusations. Hence the accusers and the audience were in a social position enabling them to impose a state of exception pertaining to a particular accused witch and to adopt emergency measures to deal with the threat she posed.

5.1.3 The Usual Suspects

The state of exception pertaining to a particular accused witch is unlikely to be imposed if the threat characteristics are not recognisable as such. Securitisation is more likely to be successful if the threat presented in the speech act is generally perceived as threatening. Since witchcraft accusations embody the general threat of witchcraft in certain people, these people must be credible as dangerous witches. In this section I will show that the success of the securitisations and the subsequent adoption of emergency measures can also be attributed to the social position of those accused of witchcraft. They were all the usual suspects of witchcraft aggression.

Whereas men are the accusers of witchcraft aggression, the accused are women. Those who are denounced, banished and subjected to violence due to witchcraft are mostly women, especially elderly women and women perceived as difficult. The "right instance"[261] of naming somebody a witch is when a woman is head strong. A Ghanaian jest states: "When a woman is wicked we call her a witch." This suggests that women carry the contaminating form of witchcraft that might end up spoiling the house or village. When they act in a certain manner, they attract suspicions as embodied threats of spiritual attacks. The witchcraft cosmology is perhaps not source of the gender difference in witch persecutions.[262] The reason can rather be found in the "making up of people"[263]

259Interview with Tallongo Chief, 10/4-2012: 08:45-09:30

260Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa," in Christian Lund ed., *Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 22

261Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010),
Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 31

262Dirk Kohnert, "Magic and Witchcraft: Implications for Democratization and Poverty-Alleviating Aid in Africa," *World Development* 24 (1996), 1349

263Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 99-114

and societal structures in the north of Ghana.

Ageing women are the usual suspects of witchcraft aggression qua their age and gender. Witchcraft is a knowledge that is accumulated through life.[264] Therefore elderly women are more exposed to witchcraft accusations than younger women. The identity construction of old women as witches is supported by language. In Dagbani, which is the most commonly used language in the north of Ghana, an old woman is called *pagkpiema* or *pagkora*; names that are also euphemisms for the witch.[265] And the witch camp in Gambaga, located in the Mamprusi area, is in the local language called *pwaanyankura-foango,* which translates to old women's section.[266] Hence, ageing women are constructed as always almost witches, on the verge of becoming the excluded other. In language, they appear to be vengeful creatures that ought to be feared. This indicates that elderly women are perceived as dangerous "weapons of mass destruction."[267]

The reason why the witch is defined according to identity markers such as age and gender might be because when the woman grows old she becomes surplus population. She might become unable to contribute to the family or village through labour or by giving birth to new members of the community. As a woman at Gambaga witch camp concluded, there was no longer any reason for her to stay with her husband since she could no longer bear children.[268] And in a polygynous society the woman might be replaced by a younger wife.

Another explanation for why women are the usual suspects of witchcraft aggression can be found in notions of legitimate aggression. Women are expected to be submissive, industrious, benevolent and supportive.[269] Women who know their place are careful not to speak up. They wash the clothes of the rest of the family, give up their seat when a man wants to sit and never speak on behalf of the family.[270] Women are not expected to behave in an aggressive manner since the role of publicly

264Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 211

265Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 63

266Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993), 535
Field notes by author, 26 April 2012

267Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 76

268Field notes by author, 26 April 2012

269Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 45
Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 207-244
Mensah Adinkrah, "Witchcraft Accusations and Female HomicideVictimization in Contemporary Ghana," in *Violence Against Women* 10 (2004), 331

270Field notes by author, 10 April 2012

fighting for influence and ensuring the security of the household belongs to men. In carrying out this role men are expected to act aggressively whilst competing with other men and to use any means available to boost their strength. This includes consuming local medicine infused with spiritual force. The strongest and most powerful man is he with the strongest medicine. The usage of spiritual power is known to all. Thus men are perceived to use the spiritual for legitimate purposes which might be deemed good and beneficial for the community.[271] Men use their spiritual powers to protect their dependants. But when a woman exercises power, she secretly steps out of her supportive role and acts in a more competitive manner, which might be interpreted as a form of subversion undermining the power of men. Aggression on the part of a woman is illegitimate and evil.[272]

There is thus a link between witchcraft and power. Women are mostly targeted as witches when they exhibit a behaviour which departs the submissiveness expected of women. When a woman is aggressive and head strong, people start wondering where she got her power from. Acquisition of material things not common in the community might also be interpreted as a sign that the woman is carrying out secret spiritual aggression which allows her to progress on the expense of other community members. Therefore, being the first in a community to get a tin roof on your house, might cause suspicions of witchcraft aggression.[273] When a woman is aggressive or has acquired relative wealth, she is acting in breach of the African traditional customary laws of redistribution and solidarity with kin.[274] Witchcraft is considered an anti-social act[275] and behaving in a manner considered anti-social thus attracts suspicions of evil witchcraft. A person, especially a woman, who appears envious and spiteful or shows misery and malice is hence a credible threat to society.[276] Anti-social behaviour conflicts with the "imagined community"[277] and thus sparks vernacular

Field notes by author, 14 April 2012
Field notes by author, 10 May 2012

271 Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 68

272 Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993), 531; 542-546
Esther Goody, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State," in Mary Douglas ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 207-244

273 Reintegrated accused witch, interview by author, 27 April 2012, 17:05-18:45

274 Dirk Kohnert, "Magic and Witchcraft: Implications for Democratization and Poverty-Alleviating Aid in Africa," *World Development* 24 (1996), 1349

275 Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 62

276 Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 71
Opoku, 1978: 146

277 Benedict R. Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983)

security images of the dangerous witch.

The women that I met at the witch camps might have looked shy, submissive and fragile to me. But in the narratives of those who accused them of witchcraft, they appear as both outspoken, envious, spiteful and attentive to their own needs and wants rather to the ones of the family. They appear as if they do not know their place. This applies for example to Senaba who wanted another room in addition to the one she already had in the house. This was interpreted as a sign of greed on her part. She also stole firewood from a family member with whom she was otherwise supposed to share her own wood if necessary. This suggests that Senaba was avoiding her responsibilities as a residence of the compound. Mariam was also envious of what her grandson gave to her son. She wanted a bigger piece of the cake. And when the chief asked her to cure her grandson, she spitefully rejected his command. Her family emphasised that Mariam's sister, who was also an elderly woman, would not be banished to the witch camp because she "did not do anything."[278] She seemed to be a quiet and submissive old woman.[279] In the case of Ayishetu, her family emphasised how unfair her banishment was since she did know her place. She was not roaming around the village but was always in the house or out farming. And when she went out farming she came straight back to the house afterwards.[280] But in Tollongo many people have been banished. This suggests that the ontological insecurities making inhabitants of Tallongo fearful of spiritual attacks are greater than in other places. Ayishetu was by this logic a credible personification of evil because in Tallongo anyone could become a witch.

