

IOANNIS KYRIAKAKIS

# COLONIZING THE MIND

THE WITCHCRAFT OF THE GLOBAL CLASS SYSTEM

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY, NEOLIBERALISM AND THE BRITISH ACADEMIC SYSTEM



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## COLONIZING THE MIND

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Athens 2024



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## FOREWORD

With the present book I attempt to fulfil three different tasks. All three are based on my ethnographic experience in West Africa as well as, on all the relevant experiences that preceded and followed the ethnographic expedition. The first task is an introduction to anthropology. The second is a call for awareness on how people in Africa live. And the third is an analysis of the ways through which, faith in contemporary western science and culture supports the socio-economic system of capitalism. The three tasks, although distinct, are also interrelated.

An introduction to anthropology is necessary, as I employ anthropology as a method, as a way of thinking and as a tool for understanding the modern world. Such a use of anthropology, as a method, has both educational and political dimensions. Fundamental parts of contemporary anthropology are the following: 1. The study of human groups and individuals who are not represented in the official discourse and politics of the western channels of communication and knowledge. These groups and individuals are either geographically distant, or socially subordinated, that is, marginalised within western societies themselves. 2. Anthropology

studies not merely contested and constructed by official discourses, categories of the alleged “human condition”, such as “economy”, “society”, “religion” etc, but also the ways and channels, through which, these categories are transmitted from one generation to another. This means that anthropology pays attention to culture, that is all knowledge, which is not transmitted genetically but socially, in a dynamic way, by studying how the transmission is eventually “realised” (through symbolic systems, rituals and power relationships): a discipline not merely studying human “culture” but human “communication” as well. 3. Anthropology puts in the centre of its attention real human beings and their life-experiences and does not treat people and groups as analytic, abstract categories and numbers. The more important, real life-histories of real people are told by people themselves. Most ethnographies are full of narratives of informants transmitted exactly as they are told by them, in their natural environment, on the field.

These three basic components of anthropology (1/ Unrepresented groups and individuals, 2/ Challenging established categories 3/ People talk for themselves) make anthropology a fundamentally critical discipline against the dominant culture. North European and North American or else “western” culture, particularly based on overrepresentation of white-male, as well as, of Anglo-Saxon groups and individuals owes a lot of its global dominance to the claim that its socio-cognitive categories are eternal and universal and pays the highest respect to the “word” of “experts” and “masters”, while neglecting the voices of common people as irrelevant or superstitious. However, anthropology itself is part and flesh of “western culture”. This constitutes an antithesis to its critical character! It was born within western tradition and, at least at its first stages, as a discipline espoused and fully supported western culture’s basic principles. That is why men and women

who practise anthropology have to criticise also their own discipline, reconstruct their own categories and taxonomies, as well as, constantly re-examine their methods and theories. In this book I claim that this constant battle for critique and renewal does not depend merely on the compilation of data and the respective “production” of knowledge, but also on political and class-related balance of power in both national and global levels. This class-related balance of power, which includes anthropology, as well as all other disciplines, especially their academic part, affects their agendas and determines their course.

My second task, the attempt to inform the reader about what is really happening in Africa, does not restrict itself in a simple reporting of history or current affairs and attitudes. Through my own ethnographic experience and the relevant study of the historical background, I realised that the current condition in sub-Saharan Africa is the outcome of the combination of two inherent and very characteristic properties of contemporary, global capitalism. The first is the intensive and unabashed exploitation of Africa’s (and the entire South’s in this respect) raw materials by the multinationals of the capitalist centre. The second is the ideological hegemony of “western culture”, which is held as the best ever-made and uniquely “proper” model of living, a model that all modern-day vassals of the global periphery must emulate or reach out. Although, in practice, the first property (the exploitation) renders the second property (development according to western standards) impossible, the two properties together constitute a dipole of domination: Exploitation of resources by multinationals makes local people poor, and poverty pushes them to search for distant and alien models of living, while believing in distant and alien ways of living, makes the penetration of foreign multinationals into local economies easier!

