

# Homosexuality, Witchcraft, and Power: the Politics of *Ressentiment* in Cameroon

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**Abstract:** In this study I hope to deconstruct dominant and popular homophobic discourses in Cameroon to offer a deeper analysis of the common association made between homosexuality, witchcraft, and cults. Through a closer engagement with rumors that suggest homosexuality, witches, and cults are working collectively and covertly to destroy Cameroonian society important issues of power, morality, and inequality emerge, providing a more complex understanding of homophobic violence. I argue that in order to address homophobic concerns in Cameroon, activists must contend with the complexity of epistemological differences and speak to the root causes of an emerging *ressentiment*.

**Résumé:** Dans cette étude, j'espère déconstruire les discours homophobes dominants et populaires au Cameroun afin d'offrir une analyse plus approfondie de l'association commune faite entre l'homosexualité, la sorcellerie et les sectes. Par un engagement plus attentif aux rumeurs qui laissent entendre que l'homosexualité, la sorcellerie et les sectes travaillent collectivement et secrètement pour détruire la société camerounaise, d'importantes questions de pouvoir, de moralité et d'inégalité émergent, offrant une compréhension plus approfondie de la violence homophobe. Je soutiens donc qu'afin de répondre aux préoccupations homophobes au Cameroun, les militants doivent faire face à la complexité des différences épistémologiques et parler des causes profondes de ce ressentiment émergent.

**Resumo:** Neste artigo, proponho-me a desconstruir os discursos homofóbicos que se popularizaram e predominam nos Camarões, bem como analisar de forma aprofundada

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a associação—muito comum neste país—entre homossexualidade, bruxaria e culto. Por via do escrutínio dos rumores segundo os quais a homossexualidade, a bruxaria e os cultos estão, por ação conjunta, a destruir insidiosamente a sociedade camaronense, levantam-se importantes questões de poder, de moralidade e de desigualdade, o que possibilita um entendimento mais profundo da violência homofóbica. Para enfrentarem os problemas relacionados com a homofobia nos Camarões, os ativistas têm—e é nesse sentido que vai a minha argumentação—de lidar com a complexidade das diferenças epistemológicas e enfrentar os fatores que estão na origem de um *ressentimento* crescente.

**Keywords:** Homosexuality; witchcraft; cults; Cameroon; power; resentment

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### Call to Action

At the 59th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association in Washington, DC, on December 2, 2016, Peter Geschiere called on the academic community to contribute to an investigation into the interrelation of homosexuality, witchcraft, and power in Cameroon. This call was made during the *African Studies Review* Distinguished Lecture, titled *Tempting Transgression: Same Sex Practices as a Challenge in African Studies*. During the lecture, Geschiere addressed the recent rise of anti-gay violence and rhetoric in Cameroon and spoke to the complex associations made between witchcraft, homosexuality, and cults.

Having conducted my fieldwork on witchcraft-related violence in Ghana and Cameroon in 2012 and 2013, the anecdotes shared and media articles discussed resonated with my own experience. When I was conducting interviews with state officials, NGO workers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, and victims and perpetrators of witchcraft-related violence, the issue of homosexuality often arose. Though I was aware of this association before entering the field, I was not prepared for the intensity of responses as there is very little literature that comprehensively addresses the overlapping complexities of these issues.

In studies on witchcraft, some mention may be made of witches engaging in same-sex relations in the invisible world, though in many of these cases the discussion remains limited in scope, focusing on witchcraft as an expression of inverted social norms or as a barrier to medical intervention (for example, see Niehaus 1995; Geschiere 1997; Liddell, Barrett & Bydawell 2005). Conversely, articles addressing homosexuality and homophobia in Cameroon may acknowledge the correlation between witchcraft and homophobia, though in these cases deeper analysis of this relationship is often lacking in detail (for example, see Awondo 2012; Nfobin 2014; Ndjio 2016). In my experience researching these topics, this gap in the literature (which is most exaggerated in political science) is precipitated in part by a profound bias in academia that fails to value concerns and experiences of peoples who fall outside of, or may even actively contest, dominant epistemologies.

The marginalization of queer politics further compounds this effect, leading to a theoretical disconnection of witchcraft, homosexuality, and power.<sup>1</sup>

At the Annual Meeting, this bias was expressed poignantly during Geschiere's lecture, when the audience laughed, somewhat uncomfortably, at some of the accounts of peoples' fears regarding the collusion and activities of suspected witches and homosexuals. These reactions suggest the need for further discussion regarding how power is conceived and operationalized within the context of African epistemologies that include the supernatural or spiritual. Instances of ridicule reduce and dismiss lived realities and enact problematic notions of epistemological superiority while advancing an unconscious reflex towards sameness that, I would argue, is replicated in human rights discourses of international LGBT activism.

Fostering a deeper understanding of power, witchcraft, homosexuality, and homophobic response to homosexuality in Cameroon may be helped by a willingness to envision plural realities and diverse experiences. This is not to say that one should accept expressions of hatred, contempt, and disgust, nor is it to minimize the brutality of actions being taken against assumed, accused, and actual homosexuals in Cameroon. These instances of violence are abhorrent. They are also too often simplified and, as Geschiere rightly stressed, poorly understood. In this article, I hope to contribute in a small way to Geschiere's call by offering an analytical approach to the conspiracies of power, led by witches, homosexuals, and cults, that dominate Cameroonian society.

I also hope to contribute to discussions regarding the rise of homophobic politics in Cameroon by disentangling some of the layers of tension underlying these events. Building on the work of Ryan Richard Thoresen, who notes that there is a "dearth of frameworks" through which we can assess the "particularities" of distinct anti-gay responses, and who seeks to situate "different forms of anti-queer animus in national and international context" (2014:24–26), I hope to demonstrate that there are numerous power relations that are being challenged, contested, and conserved in Cameroonian debates regarding homosexuality.

I argue that contemporary expressions of homophobic panic in Cameroon have deep roots in beliefs regarding the morality of power, thereby implicating the supernatural, and sentiments of powerlessness, oppression, and deprivation that can be understood through Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*. Bringing together witchcraft, homosexuality, and resentment, I hope to demonstrate how societal moralities of power in Cameroon are subverted and suppressed by international and state systems, leading to the mass disenfranchisement of Cameroonians, who are increasingly expressing their experiences of oppression and exclusion through the politics of resentment.