When a woman is accused of witchcraft, the accusation is also more likely to be accepted as true because of societal structures, which imply that women are never fully integrated into the community. She never quite belongs; she is always a foreigner:

> We know that in the society women in general, and the elderly women in particular, are socially powerless. They depend so much on others. And the situation of women in our setting is very pathetic, because she is always a foreigner. She does not have a land. […] What I mean is that she does not have a home. Because if she is in her father's place, they don't see her as part of the family. [...] They see her as somebody who will be leaving her family for another family. And when she is there in the husband's home, she is also seen as not belonging to that family. So we see that in either case, she does not belong there. That is the reason why she is so helpless. Because if anything happens to her in her husbands house […] not many people are there to fight on her

278Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012
279Mariam's family, interview by author, 24 April 2012
280Ayishetu's family, interview by author, 5 April 2012

behalf.[281]

The citation above suggests that women are not included in society on their own terms. They are only included through their affiliation with a male member of the society; she is never a full member. Women are on probation and only included by their ability to behave as women should by always working to benefit the community. If a woman behaves in a manner, which does not fit the in-group, the woman is quickly excluded as there is often nobody who will take her side and attempt to draw her back inside and convince people that she is not a dangerous threat to the moral community. Thus Ayishetu, Rafiatu, Senaba and Mariam were all credible embodiments of evil witchcraft and the accusations against them therefore resulted in the adoption of emergency measures.

5.2 Biopoliticisation of the Witch

The above section shows that witchcraft accusations occur as practices of security in which a general state of exception becomes embodied in particular people. For the accused witch, banishment thus marks an entry into a state of exception. Banishment is only one of many emergency measures that can be used for dealing with the witch. This section will look more into what happens after securitisation has taken place. The second step to answering the question of why witch camps exist in the north of Ghana is to create an understanding of the biopoliticisation that banishment from the moral community entails and how this opens the space of the camp.

This section will proceed as follows: I will start by showing that after banishment the witch becomes reduced to bare life and violent closures[282] to witchcraft related insecurities become legitimate. I will then argue that the witch camps are a response to securitisation and biopoliticisation of the accused witch.

5.2.1 Killable Witch

The state of exception is a space devoid of law.[283] Through securitisation it becomes legitimate to break free from rules that would otherwise apply.[284] When community chiefs and family elders

281 Zakari Saa, Ministry of Women and Children, in panel debate, 19 May 2012(B), 13:47-15:06

282 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 132

283 Georgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 50-51

284 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London:

expel the witch from the community, they suspend the general norm of community orientation. Under normal circumstances community and family life are inclusive. Integrating as many people as possible into the community is perceived as an advantage.[285] An individual is included in the community as soon as the community members know whom this person is connected to, whom the person is part of and belongs to.[286] Membership in the community implies helping other community members and being helped by the others.[287] Community members share in each other's fortunes and misfortunes. Membership in the community implies protection by the community. In case of an attack on a community member, the whole community will fight on the member's behalf.[288] When the witch is banished, she no longer enjoys this protection.

The witch label might imply grave danger for the person carrying it due to the association of witchcraft with evil. By naming the witch as a threat and banishing her from the community, she becomes a personification of everything anti-social and evil; she disrupts life and spoils the village. Once the witch has been identified, she thus becomes excluded from the moral community in a very physical manner and deprived of her human rights. She no longer enjoys the right to self-defence and security. Everybody might legitimately expose her to violence thus challenging her material security,[289] the integrity of her body. She might be tortured and subjected to other human rights abuses.[290] Because the witch is a dangerous person it becomes both legitimate and necessary to eliminate her, either physically by killing her or geographically by driving her away from her home town.[291] Because of the dangerousness of the witch, she becomes stripped of her rights and reduced to bare life.

This implies that labelling somebody a witch legitimises a politicisation of human life, a biopoliticisation of the body of the witch. When a chief or a family elder decides upon banishment of the witch, they draw an outer limit of the moral community and make a distinction between

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Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 25

285 Tallongo Chief, interview by author, 18 April 2012
Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 25:00-27:00

286 Field notes by author, 8 May 2012

287 Ibid
Fieldnotes by author, 10 May 2012
Fieldnotes by author, 11 May 2012

288 Field notes by author, 8 May 2012

289 Steffen Jensen, "Security and violence on the frontier of the state," in Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio eds., *Violence and Non-Violence in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2007)

290 Abraham Akrong, "A phenomenology of witchcraft in Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 62-63

291 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 118

valuable and non-valuable life. The moral community is "founded not as the expression of a social tie but as an untying that prohibits."[292] In other words the moral community comes into being by excluding somebody and thereby creating the boundaries of the community. Banishment of the witch is such an untying. It produces a demarcation between those worthy and unworthy of society's protection. In the untying the excluded body becomes abandoned by the community "to an extent that causes, if not actual death, then social death."[293] The one who is banned is abandoned by law, exposed and threatened. Her life can only be lived on the mercy of others.[294] This might be especially true in a community oriented society such as those in the north of Ghana. When subjectivity only exists by means of the community, being cast out of that community renders the witch as worthless. The life of the witch becomes a "life devoid of value."[295] Thus when the witch is banished she goes from being in a position of qualified life to bare life. The banished witch is thus a figure akin to Agamben's homo sacer.[296] The cases of violence analysed below indicate that, like homo sacer, the witch occupies a zone of indistinction between life and death, human and animal.[297] Through banishment the witch becomes bereft of her humanity. The witch can be treated in an inhuman and degrading manner because she is not regarded as human. Sometimes she might even be lynched. Her life is not a life worth protecting or preserving.

