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THE FATHER AS WITCH

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Economic and social forces that play upon household and kin dynamics exacerbate tensions and hostilities among associates, who become suspected of both causing and benefiting from the misery of others. How this is conceptualised depends upon previously existing views of human nature and its potential. The West gives credence to satanic cults whose members sacrifice children and to so-called recovered memories of childhood abuse (Kohn, 1994; La Fontaine, 1998). In Zambia evil is embodied in the person of the witch.

Long ago Monica Wilson, in a comparison of the locus of witchcraft accusations among Mpondo and Nyakyusa, demonstrated that accusations reflect patterns of residence and animosities stemming from the exercise of power and the differential distribution of benefits derived from property and labour (1951: 163). This is in line with Evans-Pritchard's finding (1937: 109) that resentment, fear and envy underwrite the truth of a diviner's diagnosis of the source of evil. An acceptable diagnosis must be plausible to those aggrieved, and plausibility derives from the emotional charge of the relationship. When the focus of accusations shifts, something has happened in the field of relationships that makes the belief plausible that this person, not that, is causing misery, and it must be plausible to both sufferer and supporters.

In recent years such a shift in focus has occurred among Tonga-speakers in Gwembe Valley in the Southern Province of Zambia. Since the 1980s they have increasingly named their own fathers whereas in previous decades the plausible witch was usually sought among other male kin.

In this article I deal with the increased salience of witchcraft accusations and attribution to witches of new forms of power and modes of action as well as with the shift in focus of accusation. Increased salience and changing concepts of a witch's powers reflect the interplay between Gwembe life and the macro-system and are explicable by theories that interpret witchcraft beliefs and accusations as precipitates of the power relations of post-colonial systems (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993; Fisiy and Geschiere, 1996; Geschiere, 1997b). To understand why the Gwembe father has become suspect, local knowledge is essential.

Data are drawn from research among Plateau Tonga (1946–47 and 1948–50, when I also spent a month in Gwembe Valley) and from the longitudinal study of Tonga-speakers in Gwembe Valley initiated in

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1956 by Thayer Scudder and myself (Scudder and Colson, 1977). One or both of us visited Gwembe at approximately three-year intervals between 1956 and 1998. Others involved in the study include Jonathan Habarad (1987–88) and Samuel Clark, Rhonda Gillett-Netting and Lisa Cligget, who began to assume responsibility for the study in the 1990s. We have intensive coverage of villages in four neighbourhoods, two in Gwembe North, one in Gwembe Central and one in Gwembe South. On these we have both censuses and a large corpus of field notes supplemented since the 1980s by diaries kept by village assistants. Since 1995 the former Gwembe District has been subdivided into Siavonga, Gwembe and Sinazongwe Districts, but here I continue to refer to these divisions as Gwembe North, Gwembe Central and Gwembe South.

THE PREVALENCE OF WITCHES

The Tonga term *bulozi* covers covert action by human beings that cause misfortune. Formerly I translated it as 'sorcery'; here I use 'witchcraft', following the usage of English-speaking Tonga, a usage also preferred by Mbiti (1990: 197) and Magesa (1997: 68).

Fears of witchcraft have varied over the years since 1956. Immediately after 1958, when the Kariba Dam flooded much of Gwembe Tonga territory and forced the resettlement of the majority of those living in Zambia, people attributed illness, death and other misery to the Europeans who had built the dam, flooded their land and thrown them away into the bush to die like animals (Colson, 1972). Subsequently suspicion of kin and neighbours revived, and suspicion may have reached a high point during the economic distress of 1980–82 when every neighbourhood in the valley summoned witchfinders to detect and cleanse its witches. Since then suspicion and accusations have been endemic.

Factors unique to Gwembe do not account for the increase in open accusations beginning in the late 1970s, since witch hunts have been common during the last three decades throughout central and southern Africa, among rural and urban populations alike (Austen, 1993: 90; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993: xxv; Fisiy and Geschiere, 1996: 193; Geschiere, 1997b: 2–3; Werbner, 1996: 18; Yamba, 1997: 203; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 October 1998: D3).

In Zambia witch hunts have proliferated despite the increasing importance of Christian churches, a majority of Zambians in the 1990s (75 per cent or so) identifying themselves as Christians affiliated with one of many Churches (Gifford, 1998: 183). Some began as mission Churches, founded early in the century: in the 1990s apostolic and pentecostal Churches have grown rapidly (Gifford, 1998: 184–7). Early missionaries attempted to discredit belief in spirits, including those of the dead, along with belief in witchcraft. Apostolic and pentecostal Churches acknowledge the reality of such spirits, but visiting American evangelists define them as demons and call witches 'satan's emissaries' who join together in satanic cults (*Post*, 4 November 1996; *Zambia Daily News*, 22 November 1997).

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In the 1950s few Gwembe Tonga adults were practising Christians. Most relied upon ancestral spirits for protection and appealed to other spirits at neighbourhood shrines for rain and the warding off of epidemics and other threats (Colson, 1960, 1969). Since the 1960s, despite the delinking of schools and missions, Christianity has spread, and since the 1980s churches have proliferated (Luig, 1997). By the 1990s offerings to the dead and appeals to spirits at neighbourhood shrines involved only a minority, and English-speakers commonly refer to such spirits as demons. Belief in witchcraft, however, survives, as does belief in spirit possession (Luig, 1999: 132–3) perhaps because Churches either offer no explanation for personal misfortune or invoke the personal failures of the afflicted and call for reform. Indeed, mission teaching may even have strengthened belief in the power of witches by introducing 'the concept of a personalized Devil, eternal damnation and the reality of the powers of evil' and by making the witch an ally of the devil (Ipenburg, 1992: 128). If Christianity incorporates recognition of spirits only by demonising them as satan's minions (a practice not unknown elsewhere: Caplan, 1995: 102) and at the same time associates the witch with the devil, it is not surprising that the growing influence of Christian Churches is associated with pervasive fears of witches becoming more powerful and less inhibited by human obligations.

Christianity, moreover, continues to be linked with education and with living standards unattainable for many. Interpersonal tensions increase as people compete for education, jobs and other resources, and the successful know they are the target of envy from those who want to share the good things acquired at so much cost while losers attribute failure to the medicines of the successful (Cligget, 1997). The educated Zambian elite may attribute the country's economic ills and political problems to colonial and post-colonial exploitation, though some find an explanation in the Zambian character. For individual problems, for the question 'Why is this happening to me?', many still find an acceptable answer in witchcraft (Crehan, 1997: 190–1, 196; see also *Post*, 4 October 1999).