## Cameroon in the International Context

In a 2012 article collaboratively authored by Patrick Awondo, Peter Geschiere, and Graeme Reid, titled "Homophobic Africa? Toward a more nuanced view,"

the authors challenge “a stereotypical image of one homophobic Africa” (Awondo et al. 2012:145). In this work, the authors deconstruct homophobic reactions in diverse localities that are frequently homogenized and simplified in international discourse. Just as it is important to consistently resist the construction of Africa as a homogenized political and social space, it is also essential to recognize complexity in the expression of homophobia in order to better understand the specific moralities, experiences, and concerns motivating these responses (Thoresen 2014).

Though homosexuality exists in all societies, expressions of homosexuality vary, and public expressions of the homosexual as an identity are not universal. As noted by Marc Epprecht, in many societies across Africa, a “key proviso is that non-normative sexuality not be named as such” (2012:226). Epprecht refers to this as a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach to homosexuality that permits homosexual activity to “take place under the umbrella of heteropatriarchal constructions of family, faith and African identity” (2012:226). Addressing the construction of homosexual identity in Western societies and the international is beyond the scope of this article. However, the link made by Epprecht between the permissibility of same-sex activity that is expressed outside of homosexual identities seen in some African societies and dominant discourses of homosexuality as the product of “outside interventions” is an important aspect of homophobia in contemporary Cameroon (2012:226). A micro-example of this link is provided by Erica Nordberg’s study of a Cameroonian court case against a man accused of homosexuality in 2009. In her work, Nordberg stresses that the accused was “arrested and charged not for something he had done, engaging in sexual acts, but for his identity as a homosexual.” Further, Nordberg notes that during the trial, “the judge called the charge ‘homosexuality,’ not ‘engaging in sexual acts’ which is what the law actually criminalizes” (2012:450).

This example provides some additional insight into the complexities of homophobic responses in Cameroon, where it is not homosexual acts that are aggressively criminalized in court proceedings, but rather the transgression of social norms. Though this point is neither particularly novel nor nuanced, it is an additional complexity that risks being overlooked in current debates. Emancipatory theories and anti-oppression discourses are constantly engaged with the task of overcoming social norms, to the point that this endeavor becomes routine. However, it is important to revisit these fundamental questions because many social movements are not only advancing rights-based discourses, but they are in fact seeking to alter the social norms of societies, and in order to do so, it is important to understand the foundations of these norms. Without this deeper understanding, international LGBT activists working against homophobia in Africa risk transposing assumptions about social norms and social change from their home societies onto others.

In particular, international LGBT movements often advocate the replication of Western models of emancipation, building on their own experiences,

histories, and affinity for human rights-based discourses and state protections (for example, see Epprecht 2012; Nordberg 2012).<sup>2</sup> However, in a post-colonial context such as Cameroon, where neo-colonial pressures continue to oppress, marginalize, impoverish, and dispossess the population, these approaches, when advocated by international voices, are justifiably associated with neo-imperialism. As noted by Epprecht, “the widespread perception that human rights discourse is a not-so-subtle form of Western neo-imperialism” inherently complicates “the situation” (2012:228). Though Cameroon has attracted “international attention for the frequency and intensity of antigay attacks in the country and the complicity of public officials” (Ireland 2013:48), as noted by Geschiere, few have sought to assess important links between these actions and concerns regarding the supernatural.

### The Homosexual Witch-hunt

Awondo and Geschiere cite the publication of three newspaper articles in *Nouvelle Afrique*, *L'Anecdote*, and *La Me'te'o* on January 24, 2006, as the watershed event that marked a dark turn in Cameroonian sexual politics. The articles titled “*List of queers*,” “*Top 50 presumed homosexuals in Cameroon*,” and “*Homosexuality in top state positions*” provided the names of suspected homosexuals in the public service (Awondo 2010:316). Both authors note that these articles were inspired by a holiday sermon “delivered a month earlier by the archbishop of Yaoundé” who was credited by the editor-in-chief of *L'Anecdote* (Geschiere 2010:126).

During this Christmas sermon, attendees were told that homosexuality is against the teachings of the Bible, were “warned against homosexuality amongst the Cameroon elite,” and were told that the European Union and Amsterdam Treaty were trying to prohibit reasonable “discrimination based on sexual orientation” (Geschiere 2010:126), in other words, forcing homosexuality on Africans. The archbishop spoke directly to international interventionism and suggested that the European Union represented a “wider problem” of “increasing pressure by international human rights organizations to end the penalisation of homosexual acts,” which, in turn, was decried as the source of increasing conflict in sexual politics across Africa (Geschiere 2010:126). In Cameroon specifically, “the homosexual problem” was, according to the archbishop, “a passport for ‘preferential treatment’ in the public service and a means of ‘corrupting the youth... [and] threatening the stability of the family’” (Awondo 2010:316).

In this re-telling of the sermon, numerous layers of discourse were instrumentalized by the archbishop to advance a fundamentally religious opposition to homosexuality. In his sermon, the archbishop drew on post-colonial sentiments of hostility toward international intervention, neo-colonialism, and neo-imperialism, alongside popular disdain for the state, whose authoritarian regime is suspected of being complicit in the progressive destruction of Cameroonian society by excluding people from the potential opportunities of development. However, the roots of these

discourses run deep in Cameroonian society and are inextricably linked to political and social power in both the visible and invisible worlds. At the same time that the Cameroonian state denies its own citizens opportunities to develop and progress, selfishly guarding such gains for state officials, it is also corrupting the fabric of society by colluding with nefarious actors who provide, guard, and abuse the power of the state: witches, cults, and homosexuals.

The idea that the Cameroonian state is widely suspected of working with homosexuals may seem counter-intuitive to those who are more familiar with international representations of state-enforcement of anti-gay legislation and stories of state complicity in violence against suspected and accused homosexuals. However, these representations fail to account for duality in public appeals for actions against homosexuality. Though many Cameroonians seek the assistance of the state in limiting the social transgression of homosexuals, many other Cameroonians are also suspicious of state actors and distrustful of state authority. The state, as a system of modern and secular (i.e., not supernatural) power, may be viewed skeptically as yet another legacy of Western colonialism—a perspective that further complicates statist, legalistic, and rights-based appeals and more fundamentally undermines Western rights-based strategies.