The third task of the book connects and unites the other two in a single argument: What is today held by the majority of people as the high achievement of humanity, that is the western economic, political and cultural social structure, the “best model” of social organisation that tends to be imposed everywhere around the globe as the best exemplar ever created, is based on an almost universal faith, a faith that is not qualitatively different than other global religions. This specific faith I am trying to delineate through the term “anthropology of capitalism”, which implies that type of human practice and subjectivity that reproduce the system even if they seem that they fight against it. The basic line of my argument reads that a system (either ideological, economic or social) cannot change through the principles, the structures and the representations that produced it in the first place. On the contrary, systems change only when new principles, structures and representations act in competition to the old, established ones and threaten directly the reproduction of the system. Based on the methodological principle of the competitiveness between structures, principles and relationships, I claim that if we wish to change modern society, we have to discover its basic components, the basic building blocks of its architecture and then try to imagine the alternative and competitive ones for constructing something new. I discern as the basic building blocks of the ideal modern society, the idea of constant “progress”, the faith to “objective truth” and science, the respective contempt for religion and spirituality, and finally, above all, the belief to the unrestrained freedom of the individual as the highest moral principle of modern social life. These are, in my view, the basic components of “western culture”, regardless of whether it is seen as an ideological mechanism or a series of material relationships and interests.

The relevance of anthropology in general to the anthropology of capitalism in particular lies in my assumption that capitalism in a nutshell is *the worship of the self*, whereas anthropology, in general, claims to be *the study of the other*. Consequently, knowing, understanding, loving or being *the other* is, according to my assumption, a state of structural opposition to capitalism. “Self” and “other” are geographically, historically, economically and politically specific terms and refer to the World-Capitalist centres on the one hand and the subordinated periphery on the other. Since the crucial masses of western middle-classes, who consume capitalist products, vote for and support the political personnel of global capitalism, reside all in the capitalist core, social change in a global scale seems very hard to happen. It is hard but not impossible. Perhaps new alliances and new priorities on behalf of the global underclasses must be conceived of and then put in practice. Perspectives that stress the global character of contemporary class-ideology and exploitation may contribute to this direction.

My aim in this book is not just “Knowledge”. I maintain that Knowledge is never and it can never be neutral. Since neutrality and objectivity of knowledge is part of the dominant ideology, as I claim, one cannot pretend being neutral and objective without joining the dominant ideology. The methodological principle of this endeavour is the following: I do not study history and social relationships in order to establish a theoretical position, which describes and explains reality “as it is”. There is no such thing like “as it is”. I study history and relationships in order to serve the interests of the social class I belong to. In my case, as I identify myself with the global underclasses, my motivation is to offer inspiration, courage, reflexivity, vision and faith towards the necessary ruptures and challenges against global capitalism. Although an entire tradition of anti-capitalist thought saw in science and its re-

spective ideology of “objectivity” a natural ally, my view in this book is that there is no more dangerous illusion for the underclasses than this! Science is not objective; it does not stand above politics and subjective interests; it does not serve “society” as a whole! On the contrary, in science, struggles for power as well as class struggles are reflected par excellence!

The present book is not written in a conventional academic way. It is written as a narrative, a story. Thus, references are limited and used only when they relate to the recounted story. Similarly, in bibliography I have included only the basic readings that inspired this very book and not the entire bibliography I used for my PhD. I wish to thank Ronald Lee, Lawrence Agyarko, Emmanuel Effa-tue, Johnnie Fayemi and the people of Teleku Bokazo, Ellembele, Ghana, without whom this study would have never been conducted and this book would have never been written.



PART 1  
SCIENCE AND CLASS



## CHAPTER 1

### THE DEEP STRUCTURE: INTRODUCTION TO CLASS-GEOGRAPHY

Anthropologists use to start their monographs with a strange reverse of time, commencing with the ethnographic present, as if nothing had happened before! It looks like they were born in the field and they lived only in order to describe their fieldwork! On the contrary, I am following the course of events as they really happened and thus, I break, from the outset, with the academic tradition, which reads that anything except for the academic life and research is not worth mentioning. This is not, of course, a peculiar whim of obsessive opposition. Writing about the facts that preceded the conduct of an ethnographic research, helps the reader to understand the reasons and the motives of the researcher's actions and choices in the field, as well as, his/her options after the field. Although the "before" and "after" parts are missing from most ethnographic works, I believe that no one can really evaluate any ethnography without them. Therefore, I will not start my story from Africa, but from Greece, the place where I was born and grew up. The entire first part of the book will describe a period,