Factors fuelling a sense of victimisation have been endemic in Zambia, as in much of Africa, since the 1970s. As national governments proved unable to sustain economies, maintain social services or otherwise meet the expectations of the independence period, people everywhere have felt the pinch. In Gwembe Valley the sense of victimisation is associated with: (1) involvement in a cash economy in which some people gain advantage from the needs of others; (2) a yearning for known but usually unattainable luxuries; (3) a sharp decline in the Zambian economy since 1973 with diminishing opportunities for young men and women to establish their independence; (4) rapid, disorienting inflation; (5) a general malaise associated with the perception that life has become more difficult and will become still more so; (6) growing tension between husband and wife as women see themselves as exploited by husbands who take a disproportionate share of resources acquired by family labour; (7) violence against

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women and children by angry, frustrated men who have readier access to beer and other forms of alcohol than they did forty years ago; (8) increasing theft and other crime, (9) an increased burden of ill health as malnutrition worsens, malaria and tuberculosis are again common, and AIDS spreads; (10) frequent drought years through the 1980s and 1990s with poor harvests and much hunger (Cligget, 2000; Scudder, 1983, 1984). These account for much of the unhappiness that fuels suspicion. Meantime enforcement of the ordinance banning witchcraft accusations, enacted by the colonial government and still on the books, has largely lapsed since 1967, when its amendment to permit traditional healers and herbalists to register as health practitioners served to legitimate diviners and witchfinders (Dillon-Malone, 1988: 1160). Suspicions therefore result in public accusations.

All this explains why Gwembe Tonga, like many other Zambians, think themselves ill-used and why, given that they hold witches responsible, they are willing to voice their suspicions. It does not explain why they accuse their own fathers of bewitching them. Elsewhere in Zambia, similar conditions put other categories of people, especially old women, under suspicion.

GENDER AND WITCHCRAFT

The Tonga witch is usually male, and there is no evidence that Tonga-speakers have thought of women as using the most dangerous forms of witchcraft although this may be changing (Cligget, 1997: 134–1; Luig, 1997: 48 ff.; Schuthof and Boerenkamp, 1991: 53 ff.). A diary keeper in Gwembe North living close to Goba villages of Shona origin generalised Tonga thinking when he wrote in 1995, 'We, in Tonga manner, our women use witchcraft only a little. It is the men who do witchcraft. But Goba women use witchcraft greatly, and their men too.' A review of a portion of our field notes from 1956 through 1992 turned up accusations against seventy-three men and thirteen women, the women usually associated with the least feared techniques. In the four neighbourhoods of intensive study only one woman was accused in the witch hunts of 1981, when almost every senior man was cited. She was an elderly woman who owned cattle and was therefore worth 'fining'. Few women were named in witch hunts recorded in village diaries in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

Elsewhere in Zambia, and among Shona-speakers in neighbouring Zimbabwe, the common stereotype of the dangerous witch is an old woman, whether descent is matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral although ethnographers report that men often predominate among those publicly accused (Auslander, 1993, 1997; Marwick, 1967: 107; Skjønsberg, 1989: 167; Doke, 1931: 302; Reynolds, 1963: 29; Turner, 1957: 144–5, 151–2; Crehan, 1987: 240; Schmidt, 1992: 18). The Tonga matrilineal descent system, therefore, does not explain why Tonga define men as primary witchcraft suspects. Residence may be a factor, since Tonga marriage has been virilocal. Moreover, Tonga-speakers, unlike other matrilineal people of the region, give substantial bride-

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wealth payments. These are shared between the bride's father and her matrilineal kin and are interpreted as giving the husband rights in the bridewealth of his own daughters and in the estates of his sons and more control over wives and children than is common in matrilineal systems (Colson, 1958: 327–36; 1960: 52, 156–7; Price, 1998). Gwembe men belonging to the same matrilineage competed with one another to inherit rights over wives and children along with rights to prized alluvial land and sought the source of their misfortunes among fellow competitors. The gender association is also affected by ideas about how witches acquire their power, the motivations attributed to them and how these square with long-established gender assessments.

The Tonga witch is said to be empowered by medicines acquired through purchase rather than through inheritance. A woman's scope for becoming a witch is said to be limited by her lack of purchasing power and because, unlike a man, she does not travel and mix with strangers. As women increasingly travel, are employed and have property, including cattle, they become more credible objects of suspicion. Tonga views on sexuality may also inhibit suspicion of women. The most powerful medicines are said to be activated by incest with mother or sister, i.e. a member of the matrilineage. This implicates the woman as the associate of a witch but gives power to the man who initiates the action.

Geschiere (1997a: 185) believes that Africa is seeing a shift in the gendered association of witchcraft, from female to male, owing to new forms of accumulation of wealth and power from which women are largely excluded. This does not hold for Tonga-speakers, where the association of witchcraft with males probably pre-dates colonial rule and has survived radical shifts in forms of wealth and power. In the 1910s Smith and Dale found Ila, who speak a Tonga dialect, usually identifying men as witches (1920: II, 90–7). In the late 1940s Tonga of the Plateau and Gwembe Valley usually suspected men, and those remembered as witches from earlier decades were usually men. In Gwembe Valley it was only in the 1980s and 1990s, when village women had become cattle owners on some scale (Colson, 1999), that a few senior women have been accused of the more dreaded forms of witchcraft.

During the 1970s and 1980s, despite the fact that the majority of witchfinders consulted by Gwembe people came from areas where women are prime suspects, their findings reflected what local people suspected, and it was the male kin whom they identified.

FORMS OF WITCHCRAFT

Recently Gwembe Tonga have adopted stereotypes of witchcraft activities long common elsewhere in Zambia and in neighbouring countries. The slowness with which these spread into Gwembe is one indication that witchcraft beliefs are not easily read off as direct responses to any encompassing power system. Experiences with the colonial and post-colonial state and the international system are fairly

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comparable throughout Zambia though people of particular areas were and are engaged with the state and the market economy in somewhat different fashions. Plateau Tonga, who share Gwembe witchcraft stereotypes, had switched from labour migration to a cash-crop economy by the 1930s, facilitated by their proximity to the railway line (Chipunga, 1988; Colson, 1958; Vickery, 1986). Gwembe Tonga continued to work as labour migrants, as did people in other provinces. Gwembe Tonga were subject to a radical uprooting when the Kariba Dam was built in the 1950s, but Plateau Tonga and many people in Central and Eastern Provinces suffered earlier displacement to make way for European farms and mines.

As Crehan says (1997: 222), people interpret experience in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times from 'their basic mental furniture'. Werbner puts it differently, saying that in each locality 'identity strategies' express themselves 'through the cultural richness of specific idioms, images, metaphors and metonyms (1996: 2)'. I accept this, but Gwembe Tonga would deny that witchcraft is a metaphor for what is wrong with their world. To them it is real, it is causal rather than descriptive, however much it subsumes the evils from which they feel they suffer.