This criticism is coherently paired with the “deep-seated and widespread belief that homosexuality is a ‘white disease’” that was brought to Africa through the “sexual colonization and alienation of Africans by perverse western colonialists and missionaries” (Ndjio 2016:129). Though Basile Ndjio notes that there is evidence of the history of “same-sex relations in many pre-colonial African societies” (2016:129), colonial associations of homosexuality as a lifestyle and identity were in part cemented by the post-colonial state as it sought to distance itself from that period. As noted by Ndjio:

Since 1972, the sexuality of Cameroonians has developed within a dialectic of inclusion of heterosexuals as good citizens and culturally rooted Africans and the exclusion of homosexuals seen as alien citizens or uprooted Africans who flout African traditions and values, or who claim a globalized identity over their Africanity. (2016:116)

Under the first President of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo, policies against homosexuality were introduced that did not specifically target sexual acts, as Cameroon “had no legacy of colonial anti-sodomy legislation,” but which sought to suppress the “practice and performance” of homosexuality (Ndjio 2016: 119–20). Ndjio notes that these laws were not designed to prosecute “gay people as such but rather those who failed to conceal their sexual practices” (2016:120). Accompanying this suppression of the performance of homosexual lifestyles and identities, the state “turned a blind eye to dissenting sexualities ... so long as they did not claim specific rights on the basis of their sexual orientation” (Ndjio 2016:120).<sup>3</sup>

This “relative indifference” on the part of the state meant that LGBT persons were less frequently harassed by state officials, and some public locations such as bars and cafés in Douala and Yaoundé were permitted to operate as informal “meeting places for local gays and lesbians” (Ndjio 2016:120). This policy was maintained by Ahidjo’s successor, Paul Biya, who “paid only incidental attention to gays and lesbians,” until the events of late 2005 (Ndjio 2016:121). In recent years, President Biya has departed from the preceding policy of indifference. As Ndjio puts it, “the veil of silence was shattered by members of the ruling class launching endless tirades about unconventional sexualities and sexual inverters” (2016:121).

Within these tirades against “sexual delinquents” (Ndjio 2016:124), emerged a dominant homophobic discourse that appears so absurd to many international audiences that it has been largely dismissed, ignored, or openly ridiculed. Contemporary homophobia in Cameroon constructs homosexuals as “dangerous sorcerers or witches connected to what one populist pro-Biya regime intellectual has called *sectes magicoanales* (magico-anal sects)” (Ndjio 2016:124). This supernatural dimension is also entangled with anti-state discourses against “gays of the republic” and “sodomite-in-chief” who are “accused of promoting homosexuality as a means to achieve political and economic domination, or to gain access to wealth and power” (Ndjio 2016:125).

Homophobic, anti-government terms such as “anusocracy” and “homocracy” (Nforbin 2014:76) combine disdain for homosexuality as a form of social corruption with contempt for an authoritarian state that is repressive, exploitative, and corrupt. It is not coincidence that these fervent anti-gay and anti-government sentiments are being expressed alongside open rejections of neo-colonialism. As noted by Ndjio, these tensions manifest at “a time when the country was witnessing unprecedented inequality” (2016:125). Rumors regarding the decline of economic opportunities and increasing desperation, in a state rife with corruption, led many to believe that “it was by dropping their trousers that mediocre people without qualifications and competence became rich and powerful” (Ndjio 2016:125). As noted by Nordberg, Cameroonian media continues to promote this perception and openly blames ““rich, power-hungry homosexuals” for taking over the state” (2012:447).

In a time of economic despair, vulnerable people were seen as being willing to submit themselves to the depravity of a corrupt political and economic elite in order to survive. This willingness supposedly fed the long-suppressed appetites of elite homosexuals and strengthened their position in society, thereby cementing their alliance with the key power brokers of the Cameroonian state, cults and witches. Ludovic Ladó notes that “what is new about the current tensions, is not that homosexuals are stigmatized, nor the demonization of a discredited elite, but the union of these two themes in the current socio-political context” (2011:939, my translation). E. H. Ngwa Nfobin notes that this union is so strong, that “[s]ome even think [homosexuality] is inseparable” from other social ills such as “single-ness, memberships of demonic sects [and] witchcraft” (2014:74).



## Witchcraft, Power, and Homosexuality

In the belief systems of many peoples in Cameroon, power in the visible world is derived from and remains connected to power in the unseen and invisible world of the supernatural. Contrary to the common approach to witchcraft as a representation or idiom that is used to understand, explain, or symbolize power in the visible world, witchcraft is more accurately understood in Cameroon as a distinct reality, where the moral conception and “proper function” of power is debated (Ellis & ter Haar 1998:201). As noted by Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, Western approaches to African political landscapes tend “to regard politics as a metaphor for movements in the spirit world” (1998:186).

This subversion of African epistemologies, and the supernatural powers that are manifested in many of these epistemologies, reduces the complexity of non-Western political realities and perpetuates foreign constructions of power that assume a stark division between that which is considered real and empirically grounded and that which is considered false or non-existent, a divide which is not present across Cameroonian societies (Nyamnjoh 2001). In the place of an imposed or authoritarian reality determined by the principles of modernity, many Cameroonian societies inhabit negotiated realities (Nyamnjoh 2001), where one’s experience is not wholly negated when it cannot be experienced or perceived by another.

Witchcraft, as a form of power, transgresses the boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds and imbues those who are able to pass between worlds or draw on the supernatural with the ability to gain considerable status, wealth, and power in the visible world. Witchcraft as a power is not inherently evil, though most who seek this heightened ability are believed to use it to harm (*nuire*) others and their community. When used destructively, witchcraft power is commonly employed to deprive others of success and happiness. For example, a state official I spoke with lamented that her brothers, despite being intelligent and educated, were incapable of advancing in life because of witchcraft (Interview, State Official, March 2013), while another stressed that witchcraft is used to destabilize people morally and psychologically (Interview, State Official, April 2013). The manifestation of witchcraft attacks against moral fortitude is also reflected in religious terms, where witchcraft can be defined as any actions contrary to the precepts of the Bible (Interview, State Official, April 2013), including homosexuality (Interview, Victim of Witchcraft-related violence, April 2013).

As noted by Geschiere (1997), witchcraft is also deeply concerned with inequality, as witchcraft discourses force us to acknowledge that inequality and jealousy exist among those with whom we are closest. In cities, where many people are strangers, witchcraft-violence as a reflection of the dangers of intimacy is stressed in frequent discussions of violence between witches. The secret societies that witches supposedly form foster another layer of violence which some view as a significant threat (Interview, Religious Organization, March 2013). In these instances, newly initiated



witches may come into conflict with their covens, and the resulting aggression can lead to collateral casualties. Other witches are born with inherited supernatural powers which may be seen as somewhat ambivalent, as their families may be provided greater protection. As well, enslaved recruits who repent may be absolved and permitted to return to society if they reject witchcraft teachings.