when I really had very little idea of what anthropology was about. I will, however, employ an “anthropological perspective” in order to describe that period. I owe this term to Sotiris Demetriou, my mentor in anthropology, about whom I will talk later. Demetriou, by using the term “anthropological perspective”, meant this method of narrating and analysis, which necessarily includes both individual actions and their cultural and historical framework. According to this perspective, all events or group of events are happening within and interact with a cultural system, either supporting or subverting its reproduction, no matter whether this support or subversion occurs on purpose or not. This perspective dictates also the specific way one should treat his/her own personal position within the course of events: One should see him/herself as one among many actors and factors that contribute to either the reproduction or the subversion of a specific cultural system. This is a very specific version of the famous term “reflexivity”:

It does not merely include the researcher’s own personal history with regard to the research, but also places it within the general framework of his/her culture. In that respect, motivations for conducting specific research become visible not as too personal and idiosyncratic but rather strongly culturally and socially framed.

In my view, there are two very wide varieties of experiences that determine, in principle, our place in the world: The geographical and the social-class experiences. These, of course are not the only ones. There are also family-related, gender, emotional, sexual and many other sorts of experiences equally important as place and class. Place and class (probably gender, as well) however, are too often presented as “natural” instead of historical and political; they are, in other words, usually used for social exploitation, political deception and ideological domination. Very often, these two kinds of experiences overlap with each-other, but they are not

identical. For example, geographical difference is the difference between an inhabitant of a big city and a farmer, a person who lives on a mountain and a person who lives on plains or by the seashore, a person who lives in the centre of a metropolis and a person who lives in the outskirts, a person who lives in one country and a person who lives in another, in the north and in the south, in the west and in the east, in one continent and in another and so on. However, to the extent that these geographical differences signify also social inequalities (and more often than not, this is exactly the case), the geographical difference becomes class-difference: Some people are born in places, which automatically mean social privileges that other people born in other places, are deprived of. In many cases the link between the two groups is aetiological: Some people relish their privileges exactly *because* some other people are deprived of them.

The latter case indicates that geography cannot be just the description of morphological, ecological and social characteristics of a place, an area, a country and so on, not even just the comparison of different places. Any geography that does not examine the *relationships* between populations and activities that have taken place in different places, fails to follow what is really happening in the world. Especially during the last two hundred years or so, one cannot claim that there are isolated areas in the globe, areas that are not affected in one way or another by evolutions taking place somewhere else! On the contrary, the movement of the world heads towards the constant transformation of geographical differences into class differences. The terms “advanced”, “developed”, and “backward”, “developing” or “underdeveloped” imply a common yardstick for evaluating different places, and at the same time indicate that there is a sort of ranking in the world, a distinction in a scale with higher and lower positions. Interpretations on how

and why this scale was created in the first place vary but in principle consist in two major categories: The first category is the “racist”, as I call it, which implies that there is a sort of either “white supremacy” or a “coloured backwardness” in the world, built in either historical (the liberal version) or in “natural” (the hard-core racist version) reasons. The second category is the “Marxist”, as I call it, which implies that the split of the world in developed and underdeveloped parts owes itself to a deeper structural split between a capitalist centre and a “working class” periphery, with the former exploiting the raw-materials, the workforce and the surplus-value produced by the latter.

It is that, the second category of interpretation, that I follow in this book, embellished with a sort of Gramscian, Foucaultian and Weberian perspectives, which read that economic exploitation alone, cannot secure the capitalist profits without a sort of cultural hegemony, a hegemony that consolidates political, ideological and moral domination. I recall the spring of year 2000 when I had travelled to Indonesia. I worked as a part-time interpreter for a Greek merchant, who imported cheap houseware from South-East and Far-East Asia. As we were taking off at the airport of Jakarta for the flight back home, the view of the huge slums of the city was striking. Jakarta is built exactly in the model of rich-core and poor-periphery, reflecting in a peculiar way the global division of power and wealth. The external ring of the city is inhabited by some 20 million people living in slums. The merchant at that moment turned to me and said: “What is the fault of all these millions of children, who are born within this filth and not in Europe and America? No fault; just bad luck!” Of course, the fact that the merchant could make a fortune by buying the cheap houseware, made by the illegal work of these very children, was something that was not mentioned in the conversation.