Bulozi, witchcraft, is ambiguous, however, because it derives from empowering medicines (*misamu*) which can be used for personal protection and for public ends as well as for evil. As is typical in Africa, powerful or prosperous persons, including chiefs, diviners and politicians, are assumed to have medicines that assist and protect but also kill and are therefore *bulozi*. Medicines for hunting, canoe building and other crafts, now largely obsolete, are *bulozi* because they demand the death of kin whose spirit or life force (*muuya*) then works with the hunter or craftsman. Initial empowerment of the medicine may also require an act of incest (see above). Since *bulozi* is obtained through medicines, it is not surprising that poisoning through vegetable poisons, battery acid and now pesticides can be termed *bulozi*.

Some forms of *bulozi* are unambiguously evil. *Ciposo* medicine is placed in a path, doorway or field, or sent via a treated duiker horn (*insengo*) or other vehicle, to kill a victim. Some medicines are used to create familiars such as *ilomba* or *zikobelo*. The *ilomba* (or *idomba*), a snake with human head, is nurtured on human blood and when grown does the will of its owner, attacking victims in the immediate neighbourhood. *Zikobelo* (pl.) and *buyowela*, also nurtured, appear as manikins or chicks. Witches also use medicine to capture spirits of the dead, *zelo* or *masangushi*, which are used to drain grain from granaries and life force from sleeping people and sometimes to kill. Some witches have medicine to move about as crocodiles, snakes, lions or hyenas. Some are dancers, *bazyani*, who dance or sit naked in the yard or garden while ill-wishing members of the homestead.

These forms of witchcraft, talked about in the 1940s and 1950s, are still feared. Most are reported from elsewhere in Zambia (Ngulube, 1989: 22 ff., 81 ff., 147 ff.) and neighbouring countries. In the 1940s and 1950s Tonga commonly said that *ciposa*, *ilomba* and *buyowela* had

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arrived recently, purchased in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) from labour migrants from Malawi or western Zambia. Whatever aspects of the colonial world Tonga were responding to in the 1940s and 1950s (political domination, dispossession of land, subjection to a cash economy, industrialisation and involvement in two world wars), they associated witchcraft with fellow Africans rather than Europeans or Indians.

After Zambian independence in 1964 Gwembe men found work primarily in Zambia, and both men and women began to visit Zambian towns, especially the capital, Lusaka, which attracted people from all over Zambia. Post-1960 Gwembe villagers began to talk of new kinds of witchcraft, purchased initially from non-Tonga witches from other regions of Zambia, including those who settled in Gwembe after the formation of Kariba Lake. By the 1980s such medicines were said to be on sale by local Tonga. No longer foreign, they were part of the Tonga repertoire. They were usually referred to as *katumwa*, 'that which is sent', a term that may derive from the Mutumwa Nchimi healing movement. This was founded in north-eastern Zambia in the 1930s and flourishing on the Copperbelt and in Lusaka by the 1960s. It specialises in diagnosing and treating illnesses and misfortunes attributed to witchcraft (Dillon-Malone, 1988). In Gwembe *katumwa* now includes both older forms of witchcraft such as *ciposo* and newly introduced medicines for magic horses, cars or aeroplanes that speed a witch to wherever his victim lives, magic guns that hit their target even at great distances, and medicines for spirit servants that extract the life force of sleeping men and women to work for the witch. The victim rises in the morning drained of energy and with aching muscles. Such techniques were reported decades earlier elsewhere in Zambia, and magic guns, aeroplanes and cars are part of witchcraft discourse throughout Africa (e.g. Geschiere, 1997b: 59).

I have no evidence that Gwembe people think that any local person has created a new means of bewitching in the last half century. New techniques come to them from beyond the valley, usually from the cities. Although the malice and ambition that motivates the witch are regarded as endemic to their own life, the means to arm these are seen as foreign.

Elsewhere in Zambia people have long feared witch covens reputed to share feasts of their victims' flesh, and the desire for human meat was assumed to be a common motive for witch attacks (Turner, 1957: 151–2, and Crehan, 1997: 198, on North Western Province; Marwick, 1965: 78, on Eastern Province). Desire for flesh was also a recurrent theme in *banyama* rumours in Northern, Luapula and Eastern Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s (White, 1993). Tonga-speakers, however, denied the existence of covens and said a witch worked for his own ends and alone. This fits well with the Tonga belief that men should act independently, each following his own law (Chibalo, 1983: 27–8). Nor were witches thought to eat their victims' flesh, possibly because there was less meat hunger in Southern Province, where herds and flocks as well as game and fish supply protein. In the 1990s, when

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hunger was rampant throughout Gwembe and the number of stock slaughtered for the funerals of senior people had greatly increased, I heard suggestions that old men might be killing in order to feast on funeral meat, but this is very different from feasting on human victims. Tonga associate witchcraft with the desire for inheritance, revenge, malice and appropriation of energy.

When in the 1980s I began to hear tales of witch cannibals, these were identified as foreigners and so were a contradiction of the Tonga assumption that witches act against known others whom they have reason to victimise. Therefore some people are not sure that the actions of witch cannibals should really be called *bulozi*. Paul Richards (1996: 80–1), discussing witch cannibals in Sierra Leone and Liberia, hypothesises that accusations of cannibalism become believable in 'weak patrimonial political formations' as 'clients become especially sensitive to the fragility of ties that bind them to their patrons' and 'come to suspect that politics "feeds" on weak and defenceless persons'. This makes sense but is difficult to square with the timing of the spread of such beliefs in Zambia. It could be that Gwembe Tonga became more aware of the fragility of containing power structures in the 1960s with the collapse of colonial rule or in the mid-1970s when local governance through chiefs and headmen was replaced by a structure based on party organisation, and again in the 1990s when that structure was dismantled in turn with the shift to a multi-party system and a return to local governance through chiefs and headmen. The 1991 fall from power of Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first President and then President-for-life, may also be relevant. But why should a power vacuum and blatant corruption be perceived decades earlier in northern and eastern Zambia and neighbouring regions, where tales of witch cannibals and *banyama* gangs who worked for European or Indian bosses to obtain blood or turn victims into zombie labourers were prevalent from the 1920s on (Cunnison, 1959: 27; Musambachime, 1988; anon., 1960: 67–8; Leaver, 1960; Fisiy and Geschiere, 1996: 205–6; White, 1993)?

Gwembe villagers began to talk of *banyama* only in the 1970s. In the 1980s tales began to circulate of encounters with gangs employed to obtain human flesh or blood, although the encounters happened to unnamed people or were described as miraculous escapes. When such stories first circulated the assailants took hearts, genitals and blood, associated with strength and fertility, for witchcraft medicines. The employer was usually said to be an Indian in an urban area. After 1992 the tales, including diary accounts of encounters with reputed body robbers, reflected the spread of knowledge about the market for transplant organs. (White, 1997, reports similar rumours current in Zimbabwe.) In the multi-ethnic towns of Zambia's Southern Province fear of body robbers led to riots and attacks on Indian storekeepers in early 1996, while Gwembe people reported fleeing at the sight of a stranger or a group of strangers.