In some instances, people who have been forcibly initiated into witch cults as recruits are then expected to contribute to the power of their coven. In defining witchcraft, one chief stressed this growing trend; whereas in the past witches could harm non-witches, the rise of witch organizations, built on the success of cults hidden within religious and community-based organizations, has brought new means to recruit the next generation (Interview, Traditional Authority, April 2013). Increasingly, it is through social organizations that parents are groomed to voluntarily sacrifice their own children, thereby expanding relations of violence from witches to non-witches. Witchcraft is viewed as a pervasive threat that any one may unknowingly invite into their life. As noted by one state official, hate, fornication, and other immoral acts open up windows through which witches may enter human bodies in order to perpetuate their existence (Interview, State Official, April 2013). Without these base inclinations, witches would cease to exist.

The witches who are of greatest concern in Cameroon are those who are driven by base and immoral motivation, those who seek witchcraft powers out of envy, jealousy, or greed, and who have no intention of contributing to society through their exceptional power. A young woman whose mother died from a purported witchcraft attack and who believes herself afflicted by the same witch but survived suggested that there is a moral equation underlying witchcraft (Interview, Victim of witchcraft-related violence, April 2013). Witches, and people who want things in life without having to work for them, turn to witchcraft, sacrifice, and cults, in order to achieve outcomes that are impossible without effort. This requires obscure practices that are defined by a perceived inversion of productivity and morality, such as homosexuality, and alliances with agents who are depicted as being unable to contribute to society, such as witches traveling with hermaphrodites. It is the desire to destroy human society through the complete inversion of morality that is believed to motivate many witches, and it is these witches that are most hated.

As noted by a state official (Interview, State Official, April 2013), witches who kill for their own gain cannot be allowed to live among people. Yet, witchcraft power is viewed as accessible to all, insofar as any individual who is power hungry and callous can gain witchcraft powers through the sacrifice of family members or friends. These objects of sacrifice, who are received as payment for initiation, are fed to other witches who will eat them from the inside out, depriving them of opportunity, destroying their health, causing them misfortune, and finally, taking their lives. In the visible world, people have equal access to socially accepted forms of power; however, through the supernatural, individuals may trade their humanity for an exceptional ability that allows them to exercise power above and

beyond the natural limits of human society. Therefore, it is considered reasonable to assume that those who hold exceptional positions in Cameroon are in collusion with, or may actually be, witches.

Understanding the role of the supernatural or spiritual in Cameroonian politics requires an upending of dominant assumptions regarding reality, which is helped by permitting the co-existence of diverse realities that are not mutually exclusive, if authoritarian tendencies toward reality can be abandoned. As noted by Ellis and ter Haar, power, for the vast majority of Africa and arguably the world, is rooted in part in the “invisible world,” and the supernatural has a significant “influence on the conduct of the political and on political attributes such as authority and legitimacy” (1998:390). For those who live among witches but do not believe in the supernatural, they are often unaffected by its power and therefore not required to believe in order to secure their protection. However, the alternative, where witchcraft beliefs are ridiculed or demonized, and experiences of insecurity are dismissed or exacerbated by the suppression of anti-witchcraft practices, often leads to increased insecurity and greater social tensions.

Because the political landscape of Cameroon is complicated by the supernatural, those in positions of power are not only suspect, they are also bound by the same social expectations that are applied to any who benefit from greater status. State organizations, traditional authorities, and religious organizations are all suspected of harboring witches and cultists within their ranks, as they also equally suspect one another. For example, one state official I spoke with cautioned that some churches are sects, noting a case in Bamenda where a pastor had seven wives and married his own children (Interview, State Official, April 2013). At the same time, a chief (Interview, Traditional Authority, April 2013) and a healer (Interview, Traditional Authority, April 2013) I spoke with cautioned that state officials are cultists and that the majority of priests and pastors are witches or Rosicrucians. The latter noted that it was evident that many churches are corrupt given their support for gay marriage, an obvious example of witchcraft, as well as a layered criticism of Western imperialism. Cults such as the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons, which many state leaders including Paul Biya are rumored to be members of, are thought to have been introduced to the continent during colonial times, and relations between former colonial powers remain bound within these alliances (Soudan 2013).

The moral constraints placed on the proper use of power in Cameroon require those who are in a position of greater ability to contribute to the betterment of their community. When one has gained power over others, this power is balanced by a redistributive responsibility through which individuals justify their continued position, a moral constraint on power which Geschiere (1997) refers to as a “levelling effect.” These limitations on the legitimate exercise of power, and the rumors that arise from suspicion of witchcraft, also serve to deter ostentatious expressions of power and open abuses of privilege. Those who transgress these limits may be openly accused

of witchcraft, or in the case of increasing homophobic discourses, accused of being homosexuals who are corrupting society through their perverse desires.

Though witchcraft powers are inherently ambivalent, the disruption of these leveling processes and the suppression of witchcraft mediation practices during colonization contributed to greater spiritual anxiety and served to exacerbate witchcraft fears. As noted by Nicodemus Fru Awasom (2003), colonial efforts to expand state authority targeted traditional leaders and organizations vested with the responsibility of governing both the visible and invisible worlds, often separating communities from their source of spiritual mediation, which was the source of both witchcraft and anti-witchcraft powers. While, on the one hand, colonial authorities banned anti-witchcraft activities and spiritual mediation practices, on the other colonial courts “dismissed witchcraft accusations” as delusional, further alienating people from the state (Fisiy 1998:148).

As noted by Cyprian Fisiy, state efforts against witchcraft mediation produced “the frightening outcomes of witchcraft trials” where “witches were constantly set free” while those who were victims of witchcraft and who had “attacked witches ... in self-defense ... were instantly convicted for their acts” (1998:149). These injustices communicated the willingness of the state to protect nefarious actors while stressing the epistemological distance between the foreign logic of the colonial state and the people it sought to control. Adding to the increasing fear of the state’s collusion with witches, French colonial administrators “sought to contain witchcraft by eradicating secret societies, and by promoting an intensive educational and sensitization program of women and children” (Fisiy 1998:150), actions that were, and are today, synonymous with the recruitment and indoctrination practices of suspected cults (Nonga 2009).