Of course, class-inequalities do not generate only from geographical differences. Two persons born in the same place, the same town, the same neighbourhood can be also divided by class and gender. What makes them different is gender, property, income, wealth, profession, level of education, origin etc. I will deal with this kind of inequality in the second, the ethnographic part of the book. Here, I would like to examine geography a bit more, because I think that geographical inequalities are very often overlooked or underrepresented. We are too often absorbed by the conditions and habits of the place we were born in, that we take for granted that all places are more or less operating in the same way. The words of the merchant "*what is the fault of the children in Jakarta*" has marked my memory ever-since. We had also travelled to India the same year, and we had been to China and Hong Kong the year before. These would be half-touristic/half-business trips had they been restricted merely within hotels and Trade-Fairs. However, one incidence that occurred in India changed the character of these trips in my mind forever. The merchant had discovered the address of a factory producing steel-metal cooking-pots that one could buy cheaper if visiting the factory rather than the trade-faire. He asked me to find the place. After many efforts, I spotted the factory somewhere in the outskirts of New Delhi, we called a taxi and we headed to the place. I realised then that the same structure as in Jakarta applied to New-Delhi as well. Big hotels, luxury residencies and government buildings were built in the city center. while the farther you moved towards the periphery the more impoverished neighbourhoods and slams you met. Therefore, it was as if the centre and the rest of the city constituted two different worlds. By moving out of the centre in order to find the cooking-pot-factory, it was as if we left one world and entered another one. It was the first time we did this during all our trips.

When we entered the neighbourhoods of New Delhi, the aura of our cosmopolitan trip vanished. A strong cultural shock gripped us, since the taxi left us in a wrong address and we had to walk through the narrow streets in order to find the right one. We walked through narrow streets and cat walks with one-room houses made by mud and zinc or carton boxes with crap and waste running down the streets where children were playing. There was no space to move or even breath. Humans, animals and waste were mixed together in a suffocating whole. Some paths were surprisingly clean and tide but even there the smells from the next road or block reminded you that you are not in an healthy place. Unfortunately, this was an image one cannot easily describe in words. Neither written word nor visual representation (through TV-news, documentaries etc.) can convey accurately such realities. The reason is that in written word the decisive factor is the reader's imagination, which usually builds up the information according to the reader's own previous experiences, whereas in visual representation a whole range of direct feelings, smells, emotions, sounds and other details are missing. The content of representation, either written or visual, is distant and neutral, in times indifferent; an information among others, by no means a lived experience, which the observer feels with his/her own senses. Watching something is different than living in it. Mere watching does not involve sensing the atmosphere, the sense of danger, insecurity and fear, the smells of waste and feces, the experience of crossing glances, when you are not merely watching but also watched; watched as someone, who you really are: the well-dressed, the neat, the European, the westerner... This is the case when one's geographical and global-class privilege becomes a major deficit and sticks upon one's skin in the same way that racism sticks on coloured, foreign, Roma-people back in the West. Although I sensed this condition



for a short time in New-Delhi, it was only three years later in Africa that I had a full-fledged and long-standing experience of it.

During another journey some years later, in an interval of my PhD studies in London, I visited some friends in Portugal. My friends were not Portuguese themselves and we had the opportunity to comment and discuss “local culture” as outsiders. I had already been trained in anthropology and thus my spontaneous search over this sort of “deep structure” based on geography and class-division, which, in fact, affect individual lives and construct “culture” had been, by then, in full operation. In Portugal I sensed a peculiar introversion-attitude resembling some sort of depression on the part of the Portuguese I met. My friends, who lived there for years, told me they had similar feelings describing local people as “defeatist” or pessimistic. Of course, such terms and categories are labels with no “scientific” documentation. They rather pertain to what we use to call “stereotypes”, a sort of prejudice cultivated by outsiders, or governing elites with the purpose of social control. It is often the case that these stereotypes are accepted by people concerning themselves. This occurs through various social mechanisms such as education, fairy-tales and legends, rumors and oral traditions, means of collective communication, anecdotes and religion. All these means reflect power-relationships within a society, and it is more than often the case that intellectual elites impose their ideas upon the rest of the population, in a process through which ideologies become realities since too many people espouse them and act and think accordingly. Two years prior to my trip to Portugal, I was discussing with an Englishman, who was a professor of History at UCL. He was rather old, nearing retirement, and he happened to be the warden of the student-house I was living in. I visited him to ask for an interview while preparing my Master’s dissertation on Englishness and Britishness (see below); he happily accepted.