Killing for body parts, despite its indiscriminate choice of victims, can be called *bulozi*, as is poisoning. But while the poisoning of food or

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drink was alleged against known local persons from at least the 1940s, I have only one account, from the 1990s, that implicated a local person in the flesh trade, and then the man lived in another neighbourhood. Although people may say Gwembe Tonga are agents, the agents are anonymous phantoms. Nevertheless, the popularity of tales of cannibal witches, *banyama*, and organ hunters is an indication of just how vulnerable people feel in a system which they see as draining them of their resources to the benefit of remote others.

To sum up, in the last three decades of the twentieth century witchcraft techniques have increased in number and are regarded as effective over greater distances, reflecting awareness of new technology, increased dispersal of kin and increased geographical mobility. In the 1950s the most feared witches were said to be dancers or owners of *ilomba* or crocodile medicine, fear of the last being most common in Gwembe South. All were considered African resources, alien to the Europeans then in power, and effective only over a short range, so that people could protect themselves by moving to another neighbourhood or by driving the witch out. In the 1990s the most feared witches are usually said to use horses, aeroplanes or guns, e.g. resources that obliterate the safeguard of distance and are associated with technology brought by Europeans but available since 1964 to an African elite that controls political power, monopolises much of Zambia's economic resources and is rich in a land of poverty. Despite this, the accused witch so far remains someone who operates within one's own immediate network.

WITCHES AND THEIR VICTIMS

Tonga dogma holds that you cannot know that someone is not a witch, but suspicions channel accusations against particular persons. In illness or other difficulties, suspicion and then divination usually point to an older male kinsman, to a rival for a job or other resource or to someone spited by the victim. Whoever is named always has some personal link with the victim. I have never heard of a child being suspect, and people say that children have neither the resources to obtain witchcraft medicine nor the malice to use it. Men in their early 20s have said, 'We young men get along together and we don't fear each other, but as men get older and become ambitious they begin to hate each other and use witchcraft.' They also say a young man is foolish to show himself successful before acquiring protective medicines, for otherwise his envious seniors will turn their witchcraft against him. When men establish their own homesteads, and differentiate their economic activities from those of their fathers or other guardians, they have a strong incentive to acquire medicines for protection and success.

This means they are also seen as likely to become witches, since medicines, especially those for advancement, may need to be empowered through incest and the death of kin. Later, if the owner fails to indicate victims, the medicines choose and eventually, other candidates being exhausted, turn upon the owner. On his death they

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may remove themselves to a close associate—kin, child or wife—who becomes a witch in turn. The ambitious are therefore likely candidates for suspicion. But so are those suspected of envy and jealousy. The poor, deformed, old or barren are said to envy the young and successful and so try to find means to bewitch them.

Women are said to use witchcraft primarily in the form of love medicines, including those that make men impotent with other women (Keller, 1978). Men say this is *bulozi*; women are less certain. Women may also be accused of using poison, usually against a co-wife or a co-wife's children. (Reynolds, 1991: 155, cites a case among Gwembe Tonga in Zimbabwe.) This is definitely *bulozi*. Women also appear as poisoners in a context that does not carry the stigma of witchcraft when they have been ordered by their matrilineage to poison sons regarded as inveterate troublemakers. In the neighbourhoods of longitudinal study we have no instance of a woman accused as a dancer or of owning a witchgun, magic horse, aeroplane or truck or other such charms, nor are women accused of using familiars or spirits to obtain labour. If a woman is accused of having an *ilomba* or other familiar, it is almost without exception as the accomplice of her husband, who initiated her into its service. Women who become spirit guardians of dead kin can cause harm if they gossip or harbour malice, because the dead take offence when their guardian is angered. Such women therefore need to be circumspect or they are suspected of causing mischief, but they are not charged with witchcraft (Cligget, 1997: 134 ff.).

One 1996 diary reported the outcome when two adjacent villages in Gwembe Central summoned a witchfinder to identify and cleanse their witches. One village is in the longitudinal study. Eight of its ten senior men (aged over 50) were accused but only two of thirteen senior women: one for harbouring her husband's *ilomba*, the other for using medicine against her co-wife. Of the men, four were said to have *ilomba*, one had both *buyowela* and a witchgun, a sixth was a dancer and had a tin of human fat, another had 'charms', while the eighth was let off lightly with only a minor charge. We do not have a census for the second village, in which eleven men were named witches. I think they include all elders except for one man cleansed by a witchfinder the year before. Four women were charged, one for feeding her husband's *ilomba*, one for having her own familiars (*buyowela*), another for having charms to ensure her marriage, the fourth for poisoning her brother in conjunction with her son so that her son could inherit. The men were found with *ilomba* or *buyowela* or a witchgun. A 1997 diary records witchfinding carried out in a third Gwembe Central village. All four senior men were accused, along with two of ten senior women. The four men were found with *ilomba*, as was one woman but as surrogate for her husband.

Although the 1996 and 1997 diaries do not name victims of all those accused, the men's victims included daughters, sons, inherited sons and daughters, children of sons and daughters, a sister, a sister's son, and mother's brothers, while one was said to have killed his wife's mother

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and his wife's son's son. No woman was accused of bewitching a descendant.

Anyone within the witch's social network may be a victim. Children and young people are attacked to obtain their life force or in revenge against their kin. Women may be victims for the same reason or frequently, it is said, because they have refused the witch's sexual advances, but not, apparently, because someone wishes to inherit from them. Men are attacked for inheritance or to obtain their life force, to undercut their pretensions or from malice.

Where property is at stake, suspicions centre upon members of the matrilineage or sometimes the father's kin, for, despite the 1989 Zambian legislation that makes children and spouses heirs to 70 per cent of an estate (Himonga, 1995: 144–5), estates are usually claimed by close matrilineal kin, with the father or guardian of the dead father's spirit having lesser claims. As of 1998 wives and children rarely receive more than a token and may lose land, agricultural equipment, stock and other assets obtained through their labour and upon which they are dependent.

In the 1950s, in Gwembe South, where land was in short supply and feelings ran high over land allocation, divinations on the death of a senior man almost invariably held a member of the matrilineage responsible, brothers and sisters' sons (including classificatory ones) being logical suspects. Deaths of children, junior men or women were more problematic, as were other misfortunes such as illness or the death of stock or the failure of some enterprise. These might be attributed to the anger of the dead, including father or mother, over a lack of offerings or inappropriate behaviour, but the possibility of witchcraft was also considered. In the early 1960s, shortly after resettlement, when all were cultivating newly cleared land, witchcraft was more likely to be attributed to the desire to inherit cattle or other movable property. Since the 1970s disputes over land have again allegedly been responsible for some witch attacks.