There is another analogy between the witch and homo sacer. Everybody might legitimately subject the witch to violence. According to Agamben, the one who is banned is somebody who may be considered as dead and whom everybody may legitimately harm.[298] Through expulsion from the moral community the outcast suffers social death. Homo sacer is thus somebody towards whom everybody can act as sovereigns.[299] Everybody might decide upon the life or death of homo sacer. It is a figure that might be acted upon legitimately and killed with moral impunity.[300] Likewise, there is no monopoly on legitimate violence towards the witch. After banishment, the imposition of the state of exception with regards to the witch, authorities and commoners become entangled. Every

292Alain Badiou, *L'être et l'événement. (*Paris: Seuil, 1988), cited in Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 56

293Lars Buur, "The Sovereign Outsourced: Local Justice and Violence in Port Elizabeth," in Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, *Sovereign Bodies. Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 204

294Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23

295Ibid, 81

296Ibid

297Ibid, 63-66

298Ibid, 63

299Ibid, 53

300Steffen Jensen, "Security and violence on the frontier of the state," in Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio eds., *Violence and Non-Violence in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2007)

member of the community might begin to act as sovereigns towards the witch, performing violent acts that further constitute the accused witch as the embodiment of the existential threat of spiritual attacks. The witch falls victim to community's retributive, disciplinary, and exemplary violence.

The cases of Ayishetu and Senaba demonstrate that the witch is bereft of her humanity. The cases show that the witch is somebody towards whom everybody can act as sovereigns, subjecting her to violence and perhaps deciding over her life and death. After being banished, both women had errands in their respective communities and therefore they went back. But they had become legitimate targets for torturous violence. When Ayishetu went to visit her family, she and her family were subjected to violence by a grouping of villagers in Tallongo. The assemblage torched their house and stoned them. Ayishetu feared that the assemblage intended to take her and her family's lives.[301] This violence was carried out with impunity, both legal and moral. Ayishetu suspected that the chief of the community knew about the violent attacks on her and her family.[302] The house of the chief was located very close to Ayishetu's family compound.[303] But even though the participants of the violent attacks are not faced with moral prosecution within the locality, they might be juridically prosecuted.[304] Therefore CHRAJ could threaten to file a legal case against the villagers who subjected Ayishetu and her family to violence.[305] However, like most other cases of violence against alleged witches,[306] the case never became a legal case. This shows that accused witches are abandoned by law, both state law and local norms.

Senaba was likewise subjected to stoning by a mob of people from her community when she came back from the camp in order to pick up her belongings from her former compound. It was also at Senaba's former compound, during an interview with her family, that I encountered the most tense atmosphere. As mentioned before, a group of people was outside the house ready to attack me and my informants because they suspected that we were planning to bring Senaba back to the community.[307] This indicates that "violence precedes truth and violence generates truth."[308] Those

301 Ayishetu's family, interview by author, 5 April 2012, 08:01-09:21; 13:08-17:15
Ayishetu, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 07:15-09:17; 17:29-17:59

302 Ibid, 09:45-11:35

303 Field notes by author, 5 April 2012

304 Steffen Jensen, "Security and violence on the frontier of the state," in Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio eds., *Violence and Non-Violence in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2007)

305 CHRAJ officer Y, interview by author, 5 April 2012

306 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 123

307 Senaba's family, interview by author, 12/ April 2012, 57:20-01:01:37

308 Helene Risør, "Violent Closures and New Openings. Civil Insecurity, Citizens and State in El Alto, Bolivia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, 2010), 186

suspected of being involved in witchcraft in any way or helping somebody accused of witchcraft, might be subjected to violence instantly. No trial is needed in order to invoke "instant justice." Violence rather legitimises itself. Through the infliction of violence on the witch, her body becomes constructed as dangerous, deserving the maltreatment imposed on it.

Not all who are banished due to witchcraft accusations are subjected to violence. And not all approach the witch as subhuman consistently. Rafiatu was banished from Saratinga without any violent attacks.[309] This was emphasised by both Rafiatu and her family. But still she was spoken of as evil.[310] Mariam was also spoken of as dangerous[311] but still her family expressed grief about sending her to Gnani witch camp[312] and they would not let other people in the community torch her house.[313] This is a sign of ambivalence towards the witch. To some the witch might be both family and a homo sacer; sometimes the witch might be hovering between qualified and bare life. But the absence of violence does not necessarily mean that the witch is not always a legitimate target of violence. Rather, the fact that both Rafiatu and her family felt compelled to mention that she was not subjected to violence suggests that it is unusual not to subject the accused witch to brutalities. Somebody branded a witch is thus faced with material security concerns. She might therefore be forced to vacate the community and seek refuge in the witch camps.

5.2.2 Camping Witches

Following Agamben there is a nexus between the state of exception and the existence of the camp.[314] Camps are born out of the exception; a space opened up when the exception has become permanent.[315] I will here suggest that the witch camps in the north of Ghana are also a materialisation of a securitised situation in which the body of the witch has become a pure biopolitical body that everybody might treat as they please. The camps are a reaction to a situation where many people have become reduced to bare life. Generated from the exception, witch camps thus contain a double security function. Through segregation of those branded as witches they provide the broad population with a closure for their safety seeking practices. But the camps also

309 Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 31:03-31:36
Rafiatu, interview by author, 10 April 2012, 04:26-05:25
310 Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 21:51-24:45
311 Mariam's family, interview by author, 22 April 2012, 59:52-01:03:58
312 Ibid, 53:40-55:57
313 Ibid, 20:06-22:19
314 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 96
315 Ibid

protect the personal security of accused witches by shielding them from the community's violence or threat thereof.

Because of the duality of the witch camps, the nature of the camps as either places of confinement or sanctuary has been debated in both Ghana and internationally.[316] But as suggested above, the camps possess elements of both since they are born out of the exception. First, the witch camps do protect those branded as witches against being killed by violence; they function as a form of protective custody.[317] As mentioned earlier, the witch camps in Ghana are said to have been founded for humanitarian reasons as an attempt to prevent the killing of people branded as witches.[318] Thus the camps were originally intended as a countermeasure to actions allowed when the dangerousness of witchcraft has been fixated in specific bodies and these bodies become captured by a state of exception. According to Heins, the aim of humanitarian interventions is to rehabilitate the lived life of those suffering.[319] The rituals carried out at the witch camps should also rehabilitate the witch because she loses her spiritual powers through these rituals. Thus the cleansing rituals make her ready to re-enter social intercourse[320] and she might be reintegrated into the community that banished her. The GO Home project in Gambaga has also been successful in repatriating and reintegrating many of those who have been banished due to witchcraft accusations.[321]