During the interview the professor asked me which point I had reached with my investigation, and what was my conclusion up to that point. I replied that “in almost every informal discussion with English people so far, I hear how distant, arrogant and frigid English people are! ... these labels are apparently sheer stereotypes”... At that moment the professor interrupted me saying: “You know... Most times, stereotypes are true!” This phrase impressed me and stamped my memory ever-since!

The truth is that at that period I was just starting my research and most of the discussions I had were informal, within the circle of the university, with English, Scottish and foreign students and members of staff. Nevertheless, they provided the same view, and I expected that the professor would turn it over, through a more “scientific” approach. Instead of turning it over though, he not merely confirmed the “common sense” but he also generalised it and gave to it theoretical strength. The fact that this general perception of the English as frigid, distant and arrogant was so common by both locals and outsiders betrays how powerful stereotypes had been, and in that sense the professor was right. From a certain point onwards, one cannot say whether the perception constructed reality or reality constructed the perception. Was it shaped by ideological mechanisms or by common experience?

As a “progressive”, I was, that far, convinced that stereotypes were constructed by powerful elites through education and other ideological mechanisms of the State and the Capital. Nevertheless, the fact that people concerned adopted themselves stereotypes about themselves, made me contemplate over two specific issues: First, since people about whom stereotypes are supposed to be constructed, are convinced that stereotypes are true, how can one prove that they are just the by-product of ideological invention?

And second, since the “construction” is so successful that everyone believes in it, considering its outcome, is it not “true” after all? Does it not produce material outcomes? A third issue was added in my thought over the two others, in summer, 2001, while writing my Master’s Dissertation on English identity: What was my own class geography? How had the fact that I was born in the European South affected my position in the world? And what was the bulk of stereotypes about Greeks, stereotypes that Greeks themselves adopted and accepted? Probably, all these questions could be better answered through the historical investigation; a journey back to the historical past. One should look at the specific time when, the material conditions as well as the ideologies, allowed for the “national characteristics” to be formed and imposed. Throughout this investigation, one should keep in mind two things: First, “things have not always been the same”; which means that striking distinctive traits in self-recognition as a separate group were created in and by specific historical events and relationships. Second, “stereotypes do not apply to the same degree nor to the same groups of people in the same way”; which means that some social groups are affected positively and others negatively by the allegedly “national” stereotypes. In that sense at the issue of geographical inequality, the historical (“when”) as well as, the social (“by and for whom”) issues must be added. It is only then, that an allegedly common-sense observation about the “depressive Portuguese”, the “arrogant English” or the “cunning Greek” becomes an issue of revealing the historical class-relationships that lie behind stereotypes. The question then is not whether stereotypes are true or not, but why and “how much” true they are.

My motive for looking at ideas people have about themselves and their culture could be traced back in a basic question that has occupied my mind since my early twenties: How do basic perceptions

of social life change? How do people change? It was not merely my “class geography”, the fact that I was born in the European South, that triggered such a question. It was also the historical period. It was the period around the end of the 1980’s, when I was 25-26 years old, that a model of social change, particularly appealing to South European working and middle classes, the model of “existent socialism” crumbled and fell apart for good. My critique as a young Marxist against this model had begun prior to its historical breakdown. I was a member of the Communist Party since my 15, but soon enough I started questioning the strict hierarchical structure and the consequent power relationships within the party. I was kicked out when I was 23. Nevertheless, that did not affect my devotion to the basic principles of the Marxist theory, namely that capitalism relied on human exploitation and class inequality, and a new society based on social justice and equality was both possible and necessary.