From the 1970s direct public accusations increased, and so did the use of witchfinders, called *ban'ganga* (a term also used for diviner) or *bachape*, a loan word originating in the *bachape* witch-cleansing movement that operated in Northern and Eastern Provinces in the 1920s and 1930s (Richards, 1935; Field, 1985: 68 ff.; Marwick, 1950).

Yamba (1997) sees the 1996 recourse to a witchfinder in Chiawa, adjacent to Gwembe North, as a means of coping with the fears and tensions the AIDS epidemic engenders. AIDS, however, is a phenomenon of the later 1980s and 1990s, whereas witchfinders have operated openly throughout rural Zambia since the 1970s, when the Witchcraft Ordinance became largely a dead letter. Gwembe chiefs began to encourage witchfinders to operate in their chieftaincies in the 1970s, and in 1980–82 almost every Gwembe neighbourhood (*cisi*) called in at least one witchfinder, who was expected to identify all witches, destroy their witchcraft resources and administer medicines which would kill anyone who reverted to witchcraft.

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This was a time of extreme malaise, when the first impact of economic decline was biting deep into village standards, as shops closed or carried almost no goods and inflation made unavailable goods deemed necessities. It was also a time of deep despair over the ability of Zambian political leaders to come up with solutions to the general misery. Government willingness to permit witchfinding reflected belief in the power of witches among government officials, but it also deflected anger from the government in power and its party, UNIP, towards village elders, who were labelled the source of misery.

Since 1982 witchfinders have continued to be summoned for particular suspects, and frequently villages or neighbourhoods arrange for a general search and cleansing of all witches. Chiefs in Gwembe, as throughout Zambia, act on the premise that they have the right to compel an accused person to undergo detection and cleansing, and their action is supported by their people. A Southern Province chief from the Plateau, who ordered witchfinders to quit his area in 1998, did so in the face of popular protest.

However much entertainment or sense of vindication witchcraft campaigns provide to those given the opportunity to vent their hostility against senior men, they provide no cure for endemic miseries, nor do they reduce fear and suspicion for long. In the late 1980s and 1990s some men cleansed in 1982 were said to have found ways to continue their witchcraft, while younger men previously not suspect had matured and come under suspicion. The campaigns instead work to underwrite the reality of the power of witches. They are also a heavy tax on the rural economy, since those accused pay for cleansing with plough oxen and other working equipment, and the payment goes to the witchfinder and his team of assistants. A Gwembe Central elder was forced to pay nine cattle in 1996; an emigrant to the Plateau paid four cattle, a sewing machine and a bicycle in 1998. But the usual fee for cleansing during the 1990s was four cattle or their equivalent, ox chains and ploughs or money being taken in lieu of cattle. Summoning a witchfinder, therefore, has serious implications for the economic well-being of rural communities, but those who fear the witches think the result worth it.

Witchfinding does reinforce the existing power structure, for it is chiefs who give witchfinders permission to operate in their areas and enforce compliance with their demands. The campaigns also reinforce the belief that local witches are the root of the suffering encountered by individuals. As people continue to be troubled they hunt anew among those close at hand and vulnerable to local pressures rather than accuse those in power, who are not subject to local coercion.

CHANGING FAMILY DYNAMICS

Prior to 1958 Gwembe Valley exported only its labour and high-value produce such as tobacco. Agriculture was largely subsistence agriculture, principally in the hands of women and children, while men were labour migrants. Typically men went to work as youngsters, usually in

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Southern Rhodesia. They returned to marry, using wages to finance bridewealth, and thereafter alternated between work and periods at home, where their wives maintained their households, worked the fields and cared for stock. Men wanted a number of wives and many children, and continued to marry new wives and acquire new bridewealth costs. When sons were old enough for labour migration and daughters brought bridewealth from sons-in-law, men were in a position to stay permanently at home and dictate household activities. Only junior wives, married when a man's children by his senior wives neared maturity, were subject to a permanently resident husband. Most children grew up in households dominated by their mothers and in homesteads where the dominant males were senior kin of their fathers.

Women received land from kin and were allocated fields by their husband. Family labour on such fields produced a crop that fed the woman and her children and the husband when in residence. The crop grown on the husband's separate field, also with family labour, was kept as a food reserve, with any surplus the property of the husband, who used it for hospitality, to reward work parties or to trade for stock or other assets. Wages went on bridewealth, tax, a minimum of clothing and a few luxuries, some of which were shared with the family. For small boys the return of the migrant father might well mean a gift of clothing and the taste of sugar. Small girls were clothed by their mothers and by the men to whom they were betrothed.

Children worked. Cattle were reintroduced in much of Gwembe only in the 1950s, when they could be protected against trypanosomiasis carried by tsetse fly, but boys herded goats and sheep, some of which belonged to their mothers, and they saw themselves protecting assets a portion of which would belong to them. Girls carried a heavy load of household labour. Both boys and girls helped in the fields. They also received small fields of their own and were praised when food came from their fields or were allowed to trade produce for chickens and small stock.

Despite fertile soil, Gwembe Valley was notorious for frequent hunger years, owing to drought, premature flooding of river gardens, locust infestations, etc. (Scudder, 1962: 218–41). Lack of wheeled transport prior to the 1950s made the importation of food difficult. People therefore husbanded grain supplies, and the brewing of beer was primarily for work parties and for ritual offerings. The little beer usually available was reserved for elders, and drunkenness was kept in check by lack of opportunity to indulge in drinking (Colson and Scudder, 1988: 40–3).

In 1958 the Kariba Dam transformed the Middle Zambezi Valley into a giant lake, forcing resettlement of much of its population. Here, as elsewhere, large-scale resettlement brought people into closer contact with the state as government agencies built roads, rebuilt schools, installed water points and engaged in other activities associated with resettlement. For the first time since the raiding days of the nineteenth century a large number of strangers came to Gwembe, and some stayed. For the first time, also, men could find wage work and sell

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produce near home, and the new cash economy meant that women had a market for beer and garden produce (Colson, 1972).

The trauma of resettlement was mitigated in the 1960s by the prosperity associated with Zambian independence in 1964. The few with education easily got jobs in government and industry then being rapidly Zambianised. Even young men without education could find jobs and therefore had a bargaining position against elders who might control land and other local resources but did not control the jobs to which the young looked for emancipation (Colson and Scudder, 1975). They had also won the right to take wives and children with them, which meant that they did not need to rely upon elders to safeguard their familial roles.

After 1973 the Zambian economy rapidly disintegrated (Saasa and Carlsson, 1996: 34–6). Rural investment declined, the infrastructure deteriorated, jobs became scarce and much competed for. Within Gwembe, land pressure was increasingly acute. From the time of resettlement most areas had too little land to support their population. The birth rate was and has remained high. Mortality rates fell during the 1960s and early 1970s, when health services became more readily available, and though they rose again from the 1980s on, births still exceed deaths, leading to increasing demand for fields (Clark *et al.*, 1995).