However, there are also many that never leave Gambaga witch camp. And in the other camps, a vast majority of the inmates live at the camps until their dying day. Since most never escape the camps, the camps have a confining character. Confinement entails some form of barrier to social intercourse[322] which might be forced upon the inmate. Those residing at the witch camps do not engage extensively in social intercourse with members of their former communities since they have been forced to leave their homes and families.[323] According to Bauman, forcible eviction from social intercourse is often used against those seen as threats to the social order as it has the potential

316 Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009)

317 Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), "State of Human Rights in Ghana," 2008, 62-63

318 Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home), "The history of the camp," Unpublished, 1

319 Volker Heins, "Georgio Agamben and the Current State of Affairs in Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Policy," *German Law Journal* 6(5) (2005), 855

320 Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, (CHRAJ), *Human Rights Education Material,* 2009, 135

321 Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home), "The history of the camp," Unpublished, 2

322 Erving Goffman, *Asylums, essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* (Chicago: Aldine, 1962), 15

323 Susan Drucker-Brown, "Mamprusi Witchcraft, Subversion and Changing Gender Relations," in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 63(4) (1993), 535

to neutralise the threat and calm public angst evoked by the threat.[324] Witch camps are a form of confinement neutralising the dangerousness of the witch. The threat of the witch is geographically eliminated from the community when the witch enters the camp. Because of the attachment of the witch camps to shrines, the women are perceived as controlled by violent and vengeful spirits,[325] which will "not forgive" if the witches attempt to practice their powers.[326] Thus society achieves a temporary state of safety without killing the witch.

Agamben's observation that entry into camp marks a definitive exclusion from the moral community[327] is also true for the witch camps since most inmates never permanently leave the camps. This implies that in spite of the humanitarian intentions of the witch camps and perhaps with the exception of the Gambaga camp, the witch camps are protecting *bare* life instead of rehabilitating *lived* life.[328] Like Agamben's camps, the witch camps are thus "a limit zone between life and death, inside and outside, in which they [are] no longer anything but bare life."[329] When the witch enters the camp, she is already socially dead. She has already become somebody whom everybody can kill with moral impunity. She cannot expect to re-enter the moral community. She has already been abandoned by her kin and at the camp she is also neglected materially and financially.[330] In Ghana it is common to eat from the same bowl. Sharing food seems to be a token of social inclusion. But at the camp the branded witch eats alone, without her family.[331] In Gambaga witch camp the inmates have access to three daily meals, water and medical treatment.[332] But at the camp in Gnani inmates are not guaranteed food every day and there is no potable water. The main source of water is a stream which is located approximately one and a half kilometres from the settlement and dries out during raining season. The quality of the housing is also in poor condition, exposing the inmates to mosquito- and snakebites.[333] And when they fall sick, access to medical treatment is difficult due to stigmatisation.[334] My fieldwork suggests that people stay at the camps

324Zygmunt Bauman, "Social Uses of Law and Order," in David Garland and Richard Sparks eds., *Criminology and Social Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2000), 33
325Karen Palmer, *Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 52
326Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 22:30-24:45
327Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 91
328Ibid, 78
329Ibid, 91
330Mensah Adinkrah, "Witchcraft Accusations and Female HomicideVictimization in Contemporary Ghana," in *Violence Against Women* 10 (2004), 338
331Field notes by author, 26 April 2012
332Ibid
333Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), "State of human rights," 2009, 124
334Abass Yakubu, "The Policy and Social Implications of Witchcraft Accusations in the Yendi Municipality" (Master dissertation, Center for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, 2011), 42

only because the alternative is certain death.[335] Thus what the camps preserve is not the qualified life of the person accused of witchcraft aggression. They only allow accused witches to continue living as bare life. The inmates no longer hold any rights as members of the community. In the camp they are utterly rightless, only biologically alive.

The camp is thus a materialisation of this state of exception and a consolidation of the biopolitical body.[336] Just as outside the camp, the witch might also be killed inside the camp with moral impunity. One example of this is a case about a woman who died instantly in one of the camps after drinking a concoction to cleanse her of malevolent spiritual powers. As earlier argued, for some the witch is both family and somebody dangerous who cannot live amongst them. This was also the case for the woman's children who reported her death as a murder to the police. But according to local belief, a witch who does not confess to the possession of witchcraft will be killed when drinking the cleansing concoction. Therefore, the leader of the woman's family decided to withdraw the case from the police. The deceased woman was considered responsible for her own death. She had been thoroughly warned by the chief priest that death could be the outcome when she refused to confess her actions. But when the family went to withdraw the case, the case had already become a state case. Thus a legal trial followed. But the person who had given the woman her concoction was not convicted for murder. The circumstances were found to be mitigating and the responsible person was only found guilty of manslaughter; killing a human being without malicious intention.[337] His penalty was to pay "blood money" to the family of the deceased woman.[338] This shows that also inside the camp, killing a suspected witch causes neither homicide nor celebration.[339] And because killing the witch is quite legitimate, almost all of the inmates in the Gnani witch camp were killed during inter-ethnic conflicts in 1994.[340] This shows that even inside the camp, the witch might be subjected to violence. The camp just offers an opportunity and not a guarantee of being protected from violence and death . Whether atrocities are committed or not depends on the ethical sense of the chief priest or who the temporary sovereign might be. Thus the witch camp can be defined as a "stable spatial arrangement inhabited by bare life;"[341] a materialisation of the securitised situation

335Field notes by author, 11 April 2012
Ayishetu, interview by author, 11 April 2012, 17:29-17:59

336Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 96

337CHRAJ officer Y, telephone interview by author, 1 November 2012

338CHRAJ officer Y, interview by author, 18 April 2012

339Georgio Agamben, Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 53

340Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007)

341Georgio Agamben, Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California:

making the witch the enemy of society.