With the collapse of “existent socialism” all of us who had faith in an anti-capitalist future and were not enticed by money and career offered by free market orthodoxy, were divided in two different camps: On the one hand, those who believed that Marxist theory was in principle correct and the failure of socialist regimes was just an issue of false-implementation. On the other hand, those “critical thinkers” like myself, who claimed that large parts of the theory itself were, in fact, wrong. We, the members of this atypical camp, believed that, even the wrong-doings of the power-holders of the ex-socialist countries, were based in faulty perceptions and prepositions of the Marxist theory itself. We did not question the necessity of overthrowing capitalism, though. We just questioned Marx’s teleological and fatalistic certainty that social change would emerge anyway, through a sort of historical mechanism, which as a natural law, would bring, in any case, a new society. We saw a

fundamental antithesis between such a faith in “objective laws of social evolution” and the famous Marxian aphorism that “people make their own history”. On the other hand, as we came close to the turn of the century, it became more than obvious that change of “mode of production” did not necessarily lead to change of people’s ideas, feelings, behaviour. When I started searching for motives and causation of human agency other than “objective historical forces”, dictated by classic historical materialism, I could not imagine how deep into human nature I would delve during my investigation. It was this search that led me to anthropology. What was important to keep in mind throughout this search, however, was the issue of who was searching, for what and in favour of which social groups and interests. As history proved to be more contingent than predicted, the part of Marxian theory which read social reality as comprised of conflicting interests was more relevant than ever.

## CHAPTER 2

### CLASS GEOGRAPHY AND CLASS HISTORY

Prior to 2000, if someone told me that I would study anthropology, I would stare at her with amazement. In fact, I did not even know what exactly anthropology was about! I graduated from the Department of Political Science, “Panteion University”, in 1989. Choosing political science was partly accidental and partly a reaction against the mainstream. Accidental because of the Greek higher education entry-system. Students just passed the general exams and then chose the discipline they would study, according to their exams’ grades. There were just two main directions at the time. Social sciences and humanities on the one hand, and science, medicine and polytechnics on the other. We used to call them “theoretical” and “practical” direction, respectively. Political Science was partly a random choice, and partly a reaction against the system. Random, due to the fact that, according to the educational system, one did not pick a specific university department prior to the general national exams, but only afterwards, and then only the grades one had achieved at the exams determined the department one could join. Grades and demand determined school

and department, out of dozens, one could join after the exams. High demand pushed the required entry grade-levels of medical, engineering and law departments to unreachable heights for lower class students. Additionally, there is something like a custom in Greece: University candidates attend private institutions operating in parallel with high schools, the so called “frontistiria” (frontizo = take care), established exclusively for helping students to pass the national exams. Social sciences stood in the middle of the higher education demand-ladder. They usually attracted middle class or lower-class students who could not afford “frontistiria”, or were ideologically opposed to them, like me.

When I entered Panteion School of Economic and Political Sciences back in 1982, it used to be an independent school detached from the University of Athens. Its graduates in the past used to join public administration and public services. Gradually, from the mid 1980’s up to 2000, the School became an autonomous university, the “Panteion University of Social Sciences”. The 1980’s was the era of higher education’s big-expansion in Greece. I experienced the first period of this long process. Many new departments and universities were established. This process related to Greek political history and culture. What was happening then, was a triple-sided intervention of the State in education in favour of the dominant patron-client system. First, new departments and universities created a lot of academic posts for government-friendly academics and boosted business in cities and regions, where higher education was previously absent. A peculiar contest-race among different Greek peripheral municipalities all over the country, applying to the government for establishing a university or some branches (departments) at their region, was taking place for more than three decades since the 1980’s. Second, many more students gained access to higher education, allowing authority to signifi-

cantly reduce unemployment rates for young people. Third, the state opened up new paths for employing graduates to the state-apparatus, reproducing thus the patron-client system and favouritism. This sort of political intervention, however, could never happen, had tertiary education, especially in social sciences and humanities, been not so much under-developed in Greece. This was due to the decades-long domination of the anti-communist right-wing parties in Greece, which reached its peak with the military dictatorship from 1967 to 1974. This sort of regimes was not in favour of social sciences and humanities. Thus, up to the mid-1980s there were no autonomous departments of Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology (!) in Greece.