Pressure on land was reduced by emigration as long as wage work elsewhere in Zambia provided an alternative and often preferred way of making a living. In the 1980s fields also became available when some of the more ambitious and affluent Gwembe farmers chose to pioneer land elsewhere in Zambia. But yields fell when fields remained in cultivation because alternative fields were unavailable. Played-out fields are now expected to produce both subsistence and cash crops, since people depend upon the sale of agricultural produce and cattle for the purchase of clothing and other necessities.

Changes in agricultural production meantime altered family dynamics. Control of tsetse fly made the introduction of cattle possible in the late 1950s, and the cash available in the 1960s from fishing, resettlement reparation payments and wages bought oxen, ploughs and other equipment. This underwrote expansion into cash crops, including cotton, but it also meant that ambitious men needed male labour to herd cattle and to train and manage plough oxen. They looked to sons and sometimes sisters' sons and refused them food if they malingered and/or beat them if they were small. Mature sons got the use of their father's plough and oxen only after they had ploughed for him, which meant that they might miss the crucial period for planting. Men who took up land at the time of resettlement claimed it in their own name: few women obtained land at that time. After the 1970s sons and other dependants looked to fathers and senior matrilineal kin for fields and might be dispossessed if they refused labour and deference. The fields allocated to them were usually those returning the smallest yield.

Resident husbands and fathers also defined themselves as having the right to direct the family enterprise and to monopolise its profits as they

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had not been able to do as absentee labour migrants. A man could claim rights over crops grown on fields he allocated to his wife, especially if his plough and oxen were used in planting, even though she and her children provided the labour. He might forbid a wife to grow food crops if he wished to concentrate on cotton and needed her and her children's labour. When the crop was sold he received the cheque and decided how he would share it. If he did not allocate money to replace forgone subsistence crops it meant short rations for women and children (Colson, 1999). Much went on himself—for farm equipment and stock, to marry additional wives and entertain mistresses, to buy clothing and delicacies which might be shared with the family. Often much of the income generated by family labour paid for beer and stronger drink, now available almost on a daily basis (Colson and Scudder, 1988).

Drink, especially when times were tough, led to much violence as men fought each other at beer or went home to beat wives and children. A woman could divorce an abusive husband, though her kin might object, since they would have to return at least a portion of her bridewealth and might not wish to provide her with land or other support. Women with children often stayed even under conditions of frequent abuse. As one said in 1996, 'I could leave him and find another husband, but my new husband would not want my six children.' Increasingly, from the 1970s on, I heard women complain about maltreatment and exploitation and that money needed to feed and clothe them and their children was being spent on beer and other women. Women also complained of difficulty in persuading men to pay for children's school expenses. Children ambitious to escape the village felt victimised by fathers who did not reward them adequately. There were exceptions. Some men dealt fairly with wives and children, most assumed greater responsibility for marriage payments for sons and dependants who worked for them, and some sent children to school and might beat them for absconding.

Sons and daughters who in the 1990s envisaged their fathers as witches desirous of killing them to use their spirits as economic resources, or of draining their life force to grow crops, increase herds or benefit shops, grew up under these circumstances. They were born between 1954 and 1970 and by 1992 were either already established in their own homesteads or on the verge of breaking away. Unlike the young men of 1956, who were labour migrants and earned their own bridewealth, they depended upon their elders for bridewealth and for land and access to agricultural equipment.

THE FATHER AS WITCH

When I asked old friends if fathers were now suspect because so many adult children were dying in the 1990s they agreed that fathers were not accused when they were young but saw no relation between the survival of the old while the young died: one said that children accuse fathers because divinations find the father responsible.

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In the 1950s divinations might attribute illness or other trouble to the angry spirit of a dead father, though the father's spirit was also the chief guardian of his children. It was also common for adults to suspect their father's kin of bewitching them to prevent the father from favouring his children. The inheritor of the status of a dead father was a likely suspect, for relations between adult men and women and the man who inherited their dead father's position were often tense. They questioned the use the inheritor made of their father's estate as well as his claims upon their own time and property, while the inheritor resented failure to give him what he thought his due as father and feared their resentment.

If children died in infancy the diviner consulted by the mother and her kin might indicate that the father held medicine that needed empowering. Youngsters might voice grievances against parents and other adults (Colson, 1970) but adults even if they quarrelled with their father did not accuse him as a witch. On the other hand, sons occasionally were accused of bewitching their father. In 1972, in a village in the longitudinal study, three senior men were regarded as highly dangerous witches. Two had sons who had established separate homesteads after quarrelling with their fathers. Yet, when the sons talked of divinations or their own suspicions, they named mother's brothers, brothers, classificatory brothers, father's kin, or rivals. In a second village in 1972 five men were referred to as dangerous witches, three of whom had adult children. Again none was implicated by an own child, although a son's wife held one responsible for a child's deafness and the death of two other children. In a third village four men, all with adult children, were notorious as witches. In 1962 a divination named one as responsible for the death of a daughter's infant, his motive being his son-in-law's failure to give him bridewealth. In 1972 a local moot found another man guilty of killing his young son with crocodile medicine. In both instances accusations were brought by affines.

In principle, then, since the 1950s at least men have been seen as possible witch aggressors against their children and grandchildren, either to extort what they regard as their due or to obtain *muuya* for enrichment. But some people denied that a father would kill his own children. In 1982 I listened as two men lamented that people accused each of them of having killed a grown daughter. They asked each other, 'How can they think that I who begot and reared her would kill her?' In 1996, in the same neighbourhood, an elder said much the same when we discussed a current accusation involving one of his age mates. 'Do you think it reasonable that a man should bewitch his daughter whom he begot and reared? Diviners these days will use you for what they can get and will say it is the father.' Yet in 1997 the same man supported a younger maternal kinsman who was accusing his father of bewitching him and his family.

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CASE HISTORIES

The following case histories, from a single village, show how men become targeted as witches and their children become accusers. The men are designated by number.

Case 1

'One' (born 1922) cleared fields, adopted new techniques, and prospered after resettlement when he formed his own homestead. He gave up labour migration. By the 1970s he was wealthy by local standards, with three wives who with their children provided field and herding labour. One wife died in the 1970s but their children remained with him, various sisters' sons joined him, and he married again. He invested in agricultural equipment and became wealthy in stock. Inevitably he was suspected of investing in medicine for protection and prosperity.

Since One did not drink, he was somewhat isolated from other men, who by the 1970s spent much of their time at beer. He smoked cannabis but as a solitary pleasure. He opposed school attendance by his children and other dependants, insisting that he needed their labour, but as his sons and male dependants matured he helped them with bridewealth and let them clear fields in the area he had appropriated. When they quarrelled, he tried to repossess the fields. In 1992 he drove out the 20-year-old son of a divorced wife because the lad chose to stay in school rather than herd full-time. The following year he quarrelled with and drove away one of his two remaining wives.