As colonial administrators sought and failed to dispel witchcraft beliefs through education and development (Fisiy 1998:151), the post-colonial state has also sought to instrumentalize colonial discourses linking witchcraft as a source of backwardness or cause of underdevelopment. However, in a break from the legacy of foreign rule, the new independent state openly accepted the existence of witchcraft and constructed witches, rather than the belief in witches, as the source of social degradation, poverty, and suffering in post-colonial Cameroon. The government’s willingness to directly challenge the power of witches was an overt performance seeking to discursively frame the government as anti-imperial and pro-African while at the same time distancing itself from the previous colonial state administration in order to align its expressed cosmology with that of the population. Unfortunately, numerous barriers prevented the state from gaining traction through this discourse. Most notably, there was no way for the state to overcome the fundamental association between accumulated power and the supernatural, nor was the state capable of adapting the functions of the modern state to supernatural logics.

Fisiy and Geschiere (1990) note that efforts by the state to accomplish these feats served only to deepen distrust among the population. Elite efforts to address the uncontrolled realm of witchcraft motivated “the government’s campaign to establish its hegemony over this occult domain” (Fisiy & Geschiere 1990:148). This concern was expressed in greater state intervention against witchcraft as a “form of ‘subversion’” (Fisiy & Geschiere 1994:325) that was being “used by local populations to drive away civil servants posted in localities other than their homes areas” (Fisiy 1998:146). However, while state discourses stressed that witchcraft was “one of the main evils in the country,” state officials continued to openly rely on witchcraft powers in their personal lives in order to “fight off potential rivals” and “make clear to the villagers that they are invulnerable” (Fisiy & Geschiere 1990:154).

The fracturing of state power through witchcraft suspicions and accusations directed toward civil servants who are, by their own admission, relying on witchcraft in order to protect their status not only limited the ability of the post-colonial state to penetrate and govern its territory, but it also serves to perpetuate conflicts over power and authority that echo colonial efforts to consolidate foreign rule. For the colonial and post-colonial state, some regions of Cameroon were regarded as being particularly difficult to govern and resistant to state power. For example, Geschiere notes that among the Maka, the “close association” of witchcraft and power spoke to a “deep mistrust of any form of power” (1997:95).<sup>4</sup>

Though many state officials rely on witchcraft for protection and status, witchcraft fundamentally frustrates the ability of institutions such as the state to consolidate, monopolize, and normalize power. As a form of power, witchcraft cannot be constrained by actions in the visible world, nor can it be contained by the modern state. Therefore, in order to combat witchcraft, the state seeks to co-opt witchcraft beliefs through the use of physical force expressed in the criminalization of witchcraft, and to reconstruct popular discourses of the supernatural in an effort to redirect frustrations regarding corruption, repression, and poverty towards witches, who become the scapegoats for the failure of Cameroonian society to develop.

Through this discursive performance, the state has since its independence sought to establish that witchcraft is a pressing social threat that the government is committed to controlling and eradicating. However, overwhelming social, political, and economic evidence indicates that the state is losing this battle. In the context of increasing willingness among the population to express its dissatisfaction with the repressive and corrupt government, as well as persisting rumors of the state’s involvement with the occult and increasing fear among the elite regarding existing and potential unrest, a need for discursive realignment could be seen.

International pressure regarding LGBT issues, led in particular by the European Union and the United States government under President Obama, provided an opportunistic catalyst for a discursive shift in public scapegoating. Following the government’s example of the demonization of

witchcraft, individuals in the Cameroonian elite, in response to increasing insecurity regarding social unrest, sought to redirect popular frustration toward a familiar (in terms of the subversion of social norms) and looming threat: homosexuals. Building on existing associations between witchcraft and homosexuality, where both are seen to implicate the “inversion of everyday relationships” (Geschiere 1997:40), as well as anger against foreign intervention and neo-colonialism, elite actors helped stoke public rage against the unholy trinity of witches, homosexuals, and cults.

Hostility toward Western interventionism and recent homophobic reactions are further complicated by the supernatural foundations of power and the abuse of this power by the state and its collaborators. The close association of homosexuality, witchcraft, and cults such as the Freemasons and Rosicrucians is not recent. Awondo et al. (2012) note that homosexuality and Freemasonry were interchangeable terms of suspicion and contempt in the 1970s and 80s. Given the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a small elite in Cameroon who are believed able to “subject young men to humiliating same-sex rituals,” it is reasonable to assume that this exceptional power and the ability to operate with impunity would be bolstered by the power of witches as well as by a network of international organizations linked through cult initiation. Even international organizations that do not work closely with the state are suspect, as non-governmental organizations are widely believed to be cults (Fieldnotes, April 2013).

In his work on cults in Cameroon, Jean-Claude Aime Nonga warns that cults have infiltrated African societies, and Cameroonians have escaped physical slavery only to fall under the shadow of a new spiritual slavery. According to Nonga, these sects and secret orders have established themselves in the post-colonial state in order to influence politics and to recruit and corrupt the population through indoctrination efforts such as community education initiatives. Cults, like witches, draw on the power of the invisible world, often through the power of witchcraft or through an alliance with the devil (Nonga 2009). Like witches, cults are commonly believed to be driven by a morbid desire to destroy society and exact revenge on those who resist corruption, and increasingly this vengeance is sought through “an informal network of homosexual relations” that spans the continent and is drawing Africa “towards the cultural and commercial margins” of the world (Nonga 2009:31).

Though Nonga’s work is recent, rumors have a long history in Cameroonian society and are referred to colloquially by Geschiere as *Radio Trottoir*. Rumors not only speak to the closely linked activities of the visible and invisible world that exists behind the scenes of everyday life, but rumors also provide a sense of catharsis (Abe 2011). Abe suggests that rumors serve to help people process feelings of deep frustration, despair, and suffering in times of crisis by providing a symbolic representation of “the socio-economic and political situation of Cameroonians” (Abe 211:158, my translation). Abe also notes that rumors are an important performance of public space in the repressive climate of Cameroon, as rumors “by their very nature ... escape all controls” and pass freely under the strict surveillance of the state (2011:158, my translation).