Upon this paucity a model of new departments was built according to the demands of various pressure-groups -mainly academics, politicians and local businessmen- rather than the needs of science or labour-market. One such case of new departments took place in Panteion university in 1984, when the department of sociology was founded. It was the first sociological department founded in Greece ever. We, the already students of the School, had the choice either to register to the new department or join the previously existent directions of political science or public administration, which were also elevated to the status of autonomous departments. Most of my friends from the Communist Party joined the sociology department, but for the wrong reasons: the government had promised that sociology would be placed in the high-school curriculum as a subject; therefore, the sociology department's graduates would secure a public-servant's employment as Sociology-teachers in secondary education. I was deeply disappointed with the fact that my comrades followed their personal interest -to secure employment- instead of ideology. Students from all strands and ideologies massively chose sociology. As a reaction to this fact, I chose to re-



main within political science. In this sense, my choice was as random as anyone's else and it was not made with academic criteria. Considering that both Panteion University and political science were more or less random choices, it was not a surprise that, when I graduated, I did not know what to do with my degree.

I graduated in September 1989, after a totally wasted two years of military service, which is compulsory for all males in Greece. When I received my degree, I said to myself: "And now, I will do what I really want to do!". Based on a dream I had since childhood, I set out to study film-making. In January 1990 I flew to Germany to study film. Germany was not that random as a choice. German film-industry was not the best well-known in Europe. France and the UK had a much more attractive film-making history while of course in terms of commercial value, United States were in the top. However, in Germany, there were no or very low fees, and on the other hand a network of acquaintances, I had friends and relatives there. I had made a deal with my father. He would support me for a year, a time I considered enough for learning the language and after that I could work somewhere to support myself. I already had done that while studying at the Panteion university. I worked mainly in bars, cafes and restaurants, and I was pretty experienced in this sort of jobs. One can think that all these choices came from a personal mentality, whim or taste. However, it is rather class-geography and class-position that construct the repertoire of available choices. What looks like a personal history at first glance, is at the same time both a personal history and a history of place and class. One can, certainly, widen the margins of potential choices through one's actions, however, there are always certain limits of place and class, within which we are born.

The fact that I was born in Greece, in a petit-bourgeois family, es-

pecially in the specific petit-bourgeois family (with a peasant-origin), at the specific historical period, determined the range of my choices. Since in Greece, as in any other, peripheral to the capitalist centre, country education, labour market and political culture have specific structural problems (on which, I will refer below), it was very likely that at some time I would try my chances abroad. The time was not accidental, as I found myself in a period of uncertainty, after a senseless two-year long military service, with a degree at hand, with which I didn't know what to do. Motivation, however, for moving abroad for further studies, had more to do with the collective imaginary of my class, along with its economic capacity. My father had a car-dyers' workshop. He had come from a small village of Peloponnese to Athens, when he was 14, immediately after World-war II, and he worked at various car-repair shops up to his late twenties, when he opened his own shop. He had met my mother in a hospital where she worked as a nurse, an internal migrant as well, from the same part of Peloponnese as he. Social ascendance from the poor peasantry to the petit-bourgeoisie after a relatively short intermediate period of joining the working classes (10 to 20 years maximum) unfolded for millions of poor peasants in Greece from approximately the 1950's to the 1980s. My father migrated from the village to Athens in 1947, at his 14, and since he was one of the pioneers; he benefited to a great extent from this geographical and social mobility.