In 1965 gossip named One as the witch who had killed the small daughter of his close friend soon after he had accused her father of informing the police that he was growing cannabis. In the 1970s his adolescent stepsons, whom he had not welcomed with their mother, called him a witch but imputed to him no particular illnesses or deaths. Accusations began to proliferate in the 1980s when he had become a cotton farmer and the most prosperous man in the village and his older sons and sisters' sons were establishing their own homesteads and farms. He was not caught by the witchfinder who cleansed the village in 1981, thanks to bribery, some said, but a divination accused him of the death of a sister's son because the man had refused him labour and because he wanted to make use of the spirit. In 1982 a stepdaughter said he was bewitching her because she had refused to sleep with him. The same year his mother's death divination named him. In 1988 his paternal half-brother died after they had quarrelled over a field boundary and the divination held that One had killed him from malice and to use his spirit. In 1992 a daughter's child died, and his wife, daughter and sons held him responsible. In 1994 a daughter was ill. Her brothers accused One of trying to kill her for use in his fields. In 1995 another daughter by the same wife died. Again his sons accused him and wanted to summon a witchfinder. A different diviner, consulted by One, attributed the daughter's death to her brother, who would use her spirit to enrich his farm and shop. Her brothers said the divination was

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faked. In 1996 an unmarried adolescent daughter, by another wife, became ill. She, her mother, her brother and other maternal kin petitioned the chief to force One to be cleansed by a witchfinder.

The children who called him a witch and demanded that he undergo cleansing were children by the two divorced wives. Children by two other wives, one long dead, defended him, one son suffering arrest by the chief for driving the witchfinder off when he arrived to carry out the cleansing. In 1998 One, still uncleansed, had managed a reconciliation with the children of one divorced wife, though most people said he was still a dangerous witch.

Case 2

'Two' (born 1924) had two wives by 1956. After resettlement he established his own homestead and found a local job. With this, subsistence cultivation, and tobacco as a cash crop, he did not need to work as a labour migrant. He discouraged his children and other dependants from attending school, preferring to use them as herdboys and field workers, but he was prepared to help his sons with bridewealth when they married. In the 1960s and 1970s Two attracted kinsmen to settle with him but by the 1980s they had left, driven away, village gossip said, to avoid sharing food with them. Prior to the 1980s Two smoked cannabis but rarely drank.

In 1977 Two was named in the death divination of a classificatory brother and his wife, the motive attributed to him being desire to inherit the status of the man. In 1979 suspicion reawakened on the death of another classificatory brother, attributed again to desire to inherit. In 1980, when his daughter was struck by lightning, he was a suspect, but her brothers, youngsters at the time, identified the witch as their father's brother: in later years they held him responsible. In 1981 he was not charged with the death of his mother's brother, whose status he inherited, but in 1984 he was said to have caused the death of the latter's son after a quarrel over cattle. In 1981 he was not charged with the death of his mother's brother, whose status he inherited, but in 1984 he was said to have caused the death of the latter's son after a quarrel over cattle. The 1987 AIDS-associated illness of a married son and the 1991 illness of a second married son, by the same wife, convinced both men that Two was trying to kill them with an *ilomba* because he wanted their spirits to work for him. A married son by another wife attributed his 1994 illness and the epilepsy of a younger brother to their father. In 1995 the death divination of the son ill since the 1980s named Two as witch.

Two also continued to be suspected by maternal kin and inherited children, as on the death in 1992 of a sister's son although, some said the man was bewitched by workmates in town and others said he died of AIDS. In 1996 an inherited daughter petitioned the chief to force Two to be cleansed by a witchfinder, saying her dreams were haunted by the spirits of those he had killed. Between 1996 and 1998 he was accused of killing two sister's sons, a sister's daughter and a sister's

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daughter's child. His surviving sons, who said their father was a dancer and controlled an *ilomba*, wanted him cleansed.

Case 3

'Three' (born 1938) moved to the village in 1982 after inheriting the positions of two senior kinsmen. By that time he was drinking heavily. Land, cattle and rights to marriage payments inherited from his kinsmen gave him status and an income. While he married and divorced a number of additional wives his senior wife brewed beer to earn money for herself and for her children's school fees. Some of them attended secondary school and then found jobs outside the immediate area.

In the late 1980s complaints were made to the village headman that Three was threatening to bewitch inherited children who had refused to help him and women who refused his advances. His own children began to fear him as a witch in the 1990s when a married son with a salaried job became ill with tuberculosis. On his death in 1996 village gossip hesitated whether to blame Three or the man's older brother, who was said to be envious of his success. The preferred explanation, upheld by the death divination, was that his father killed him in revenge because he sent gifts to his mother but not to his father and to use his spirit for bewitching. In 1998 his daughter said he was responsible for her miscarriage and wanted him cleansed.

Case 4

'Four' (born 1927) was already married in 1956. After resettlement he worked away from the village seasonally but was back for every planting season. His wages helped to finance the development of a homestead and farm. In the 1960s and 1970s he had two wives, but one, by whom he had no children, left him in the late 1970s. In 1988 he moved to the outskirts of the village, isolating himself from demands on his time and patience.

Four worked his children hard but sent them to school, a number attending secondary school. Unfortunately most of his sons died young and his daughters married or found work outside the village. By 1990 years of drought left him no longer prosperous, and, with children grown up and his wife ill, he no longer had the labour he needed.

In 1973 Four's affines held him responsible for the death of his 3-year-old daughter. In 1980 he was a target of suspicion over the death of his brother's daughter. In 1981 the witchfinder imported to cleanse the village found him with a witch horse and other paraphernalia. Thereafter he joined a Church which forbade beer drinking. This isolated him from most of his fellows. In the 1990s some regarded him as the most dangerous witch in the village and said he had managed to abort the effects of the witchfinder's medicine.

In 1992 Four was suspect in the illness of his wife and the long illness of a married daughter. When his 26-year-old son was hospitalised with tuberculosis in 1995 Four was said to be using his life force in the fields.

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He was also held responsible for the blindness of a friend and age mate after they quarrelled over precedence within their church.

Case 5

'Five' (born 1920) did not work as a labour migrant after 1958, when he already had two wives, and from 1960 on he had his own homestead. He did well as a farmer and had cattle, both his own and those entrusted to him by kin. He began to drink heavily in the 1960s.

His two wives and their children provided much of his labour, though he also demanded herding and field labour from his sisters' sons. He discouraged his children from attending school. In the 1970s he quarrelled with his sisters' sons, by then in their early teens, when the youngsters skimped on herding, while they accused him of denying them clothes and access to milk. A sister mourned, 'It is this kind of thing that leads to witchcraft.' The youngsters were already very willing to mutter that Five was a witch.