If the rightless witch should attempt to leave the camp, she is faced with the "dislocating localisations" of the camp.[342] That the camp is a dislocating localisation has a twofold meaning. The camp is a localisation which dislocates people from their homes. But more importantly the localisation of the camp itself is dislocated. The camp exceeds its own localisation. The camp also exists outside the camp. When the witches leave the camp, they are still somehow confined to being bare life, a homo sacer towards whom everybody can act as sovereigns deciding over life and death. Even when bare life is not confined to a particular place, it dwells in the biological body[343] of the witch. Thus when Senaba and Ayishetu returned to their respective homes without permission from the community, they returned as only bare life and were quickly and violently targeted as such. The dislocating localisation of the camp can also explain why Mariam and Rafiatu moved from town to town but always ended up being accused as witches until they settled for good in Gnani witch camp. Once banished, alleged witches carry a stigma, an undesired and subhuman differentness, which prevents them from engaging in social intercourse[344] as in the camp. In spite of the GO Home project's success in reintegrating inmates of the Gambaga camp, I also witnessed challenges with the dislocating localisations of the camp in their work. Although the communities have agreed to accept back somebody branded as a witch, some become re-accused and end back at the camp.[345] Others enjoy their return back home but rely on visits from the GO Home project in order to deter the community members from banishing them again.[346] Whether at the camp or somewhere else, once banished the witch lives in a limbo of rightlessness. This is the extraordinary measure imposed by witchcraft accusations.

5.3 Conclusion

The analysis above shows that witch camps are a result of a state of exception which has become institutionalised. Like the rules and regulations in Tallongo, the confined bodies in the camps testify about a situation in which norm and exception have become conflated.[347] Witch hunts occur on a

Stanford University Press, 1998), 98

342 Ibid, 99

343 Ibid, 81

344 Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990 [1968]), 15

345 Re-accused witch, interview by author, 27 April 2012

346 Reintegrated accused witch, Interview by author, 27 April 2012, 20:44-22:02

347 Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 96

regular basis, but each witchcraft accusation is a securitisation fixating a general threat in a particular body. Witch camps exist because witches have been treated as a threat to society for generations thus making it legitimate to subject people accused of witchcraft to violence and even lynchings. The camp is thus a materialisation of this state of exception and a consolidation of the biopolitical body.[348]

348Ibid, 98

6. Never Ending Story

"The Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not."[349] Ranciere's observation on the difficulty of enacting human rights is particularly true for those accused of witchcraft. Because of the continuous state of exception, it is difficult to deter witch hunts and change the situation of the witch camps. The aim of this chapter is to discuss, why witch camps continue to exist in northern Ghana and what can be done to discontinue their existence.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Government of Ghana has proclaimed intentions to disband the witch camps. But closure of the camps does not seem realistic in the current situation. The analysis conducted in the previous chapter showed that witch camps are a product of a state of exception. According to securitisation theory, the state of exception is negative.[350] It implies that witch hunts are characterised by panic and a biopoliticisation of the lives of accused witches, thus leaving them without rights. Furthermore, all this happens far away from the reach of the state. In this chapter, I will discuss how securitisation and biopoliticisation constitute obstacles for reform of the witch camps and actualisation of accused witches' human rights. I will also discuss strategies for counteracting the continuous state of exception pertaining to accused witches.

The chapter will proceed as follows: I will start by showing how the security logic behind witch hunts implies stigma, challenges and potential biopoliticisation for those who work to better the lives of accused witches. I will then discuss the potential of the state to intervene through legislation and rights and by closing the camps and perhaps creating a new institution in their place. Based on the theoretical approach of this thesis, I will end by discussing desecuritisation as a potential means for reform.

6.1 Supporters of witches

Under a state of exception, it is difficult to promote human rights and well-being of those accused of witchcraft without being perceived as protectors of dangerous witches, protectors of those who perpetrate spiritual violence and thus constitute a threat to society.[351] Therefore those who counter

349 Jacques Ranciere, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 (2004), 302

350 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 29

351 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 15

banishment and maltreatment of accused witches are also at risk of becoming the biopolitical body of otherness. This might be an obstacle to changing the practice of witch hunts and curbing the influx into the witch camps.

Those who are working to better the lives and uphold the rights of people accused of witchcraft find themselves in a precarious situation. They often share the world view in which witches are dangerous and might pose a great threat to society. They might even share the logic of witchcraft accusations.[352] But a common feature for them is a sensibility in which everybody, even those branded as witches, should be treated with dignity.[353] But because they perceive witches as dangerous, they often need to "leave their subjectivity behind and focus on their objectivity"[354] in their work protecting the rights of accused witches. When on duty, they are not acting as part of the collective. In order to be able to help people branded as witches, they need to rid themselves of their fears of the witch in order to give those who are persecuted due to witchcraft accusations, a fair treatment. However, even though they try to distance themselves from the fear of witchcraft, they are constantly met with it in the course of their work. They are stigmatised and ridiculed because of their work. They are called names such as "witch-lover,"[355] "father of witches" or simply "witch."[356] I also witnessed how people would shout "witch car" when driving in the car of the GO Home project in Gambaga.[357]

Because witches are deemed to be dangerous threats to society, helping them is a breach of society's expectations. The witch must not be helped. As shown in the previous chapter, through banishment accused witches are deprived of their humanity and their lives are not considered worth protecting or preserving. Accused witches are not part of the moral community. To help somebody branded a witch rather than a deserving member of the moral community is therefore considered inappropriate and anti-social. It might even be considered "witchy."[358] In consequence anybody who tries to help those accused of witchcraft is on the edge of the moral community, on the verge of being reduced to bare life. The public perceives suspected witches as threats to their lives. When somebody tries to

352Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 125

353GO Home officer, interview by author, 25 April 2012

354CHRAJ officer Y, interview by author, 4 April 2012

355CHRAJ officer Y, interview by author, 2 April 2012

356GO Home officer, interview by author, 25 April 2012

357Field notes by author, 27 April 2012

358Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana* (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 64

help an accused witch by defending her or bettering her life, they risk being viewed as "supporters of witches." A supporter of witches helps and encourages witches to "finish" their victims.[359] Thus organisations such as CHRAJ and GO Home are sometimes met with resistance and hostility. They help those who should not be helped.

In some cases the work of organisations such as CHRAJ and GO Home is downright dangerous. This became apparent when a group of people wanted to attack me, a CHRAJ officer, and my informants at Senaba's family home. As already mentioned, they were afraid that we were planning to bring Senaba back to the community. This implies that people suspected us of helping a witch in a way that would threaten the community's existence. We were deemed to be committing evil acts and could therefore legitimately be subjected to violence. This is a risk taken by those who try to counter witch hunts. Officers of the Ghanaian police force are thus often afraid to investigate cases of persecution of witches and prosecute the perpetrators[360] and this further complicates the work of organisations such as CHRAJ and GO Home. This can be exemplified by the problems faced by a GO Home project officer two months before my stay at Gambaga. At the witch camp in Gambaga they had received two new inmates, a woman and her teenage daughter. Before being banished, the daughter had been enrolled in senior secondary school where she was performing well. The daughter's good grades were attributed to witchcraft attacks. A boy from the village accused the mother of stealing the brains of himself and other students and giving them to her daughter.[361] GO Home officers tried mediating with the community and investigating the potential of repatriation. But at the village they countered severe hostility and had to leave without achieving their goal. The GO Home officers did not want to give up and decided to make another attempt of repatriation. They asked the police to accompany them but the police refused. It was too dangerous for the GO Home project's officers to venture another mediation in the village without the presence of the police.[362] Therefore, mother and daughter were still at the camp two months later.