Rumors, as means to speak truth to power that cannot be otherwise contested, are a representative mechanism further underlying the persistent condition of inequality in Cameroon. Rumor, as a mechanism of resistance in a state of extreme inequality, is an ironic conveyor of fear, insecurity, and contempt for witches, cults, and now homosexuals. In the adage of Marshall McLuhan, the medium is the message. However, by invoking homosexuality and the power of the state, elite efforts to capitalize on rumors of witchcraft and cults, as well as to instigate or redirect violence toward these new scapegoats, are also invoking discourses that are deeply concerned with inequality and the moral use of power.

### **Nietzsche, Ressentiment and Homosexuality**

Michael Rowlands and Jean-Pierre Warnier refer to witchcraft and power as “two sides of the same coin,” thereby forcing political figures to confront ambiguity of power and witchcraft at all times (1988:121). Unfortunately, the bound nature of power and witchcraft rarely features in political analysis of Cameroonian or African politics, and where it does, it is often considered only superficially and in terms of the relationship between politics and religion. However, witchcraft, and the close association of witches, cults, and now homosexuals in Cameroon, offer important opportunities to deepen theories of power relations in this locality, and to better understand the complexity of public and state discourses regarding the complex realities of the political in the visible and invisible worlds.

Though spiritual or supernatural powers offer individuals exceptional ability and status in the visible world, the demonization of witchcraft as “the destroyer of social order” is considered by Rowlands and Warnier to be “integral to the local strategies of equalising wealth and making elites honour their kinship obligation” (1988:131). Similar to Geschiere’s analysis of witchcraft as a leveling force that limits the excesses and abuse of witchcraft power, Rowlands and Warnier suggest that suspicion and accusations of witchcraft operate as mechanisms of accountability in a context where transparency is impossible. Because the exercise of witchcraft power is hidden from view and occurs in the invisible world, social constraints on these powers are limited in the visible world through the exercise of moral discourses.

From this perspective, homophobic discourses in Cameroon could be interpreted as an effort to limit the hidden power of an economic elite whose status protects them from social demands to contribute to or to consider the well-being of a broader community. In the same way that witches have gained power by giving into their base inclinations of desire, envy, jealousy, and greed through the sacrifice of another, many individuals believe that homosexuals, like witch covens, also require sacrifice through submission to same-sex relations, which initiates the recruit into a world of carnal desires through which unlimited wealth and status can be obtained.

The close association of homosexuals, cults, and witches with Western imperial power could also indicate a sense of powerlessness and oppression,



a subversion of social norms that is externally imposed, thereby fostering another dimension of “resentment of Western imperialism” (Awondo et al. 2012:159). As noted by Awondo et al., “the promises of development” have produced increasing disappointment as “visions of the enviable global lifestyle—which are becoming ever more visible and ever less accessible” are exacerbated by representations of a “consumerist gay lifestyle” (2012:160). Gechiere notes that the increasing “enrichment of a small elite group around the president” has created an “ideal opening for the population to express their suppressed anger” (2010:127) in the form of moral outrage.

In the *Genealogy of Morality*, Friedrich Nietzsche uses the term resentment to describe the moralizing processes by which a subordinate class inverts dominant concepts of the good in order to valorize their oppressed existence. Nietzsche refers to this type of moralizing as slave morality, where those who are “denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge” that constructs denial of dominant class morality as a “creative deed” (Nietzsche et al. 2007:20). In essence, resentment is a reactionary morality that responds to an existing condition of privilege among a dominant class. In Nietzsche’s work, members of a noble class are able to moralize their privilege and excesses through the assumption that their status and position is a spontaneous and natural condition that is inherently good. Those outside of this noble class are therefore bound to suffering through processes that are outside of the control or actions of privilege of the nobles and, therefore, wholly unrelated to the exercise of power.

To counter this discourse of master morality, the slave performs two deeds through the “seduction of language” (Nietzsche et al. 2007:26). First, the slave identifies a “subject” who is assumed to exist behind the noble “as though there were an indifferent substratum” giving this subject the ability to manifest their privilege and thereby separating strength “from the manifestations of strength” (Nietzsche et al. 2007:26). In the second act, or double deed, slave morality invents this manifestation, “first as cause then as its effect,” thereby placing upon this subject the blame for actions it has been manifested to explain (Nietzsche et al. 2007:26). This “afterthought” or invisible “doer” becomes the focal point of moral scorn and contempt through the inversion of moral discourse (Nietzsche et al. 2007:26).

For Nietzsche, this inversion is accomplished by the oppressed when they enact a “self-deception of powerlessness” through discourses of morality that construct their own willingness to live in “self-denying, quiet, patient virtue” as inherently good (Nietzsche et al. 2007:27). For Nietzsche, powerlessness is made good and all willingness to manifest strength is made evil:

as though the weakness of the weak were itself—I mean its *essence*, its effect, its whole unique, unavoidable, irredeemable reality—a voluntary achievement, something wanted, chosen, a *deed*, an *accomplishment*. (2007:26–27)



Essentially, Nietzsche stresses that this reactionary deed does not move the slaves to action nor does it relieve their suffering; instead the “rumor-mongers” remain miserable because they are not seeking a deliverable retribution but instead a sense of justice, or moral victory, that is unattainable (Nietzsche et al. 2007:28). Nietzsche is speaking of a religious end of days or final judgment when discussing this perpetual notion of future moral victory; however, in any context this goal permits the slave to continuously rationalize inaction in the physical world, while benefiting from a sense of moral superiority that “at least anaesthetizes them somewhat” (Glezos 2014:16).

Simon Glezos stresses the importance of the separation of the visible and invisible worlds (though the latter is assumed not to exist) in Nietzsche’s concept of resentment, noting that resentment is “a part of living in the world” while resentment “takes one out of the world” and “orients one’s actions to other worlds” (2014:158). Because resentment seeks moral superiority over evil constructs that assigned responsibility for the suffering of the weak, resentment “also manifests as a spirit of revenge” directed against “those who are viewed as agents or avatars” of evil (Glezos 2014:159). Glezos notes that because resentment, as a weapon of the oppressed, “naturally takes as its enemies those who are weakest, those who are most easily targeted and punished,” it also serves to obfuscate shared histories of injustice or common experiences of social oppression and exclusion (2014:160).

In Hallie Ludsin’s work on witchcraft-related violence in South Africa, she notes that trials held against accused witches served to address “the dangers and insecurities of communal life which is fraught with tension, suffering, misfortune, weakness and vulnerability” (2003:82). However, the suppression of these processes contributed to the “fomentation of fear and resentment” and deprived people of a “means to redress the tensions created by power inequalities,” leading to the expression of a politics of resentment evidenced in the “current proliferation of witch-killings which serve as an inadequate but necessary ‘catharsis to the community’” (Ludsin 2003:82).