In 1965 Five's sister consulted a diviner over the terminal illness of her infant daughter. Among the alternatives she canvassed was her father, but the diviner found Five responsible. In 1973 Five's affines attributed to him the death of his 7-year-old daughter. In 1979 he was named in the death divination of the 18-year-old son of another sister who lived miles away. He absented himself to evade the witchfinder who cleansed the village in 1981. In 1986 sons by one wife said he had caused the death of their unmarried half-brother. In 1992 they accused him of making their mother ill and demanded that he accompany them to a diviner, which he refused to do. A 1995 divination held him responsible for the barrenness of an often married daughter whose fertility was being used in his field. By 1996 all sons had left his homestead, including an unmarried boy, but his sisters' children said that he was less dangerous than in the 1980s.

Case 6

'Six' (born 1919) was not involved in labour migration after 1956. He prospered as businessman and farmer and was politically active. In the 1960s and 1970s he and his three wives lived in a large homestead on the outskirts of the village. He sent his children to school and supported a number of them in secondary school. Six began to drink heavily in the 1970s. In the 1970s he divorced one wife and in the 1990s another. In the 1980s his business failed at the time when most rural businesses collapsed, but he still had a cash crop and livestock.

During the 1981 cleansing of the village, Six absented himself. Gossip held that he bribed diviners to avoid being named in death and other divinations. In 1991 a daughter asked him to accompany her to a diviner who had found him responsible for her child's deafness. Six retaliated by divorcing her mother and severing relations with all the woman's children except for his right to receive marriage payments on daughters. In 1992 Six called for the beating and imprisonment of a son, by the remaining wife, for cattle theft.

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These six men lived in the same village. Born between 1919 and 1938, they had sons born prior to the mid-1960s. All were at home during their children's childhood and early youth. All were perceived as ambitious men, grasping for wealth and in need of labour. All were suspected witches prior to the first accusations laid by children. Accusing sons ranged in age from 26 to 44. Twelve other men in the village of roughly comparable age had escaped accusation by their own children up to 1998, although some were accused of bewitching other people. Only two had sons over 30. The sons of one were reared by their mother's kin after their parents' early divorce. The other man was sent to a witchfinder in 1972 when his affines accused him of the death of infant children, and he was found with witchcraft objects in the 1981 village cleansing, though thereafter he was regarded as clean. He was never a heavy drinker. He did not farm on the same scale as the accused men but had found money to pay school fees for his sons, several of whom went to secondary school and worked outside the village. His immunity may be temporary, however, since all sons have moved from his homestead.

CONCLUSION

A comparable pattern emerged in other villages. Accusing children were in their 20s to early 40s. They grew up watching their fathers prosper while they perceived themselves as working for little return. Their fathers were ambitious men who seized the opportunities that arose after resettlement when it became possible to convert to plough agriculture and cash cropping. They needed labour and they extracted it from wives and children, who resented giving it, especially since until 1989 the system of matrilineal inheritance gave them little chance to inherit the wealth they helped to produce and thereafter the 1989 legislation giving rights to children and spouses was largely ignored in Gwembe and elsewhere in Southern Province, where a man's matrilineal kin continue to inherit.

In the 1980s and 1990s Gwembe Valley was hit by severe droughts sometimes two, three or four years running. Hunger became common, draining energy and hope from people also now suffering from AIDS and tuberculosis. Although Tonga-speakers generally say that AIDS is not caused by witchcraft (Hågård, 1997: 28; Mogensen, 1995: 12–13), those with AIDS and their kin usually deny a diagnosis of AIDS and try to identify a witch whose medicines can be counteracted. AIDS, therefore, like other illness, contributes to the fear of the witch as Yamba (1997) asserts.

Gwembe 'basic mental furniture' (Crehan, 1997: 222) attributes malaise to humans who further their own advantage by secretly draining life and strength from known others. Given Gwembe circumstances, who is so likely to be responsible as the father who exploited them through their childhood and youth and who can be expected to seek to continue to exploit them through mystical means now that they are adult and able to refuse their labour? Subjecting him to the witchfinder

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may be publicly defined as a protective measure but it also avenges their childhood suffering, as it demeans him before the public.

And those accused do suffer. Tears streaked his face as One faced the witchfinder and the gathered crowd. Another man accused in a village cleansing late in 1996 hanged himself. His paternal half-brother, who initially tried to defy the witchfinder, went to the nearby police station to report the death and met with indifference, for the police along with the chiefs and others in power believe in witchcraft and have no interest in defending those accused.

The increasing resort to witchfinders in Gwembe Valley reflects the general unhappiness and sense of vulnerability so characteristic of much of Africa at the end of the twentieth century as well as the strength of the sense that one is vulnerable to exploitation by ambitious others who illicitly make use of one's life force. That men rather than women are accused, however, is due to local assumptions about gender characteristics established in pre-colonial times. That the father is now prone to suspicion reflects the dynamics of Gwembe family life as grievances and hostility have become more centred on the father, who over the past thirty years has assumed a pre-eminent position among exploiters of the young.

The witchfinder in the humiliating drama associated with cleansing permits younger people to triumph over powerful elders and children to retaliate against fathers, who are forced to part with those very resources which children see as acquired through their labour.

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s the feared witch among Tonga-speakers of Gwembe Valley, Zambia, is often the father, whose adult children accuse him of using witchcraft to gain power over the child's life force to use in his enterprises. Suspicions of the father arise from changing family dynamics associated with restricted economic opportunities and a changing agricultural system involving cash cropping where family labour is of vital importance. Witchcraft fears, as elsewhere in Zambia, have become more salient as worsening economic conditions have led to general malaise and the loosening of restraints on public accusation. Feeling victimised and vulnerable in a world where transport minimises distance has led to witches being endowed with the power to operate without regard to distance. Nevertheless witchfinding deflects hostility from national political figures to elders in the neighbourhood, especially fathers, who are continuous sources of immediate frustration and are also vulnerable to local action.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans les années 90, la sorcière que l'on craint au sein de la population de langue Tonga de la vallée du Gwembe, en Zambie, est souvent le père, que les enfants adultes accusent d'user de la sorcellerie pour manipuler leur force vitale à son profit. Les suspicions à l'égard du père résultent d'un changement de la dynamique familiale, à laquelle s'ajoutent des perspectives économiques limitées et une agriculture en pleine évolution impliquant des cultures commerciales pour lesquelles la main-d'œuvre familiale est d'une importance vitale. Comme dans le reste de la Zambie, la peur de la sorcellerie est devenue plus frappante au fur et à mesure que la situation économique se dégradait, créant un malaise général et un laisser-aller quant aux accusations publiques. Le sentiment d'être persécuté et vulnérable dans un monde où les transports minimisent les distances fait doter les sorcières du pouvoir d'exercer leurs pouvoirs à des distances illimitées. Néanmoins, la chasse aux sorcières détourne l'hostilité des personnalités politiques nationales pour la porter sur les anciens des communautés, notamment les pères, que sont une source permanente de frustration immédiate et sont vulnérables à l'action locale.

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