This shows that because witches are regarded as threats to society, curbing witch hunts can also be a dangerous undertaking. The fear of witches is sometimes transferred from the accused witch to those working with her case thus serving as an obstacle for countering the practice of witch hunts.

359CHRAJ officer A, interview by author, 27 April 2012
360THUDEG and Anti Witchcraft Allegation Campaign Coalition (AWACC), "Witch Camp Report," 2011, 2
36117 year old girl, interview by author, 27 April 2012
362GO Home officer, interview by author, 27 April 2012

6.2 State Interference

As mentioned in the introduction, the Government of Ghana has proclaimed intentions to eradicate the practice of witch hunts by developing legislation declaring witchcraft accusations illegal and closing the witch camps.[363] I will here discuss if these solutions would be viable given that witches are considered security threats and the fact that witchcraft accusations and banishment are governed in the localities without much influence of the state.

6.2.1 Witch Rights

In Ghana there are no laws solely targeting either witchcraft or witchcraft accusations as there are in some other African countries. For instance, South Africa has laws condemning witchcraft accusations as illegal[364] while in Cameroon the practice of witchcraft has been sanctioned by the legal courts of the state.[365] It has been suggested that Ghana should follow the South African example and forbid witchcraft accusations. However, even though witchcraft accusations are not directly mentioned in Ghanaian state law, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana contains provisions that could be used to protect those accused of witchcraft. These include the prohibition against dehumanising and injurious cultural practices,[366] the right to life,[367] the right to a fair trial,[368] and the freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment.[369] But these rights are not enacted.

It is difficult to curb witch hunts and to regulate the treatment of accused witches through the rule of law. "The arms of the law are too short to reach to the realm in which witchcraft operates."[370] It can be questioned whether new legal provisions explicitly and specifically targeting witch hunts would lengthen the arms of the law. Such a law might create awareness of the illegality of witch hunts. Some organisations working to counter witch hunts argue that the problem of witchcraft accusations partially lies in the public's unawareness of the witches' human rights. People are often aware that

363 Clair MacDougall, "Ghana aims to abolish witches' camps," The Christian Science Monitor, 15 September 2011, localised at http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2011/0915/Ghana-aims-to-abolish-witches-camps

364 Adam Ashforth, Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 251

365 Peter Geschiere, "Globalization and the Power of Indeterminate Meaning: Witchcraft and Spirit Cults in Africa and East Asia," *Develompent and Change* 29 (1998), 824

366 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, article 26(2)

367 Ibid, article 13

368 Ibid, article 19

369 Ibid, article 15

370 Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 84

according to the constitution of the country, they themselves have rights as human beings. But they do not know that the witch carries the same rights.[371] A law specifically upholding the rights of the accused witch might remedy this unawareness. But it is quite likely that the twilight nature of public authority in northern Ghana and the state of exception pertaining to alleged witches will complicate enforcement of the law.

Governance of issues affecting witch hunts and the protection of accused witches is characterised by a distant state and parallel institutions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, banishment is decided upon by twilight authorities[372] such as chiefs and family leaders. Their authority is not always recognised by the state but they have the de facto authority in small communities. In a situation where authorities have a twilight character, where non-state institutions are stately but not consolidated, it is difficult to determine who can enforce law and produce rights.[373] The Ghanaian Constitution and other state law formally apply and are legally binding everywhere in Ghana. But they are not always implemented. The state does not seem to have the capacity to enforce rules and guarantee constitutional rights in the localities. And the legitimacy of the traditional authorities operating in the localities does not rest on the Constitution or the fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined therein. They rather rely on social capital manifested in shared culture,[374] in which witchcraft and the dangerousness it contains is a tangible reality. The fate of a person accused of witchcraft is thereby decided by fears in the localities and not by state authorities. As already argued, banishment and violence against those accused of witchcraft are responses to perceived existential threats against the community. Due to the state of exception pertaining to witchcraft, the traditional authorities often govern the area by a logic of necessity and urgency.[375] In the securitised situation there is no political space nor time for deliberation and compromising.[376] It is unlikely that the traditional authorities will seek to involve state agencies in cases where the existence of their community is perceived as threatened by the presence of a witch. Thus there might not be any institution that is able to enforce a new law prohibiting witchcraft accusations. Every human being, even the accused witch, has rights according to the Ghanaian Constitution. But the accused witch

371 Anti-Witchcraft Allegation Campaign Coalition member, conversation with author, 19 May 2012
372 Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa," in Christian Lund ed., Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007)
373 Christian Lund, "Twilight Institutions: An Introduction," Development and Change 37(4) (2006), 677
374 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 117
375 Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 22
376 Ibid, 31

does not really "have the rights that she has." This is unlikely to automatically change with the adoption of new legislation banning witchcraft accusations.

New legislation prohibiting witchcraft accusation might also become void due to the very nature of the state of exception. As mentioned earlier, the state of exception is a space for action devoid of law.[377] Derogation from law and rights is exactly what is legitimised through the state of exception. Hence it is difficult to terminate the state of exception through legislation. Adoption of additional law will probably not instantly change the construction of the accused witch as somebody dangerous or her position as bare life. People have left in protest from public education meetings organised by CHRAJ when the lecturers have claimed that suspected witches have human rights.[378] This indicates that due to the state of exception, people are not willing to grant human rights to the witch. A claim that somebody excluded from human rights is actually a bearer of these rights might easily be rejected.[379] The witch cannot both be human and the embodiment of spiritual evil posing an existential threat to the community. Through law it appears as though bare life carries rights[380] but the state of exception pertaining to the witch makes it difficult to perform rights and implement law. Thus adoption of new legislation will not in and of itself be sufficient to change the practice of witch hunts.