Similarly, homophobic discourses in Cameroon demonstrate a deep concern for the lack of economic mobility and opportunity, where homosexuals are constructed as gatekeepers of economic success. Without a means to redress this inequality and the resentment that it produces, resentment emerges. Those living in poverty reconstruct poverty as a moral achievement and, conversely, economic success becomes a moral transgression attained through a willingness to submit to, and even convert to, the corrupt desires of homosexuality. The idea that every individual is presented with the freedom to choose whether or not they are willing to contribute to the progressive corruption of their society constructs each individual as a “neutral ‘subject’” (Nietzsche et al. 2007:26) who must actively accept the immorality of their actions should they choose economic mobility over the well-being of society. This agency, in turn, justifies demands for accountability and retribution leveled against transgressors.

In this reactive morality, those who are in positions of power are seen as evil, and those who are powerless are representatives of moral fortitude. Any person who rises from a condition of powerlessness is considered to do so only through the subversion of morality; in essence, such individuals are compromised and have given in to evil in order to satisfy their base inclinations. In witchcraft, power is attained through the sacrifice of a loved one or family member; in the context of homosexual power, success is attained through submission to the homosexual desires of the elite. In this light, those who remain poor and disadvantaged remain morally pure, righteous, and good.

### **Witchcraft, Homosexuality, and Ressentiment**

While I was conducting fieldwork for my research on witchcraft-related violence in Cameroon in 2013, the U.S. ambassador to Cameroon, responding to increasing international pressure on other African governments to improve gay rights, suggested that Cameroonians may soon be subject to foreign demands regarding their human rights record. As a Westerner, I was often questioned about my views on gay rights and Western imperialism, and as a researcher interested in the subject of witchcraft, I was actively engaging a topic that opened conversations of colonialism and violence, which often led toward the association of witches, cults, and homosexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Though some people I spoke with stressed the ambivalent nature of witchcraft powers, suggesting that witchcraft could be used positively (Interview, NGO staff member, April 2013), it was often noted that colonialism has succeeded in extracting this positive witchcraft for the enrichment of European states, leaving only negative and harmful witchcraft for Africans, and thereby permanently impeding Africans' ability to develop (Fieldnotes, March 2013; Interview, Victim of witchcraft-related violence, April 2013). In this view, the exploitation of colonialism served to fundamentally corrupt supernatural power in Cameroon, reducing these spiritual powers and leaving behind only those acts that are against human existence and dignity (Interview, Religious Organization, April 2013).

As a result of this corruption of supernatural power, those who are in positions of authority are inherently suspect and often demonized, including village chiefs (Interview, Traditional Authority, April 2013), traditional authorities (Interview, Victim of Witchcraft-related violence, April 2013), as well as family heads in the Grasslands and the Kings and Sultans of the North (Fieldnotes, April 2013). Numerous informants also stressed that spiritual powers of religious leaders are also prone to corruption. In one example, the child of a prominent religious leader refused to return home once he discovered that his parents had converted to a cult and had taken to eating excrement (Interview, Traditional Authority, April 2013).

The social cost of personal gain was frequently discussed in relation to witchcraft, as well as in relation to cults, ritual murder, and animal sacrifices (Interview, State Official, April 2013; Fieldnotes, March 2013). One state official from the south stressed that personal gain through witchcraft was

only half of the harm; witches also seek to block others' ability to succeed (Interview, State Official, April 2013). Uniting cults, witches, and homosexuals reflects a hatred for the community and a desire to prevent social progress (Fieldnotes, April 2013).<sup>6</sup> Where witches act against the family as a source of solidarity in the face of poverty, homosexuals act against communal efforts to create and generate shared wealth and progress by limiting peoples' access to gainful employment and by subverting norms of social reproduction (Fieldnotes, March 2013; April 2013; Interview, Victim of witchcraft-related, violence April 2013).

In discussions with people I met day to day, concerns regarding high unemployment and low pay were often accompanied by stories of young men being subjected to degrading sexual demands during job interviews. It seemed that almost every young person I spoke with knew at least one individual, and sometimes a few people, who had been told that in order to be considered for a position, they would have to work with their pants down (Fieldnotes, March 2013). These rumors of homosexual exploitation reflect a deep resentment towards the political and economic elite, who are referred to as being part of the "anucratie" or "pouvoir sodomiseur" which turns "the backsides of the poor and weak into objects of sexual exploitation and for expressing power and domination" (Ndjio 2016:133).

## Deconstructing Homophobia

Patrick Ireland suggests that "If the barriers to legal acceptance of homosexuality can be identified and then targeted, there is hope that other forms of homophobia might be tackled successfully as well" (2013:60). In Cameroon, though the criminalization of homosexuality is often cited as a rationale for moral condemnation and even used to justify violence against homosexuals (Fieldnotes, March 2013; April 2013), popular discourses against homosexuality and the association of homosexuals with witchcraft suggest that a legal, statist approach would be inadequate in addressing deeper concerns regarding wealth, equality, and power in Cameroonian society. Unfortunately, to date, international LGBT and human rights discourses have failed to acknowledge the deep complexity and heterogeneity of homophobic responses in Africa (Thoresen 2014). Most problematically, many of the concerns expressed in popular homophobic discourses in Cameroon, involving issues of imperialism, poverty, and witchcraft, reflect a conflict that is not only legal but also epistemological.

In the post-colonial context of Cameroon, extreme disparity and supernatural power may frustrate Western strategies for addressing LGBT rights, as these efforts reflect neo-colonial and imperial logics that fail to account for increasing personal and spiritual insecurity. For example, Epprecht, writing on possible avenues of pursuing LGBT rights in Africa, notes "reasoned argument based on collaboration" between sexual health-based initiatives and "broader lgtbi associations will need to be supplemented by an element of shaming and coercion in order to effect the necessary

changes in the face of homophobic oppositions” (2012:243). Epprecht openly supports foreign interventionism in collaboration with local actors, noting that “Additional pressure will need to come from friends on the international scene” (2012:243). Adding to this, Epprecht suggests “a strategic emphasis on public health, with rights discreetly embedded in the discussion” as a “promising way” to prevent violent resistance that could further victimize people (2012:243).