6.2.2 Closing Camps

Closing the witch camps is also one of the initiatives suggested for eradicating the practice of witch hunts. However, in spite of the discourse used by human rights organisations campaigning for the government to abolish the camps,[381] most organisations working to counter witch hunts resist the immediate disbandment of the witch camps. When the government of Ghana in year 2011 pronounced intentions to disband the camps in the course of 2012, the result was protest and opposition. The organisations working to counter witch hunts claimed that the plan lacked solutions to the underlying problem of banishment. They were therefore afraid that closing of the camps

377 Georgio Agamben, State of Exception, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 50-51

378 CHRAJ officer A, interview by author, 27 April 2012

379 Karen Zivi, "Rights and the politics of performativity," in Terrell Carver and Samuel Chambers eds., *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics. Critical Encounters* (Routledge, 2008), 168

380 Jacques Ranciere, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" The South Atlantic Quarterly 103 (2004), 300

381 "Human rights activities want witches' camps abolished," *Ghana News Agency*, 19 May 2010, localised at http://www.ghananewsagency.org/details/Social/Human-rights-activists-want-witches-camps-abolished/?ci=4&ai=15797#.UJTfRMVY08l

would endanger the lives of the women residing there.[382] Also the accused witches living at the camps feared that if the camps were closed, they would be forced to return to the community that banished them and where they would risk being killed.[383] They preferred staying at the camps to being lynched by members of their former communities.[384]

Closing the camps can be viewed as a treatment of symptoms rather than cause. As expressed by Schauber, the existence of witch camps only "constitutes the visible tip of the iceberg of a violent manifestation of the belief in witchcraft. Dismantled or not, they are not the reasons for the ostracization of women."[385] As argued in the previous chapter, witch camps are born out of the state of exception and they are characterised by a "dislocating localisation."[386] Because witches embody ontological fears of spiritual attacks, their absence from community is treated as a matter of security. Accused witches remain bare life even if they venture outside the camps. As was seen in the cases of Ayishetu and Senaba, accused witches might be tortured and if they return to their communities. They might even be killed. Most organisations working to better the living conditions of the accused witches, view the witch camps as the most humane solution because at the camps the immanent threat of violence is lessened.[387] Those working to counter witch hunts are therefore often of the opinion that accusations and new entries into the camps must be stopped before the camps are closed by the state. Otherwise a closure of the camps would create more problems than it would be solving.[388] Witches will not cease to be somebody whom everybody can kill with moral impunity only because the material witch camps are closed. They will remain targets of violence. Closing the camps might create a greater sense of insecurity for society since it would take away a counter-measure[389] to the threat of witchcraft attacks while depriving those persecuted due to witchcraft accusations of their hiding place.

Some have also suggested that the camps could perhaps be disbanded if accused witches were

382 Alleged Witches Network, "Communique presented to the Government of Ghana by Action Aid and partner SONGTABA and other stakeholders of alleged witches camps in the northern region of Ghana," 30 November 2011

383 United States Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011 – Ghana" (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2012), 16

384 Field notes by author, 26 April 2012

385 Almuth Schauber, "Women and Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Ghana: Human Rights Education Between Conflict and Consensus," in Steve Tonah ed., Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 123

386 Georgio Agamben, Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 99

387 GO Home officer, interview by author, 25 April 2012

388 CHRAJ officer Y, telephone interview by author, 1 November 2012

389 Ole Wæver, "Fear and Forgetting: How to Leave Longstanding Conflicts through De-securitization" (Paper for Research Seminar at CAST, Revised version of keynote speech at National Conference on Peace and Conflict at Lund University, 2008), 3

provided with alternative housing by the state.[390] The state could found an institution where the accused witches are protected and given a livelihood thus helping the accused witches to a more dignified life. However, it can be questioned whether such an institution is realistic and whether it targets the causes of the witch hunts. As earlier mentioned, in Ghana it is considered inappropriate to help an accused witch rather than somebody who is considered deserving.[391] It is very likely that this also applies to the state. In Ghana a large proportion of the population lives in poverty and many are in need of help with livelihood. Under these circumstances, it might therefore be difficult for the state to justify prioritising accused witches over a number of other people in need. Therefore state authorities are likely to refrain from developing and implementing such development initiatives. Even tough it might entail a vast improvement in the living conditions of accused witches, giving them alternative housing will probably not change the state of exception. An institution providing accused witches with their basic needs does not target the collective fears and the security practices sustaining the exception and the witch camps. Rather it might spark additional fears if the institution is not located at a witch hunting shrine. The witch camps are perceived as a viable counter action to witchcraft aggression because they are attached to shrines[392] that "will not forgive"[393] if one of the accused witches should attempt new attacks. If the shrines are taken out of the equation, the result could be an increase in violence and lynching of accused witches. Closing the camps and perhaps opening another form of institution helping people accused of witchcraft will not automatically change the state of exception. These solutions should therefore be approached with great caution.

6.3 Relieving Fear

The initiatives discussed above will presumably only have a lasting impact on the practice of witch hunts if combined with a reduction in fear. In order to counter biopoliticisation, violence targeted at accused witches and the existence of camps, the witchcraft cosmology must be separated from practices of security. This way the witch might finally "have the rights that she has." A reduction in fear could perhaps be achieved through desecuritisation.

The discussion above on closing camps and imposing further legislation to ban witch hunts, draws

390GO Home officer, interview by author, 25 April 2012

391Jon P. Kirby, "Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian "Witch Camps" and the Dawn of the Rights of Culture," in Steve Tonah ed., Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana (Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 2009), 64

392Karen Palmer, Spellbound, Inside West Africa's Witch Camps (New York: Free Press, 2010), 52

393Rafiatu's family, interview by author, 13 April 2012, 19:33-31:02

attention to the necessity of taking culture into account when intervening in witch camps and the security practices related to witchcraft. At a panel debate on witchcraft allegations it was argued that people should stop legitimising witchcraft accusations with culture because "culture that remains static is a dead culture."[394] But culture that remains static is also a securitised culture. When a state of exception is permanent, cultural identities are stagnated[395] in an antagonism.[396] The witch is continuously perceived as an existential threat to society. Security is therefore sought through trusted counter-measures[397] such as banishment of the witch. But securitisation can be seen as a negative, a failure to deal with controversies within the normal procedures.[398] The long term solution is therefore to discontinue the continuous threat, to terminate the state of exception inhering to witches. This is done through desecuritisation; transferring the issue out of the emergency mode and into the normal political sphere.[399] This is an approach that seeks to emphasise and reduce the role of existential fear, which in the securitised situation becomes a way of life and reproduces conflictual social identities.[400] Desecuritisation aims to dismantle security practices such as searching for the witch which presupposes and reproduces the witch as a dangerous person who must be eliminated.