Epprecht does not shy away from the implications of this suggestion and refers to the “strategic embrace of health discourses” as a “‘cloaking’ mechanism to slip sexual minority rights into the local agenda” (2012:236). In Cameroon, where existing discourses of obscured and nefarious collaborations exist in the machinations of witches and cults, and where these actors are already associated with the homosexuals who are believed to be aiding in the efforts of these witches and cults to effect social destruction, this strategy may be misguided and potentially dangerous. That foreign academics advocate such an approach serves to justify and exemplify the suspicion and hostility of homophobic discourses in Cameroon. Equally problematic is that this strategy fails to acknowledge and address broader social concerns regarding power and inequality.

As noted by Thoresen, “the concept of ‘homophobia in sub-Saharan Africa’ obscures more than it reveals” (2014:36). Homophobia, Thoresen argues, is much more than the implied fear, hatred, or “antipathy towards queer persons,” it “may also be about gender, class, power, and other forms of difference and belonging” (25). In discourses of homophobia in Cameroon, these complex concerns are clearly expressed in experiences of insecurity and hostility toward colonialism and neoimperialism, which when exacerbated, breeds resentment and efforts “to reassert control ... through reactionary political movements” (Glezos 2014:152).

In Cameroon, experiences of precarity, suffering, and the threat of the supernatural are real, and the foundations of power and conflict being expressed in homophobic reactionary politics run much deeper than Western notions of the political permit. In order to understand political crises and violence in Cameroon, the supernatural must be considered, and along with it, an appreciation of the broad moral implications of supernatural power. The ambiguity of supernatural power emphasizes the responsibilities of individuals and connects our actions to both the benefits and consequences we create. Therefore, the consequences of a globalizing economy, or the failures of an authoritarian state, are not the vague outcomes of diffuse, systemic processes, but the consequences of cumulative individual actions that can be connected, assessed, and judged (Ferguson 2006).

Homophobia and antigay violence in Cameroon exist within and are connected to these social, economic, and political complexities and cannot be cleanly extricated—LGBT movements must acknowledge these complexities and seek to understand and address witchcraft and cult-related concerns in Cameroonian society. Homosexuality and homophobic expressions cannot be generalized or disconnected from the deeper epistemological

foundations of individual and social power relations; ignoring or excluding these worldviews also prevents engagement with the root causes of hostility and suspicion. Homophobic violence in Cameroon reflects, in part, a moral war between individualists who are seen to have compromised their ethics and degraded themselves for personal gain, and communalists who remain steadfastly committed to the protection of society, though this means resigning oneself to poverty and disenfranchisement—thereby sowing the seeds of resentment.

In this study, I have argued that the deep roots of inequality, continued neo-colonial exploitation, and historical and contemporary abuses of social, state, and supernatural power in Cameroon must be addressed within anti-homophobic discourses so that anti-gay violence may be productively countered. The association of witchcraft, homosexuality, and cult powers in Cameroon should not be dismissed as hateful paranoia or delusion. Rumors of witchcraft, cults, and homosexual conspiracies, rather than being peculiarities of hatred, offer important insight into the means by which shared experiences of inequality, oppression, and authoritarianism can be identified and, most importantly, present essential opportunities for understanding how these forms of oppression can be meaningfully challenged. Witches, homosexuals, and cults are seen as a threat to the powerless and disenfranchised; combating the processes by which this powerlessness and disenfranchisement is produced and reproduced can reduce fear and hostility, helping to create a climate of reduced tension within which LGBT concerns may be advanced.<sup>7</sup>

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## Notes

1. Notably, Didi Herman explores "the resonance of 'homosexuality' with other 'devils'" in her work *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (1997:17). These themes are discussed in the context of the American Christian Right whose "antigay discourse draws from and plays to preexisting demonologies" (Herman 1997:17). Though this work does not approach these themes through the supernatural, focusing instead on religious and political anxieties regarding Jewish people and Communists, Herman's discussion seeks to complicate homophobic discourses, expose conflicting power relations, and to better understand antigay sentiment in the United States of America.
2. This approach also supports the common finding in studies of dominant homophobic discourses in Africa that these responses are in part an expression of anti-Western sentiment that rejects the construction of homosexuality, and subsequent calls for greater protection of LGBT rights, as a form of Western imperialism (Awondo et al. 2012; Epprecht 2012; Cheney 2012). This discourse is present in dominant homophobic narratives in Cameroon and many explicit statements were made during my fieldwork contesting the neo-colonial imposition of Western values through LGBT rights on African states by foreign governments and by the EU and the Obama administration specifically.
3. This is not to suggest that this policy was in any way supportive or protective of homosexual or queer Cameroonians. As noted by Ndjio: "[t]he sexual policy of the Ahidjo regime was informed by deep-seated fears and prejudices that the 'sexual anarchy and unbridled sexuality' of homosexuals menaced not only the familial institution but also the postcolonial sexual order which assigned distinct roles to men and women. The juridical proscription of same-sex practices by Ahidjo's administration embodied the widespread idea that the sexual inversion of gay people challenged the very ontology of the 'natural' and 'essential' African straight ... By endorsing heterosexual



relationships and by subordinating gays and lesbians to the dictatorship of heterosexualist ideology, the anti-homosexual law took up the (Pan)Africanist project to create an exclusive African sexual identity that was the mirror opposite of ‘western perverse sexuality.’” (2016:118–19).

4. In his text, Geschiere refers to *djambe*, a Maka word for supernatural abilities, instead of the term witchcraft. There is significant debate regarding the use of the word witchcraft/sorcellerie, however, in my own fieldwork in Cameroon, I was instructed to use this overarching term by respondents and informants. Though the fraught history of witchcraft/sorcellerie as a Western concept is not lost on Cameroonians, people I spoke with felt it was the most accurate term to use when discussing the supernatural or spiritual power to harm/nuire.
5. Most often in interviews, homosexuality was listed among the key expressions of witchcraft and employed as a means of defining witchcraft. In conversation, the associations being made between witchcraft and homosexuality took many pathways, such as homosexuality as a product of witchcraft activity, and witchcraft as a synonymous social threat to homosexuality.
6. Numerous people I spoke with stressed that development would bring with it conditions that witches and cults could not survive. As noted by one person, development reflects a condition of social harmony that would lead to the death of witches (Interview, Victim of witchcraft-related violence, April 2013).
7. As noted by Glezos, “As people become more secure, they become less subject to resentment-laden tendencies” (2014:164).