The first step of desecuritisation is to break the self-reproducing circle of fear and defence. In practice this means reassuring the referent object,[401] the community which feels threatened by a witch, that the witch is not an existential threat towards the community. The community needs to trust that the witch does not have the power to harm or wipe out the entire community. This could perhaps be done by cleansing the alleged witch of her powers without subjecting her to either violence or banishment. This is similar to the GO Home project's repatriation approach where the alleged witch returns to her community the same day or few days after her arrival at the witch camp.[402] The accused witch will probably still carry the stigma of witchcraft and be trapped in a

394Fati Alhassan, Anti Witchcraft Allegation Campaign Coalition, in panel debate, 19 May 2012

395Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 27

396Paul Roe, "Is securitization a 'negative' concept? Revisiting the normative debate over normal versus extraordinary politics," *Security Dialogue* 43(3) (2012), 253

397Ole Wæver, "Fear and Forgetting: How to Leave Longstanding Conflicts through De-securitization" (Paper for Research Seminar at CAST, Revised version of keynote speech at National Conference on Peace and Conflict at Lund University, 2008), 3

398Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 1998), 29

399Ibid, 4

400Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 25-26

401Ibid, 27-28

402Gambaga Outcast Home Project (GO Home), "The history of the camp," Unpublished, 2

form of a dislocated camp. She might thus need help from outside the community to prevent violence as those who GO Home help repatriate do. But to live amongst accused witches might be the only way to reduce the collective fears of witchcraft in the long run. If alleged witches continue to stay within their communities after a cleansing ceremony, the community might become reassured that the presence of alleged witches does not comprise the demise of the community. However, if calamities continue to occur in the community, community members might become more convinced that witches are dangerous and should be banished. The approach might thus contain risks but can potentially reduce the existential fears governing witch hunts.

The second step of desecuritisation is to transform the conflict by reducing the enmity of social relations.[403] This is a difficult task in a setting where the enemy is metaphysical. The metaphysical enemy of witchcraft constantly takes new forms and appears in new bodies. Therefore traditional conflict resolution bringing the parties together is not feasible. However, transformation of the conflict could perhaps be achieved by shifting public focus from the enemies in the spiritual realm to the benefactors and the protection that the ancestors can provide. As mentioned earlier, according to the Ghanaian witchcraft cosmology spirits from the unseen world can be both malevolent and benign.[404] By emphasising the benign spirits through rituals, enmity could diminish. Public education meetings and mediation between a community and an alleged witch could perhaps also contain elements designed to reduce the collective fears of witchcraft. In addition to education on the alleged witch's rights, such encounters could involve rituals to strengthen the community. This could lead to less focus on the evil and dangerousness of witchcraft.

It might not be conceivable to disentangle witchcraft cosmologies and security practices and to change witchcraft related rituals into mere expressions of identity in a world free of fear.[405] The suggestions above will most likely not be sufficient. However, existential fears are key factors in witch hunts. Therefore more research is needed on how desecuritisation can be used to lessen the existential fears of witchcraft aggression and discontinue witch hunts as a the security practice.

403 Ole Wæver, "What Exactly Makes a Continuous Existential Threat Existential – and How Is It Discontinued?", in Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer eds., *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations* (Lexington Books, 2009), 29

404 Elom Dovlo, "Witchcraft in contemporary Ghana," in Gerrie ter Haar ed., *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2007), 68

405 Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 318

6.4 Conclusion

It is difficult to eradicate witch hunts under the state of exception. Therefore witch camps continue to exist in the north of Ghana. Attempts at reforming the witch camps and restoring dignity for accused witches also need to take into account the dignity of those who perceive themselves as victims of witchcraft aggression. This is best done by taking seriously the existential fears of witchcraft and seeking to lessen these. Relieving the fears of witchcraft aggression is not easily attainable. But it might be the only way to terminate the state of exception leading to banishment, violence and segregation of accused witches.

7. Conclusion

Why do witch camps continue to exist in northern Ghana? By analysing witch hunts as practices of securitisation and biopoliticisation, this thesis finds that witch camps are born out of and preserved by an institutionalised state of exception.

Witch camps would not exist without witch hunts. Every person residing at the witch camps has been subjected to witchcraft accusations, banishment, and perhaps violence. These witch hunts take place in a context where the social fabric is infused with witchcraft cosmologies. According to the witchcraft cosmologies, witchcraft can be used for both good and evil but the cosmologies have been transformed into existential fears and security practices constituting witches as dangerous threats to society. Witchcraft is feared as a life negating force that might terminate the life of an individual as well as be destructive to society. As an everyday security practice, people watch for signs, such as misfortunes and untimely deaths, which indicate that a witch is on the loose. Signs of witchcraft attacks might lead to witchcraft accusations that fixate the general threat of witchcraft aggression in a particular body. Witchcraft accusations are thus securitising speech acts which construct certain people as witches and therefore as dangerous. As a result, the accused witch becomes captured by a state of exception and banished from her community. She becomes reduced to bare life and might with moral impunity be subjected to violence and lynching.

Witch camps have come into existence as a response to this state of exception. At the camps, accused witches seek refuge from the violence meted out by community members seeking security from witchcraft aggression. The witch camps also provide a sense of security to communities that view witches as a threat to their existence. When entering the camps the accused witches undergo cleansing rituals to rid them of their witchcraft and the camps are attached to witch hunting shrines whose vengeful spirits are said to kill any witch that attempts to use spiritual aggression. Witch camps thus have a double security function; they protect the security of society from dangerous witches, and they protect the personal security of accused witches.

In order to discontinue the existence of the witch camps, the state of exception and the existential fears behind witch hunts must be addressed. The state of exception cannot be terminated only by closing the camps or adopting legislation prohibiting witchcraft accusations. Through desecuritisation, witchcraft cosmologies must be separated from security practices. But more research is needed on methods for reducing fears of a metaphysical threat. Only time and additional research will tell whether a world free of witch hunts is attainable.

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Due to security reasons, the fieldwork material is not enclosed. Supervisors and external examiner can requisite the material by contacting the author.