What is sociologically pretty interesting but also significantly understudied in Greece, is the fact that during the life-time of a single generation people ascended not only one but two ranks in the social class-hierarchy. If we accept that the immediately next rank from the poor peasant is a regular wage-labourer or clerk in the city, the next to that rank is a shopkeeper, or a small businessman, a contractor and the like. The distinction lies in the difference

between “working for others” in contrast to “working for oneself”. And this goes usually with buying or building up and owning one’s own house. Almost 60% of the entire Greek population during the 1950’s and 1960’s moved from the villages to the big cities (or even abroad, mainly to Germany, USA and Australia). Although the huge majority of all these people joined initially the working class (masons, factory-workers, ship-builders, transport-workers nurses and domestic workers, secretaries and employees at the catering and retail industries) the relatively retarded development of capitalism in Greece with the absence of huge monopolistic enterprises facilitated the expansion of self-employment and the creation of small businesses, especially in the third-sector of economy. Thus, a large number of masons from Peloponnese became contractors, ship-builders and sailors from the islands founded small ship-repair workshops, janitors, doorkeepers and workers from Epirus established bakeries and snack-shops at commercial centers, domestic workers became hairdressers and opened up their own salon., etc. etc. This “small business and self-employment” economy was supported by the very low cost of money, the absence of real fiscal and industrial infrastructures, as well as, the relatively low but not entirely insignificant level of industrial development of Greek capitalism.

The ascent of millions of people from the poor peasantry to the petty-bourgeoisie in just two decades had also very significant cultural consequences. One of those was the obsession with higher education. People from rural Greece climbed quickly the social ladder in the cities, where employment-opportunities were plenty; however, their close contact with dozens of bureaucratic agencies of the state, ministries, housing, tax-service, police, schools, police etc. etc. reminded them every-day the limitations of their social status and power. Their ability to confront effectively all these

mechanisms was pretty limited. Additionally, they also faced discrimination and contempt by the old residents of the cities, the petty-bourgeoisie proper. The old city-dwellers regarded the newcomers with racist-like suspicion, called them bumpkins, hicks and yokels and tried to keep them out, in the margins of the city. Therefore, the ex-peasants, newcomers, developed a sort of inferiority complex, ascribing their lower social status mainly to their low-level of education. Most of the racist behaviour against the ex-peasants was allegedly due to their idiomatic accents, their “bad manners”, their local rites and customs and generally this sort of cultural traits. Most of the newcomers had spent their childhood during the WWII and the Civil War that followed, and they were either uneducated or basically educated (only with some years in elementary school, just enough to learn reading and writing). Apart from the war, social division of labour in the provinces, based on kinship and tradition, did not really require more education than that for the majority of the people. However, things in the big cities were different. It was this specific condition of lower social status of ex-peasants, despite their economic upward mobility, that generated the obsession of educating their offspring. Sending their children to high schools and universities became an imperative for compensating their humble origin, as well as a major tool for dealing with the state bureaucracy. Consequently, many second generation internal migrants joined civil service and the service-sector as high-school and university graduates.

However, the post-war State in Greece, due to the Civil War that followed immediately after the War, was built in strict favouristic and political-discrimination lines (in favour of the right-wing against the left-wing citizens). Thus, studying became not only a means of upward social mobility, but also a way out of political discrimination in terms of job-opportunities. Nevertheless, even

having a degree in Greece during the 1960's and 1970's (but even today), did not mean better chances for employment, both for political and economic reasons, since, from the late 1970's onwards, the productive basis of the economy began to shrink. Second generation internal migrants responded to that situation in two ways: Either through the expansion of small enterprises, especially in the sectors of tourism and services, or through migrating abroad for both further studies and work.

This new petty-bourgeoisie consisting in ex-farmers, ex-herders and ex-fishermen with their offspring, who migrated in their adolescence, presented some extra-ordinary and largely controversial characteristics. First of all, the members of this new social class were proud of their origin and maintained their kinship -and locality-networks from the places of origin. The very fast social change they experienced led them directly to a peculiar economic individualism although their social memory was still full of collective forms of living. The quick transition of the city-newcomers from peasantry to the petty-bourgeoisie instead of the urban working classes, as it was the case in North-western Europe, deprived them of the, well-known in the North of Europe, working-class solidarity, based on occupational skills, labour-speciality and place of work. Instead of that, social solidarity and networking maintained the character of the place of origin, based on family and locality. It was the relationship to the place of origin and the people of origin instead of the relationship to the "means of production" that determined social and economic identities. Even in the sectors of constructions, shipping-industry, food-, retail- and textile-industry, where some amount of wage labour had been piled up, it was kin and locality that determined the criteria of hiring the workers. These structures retained the cultural traits of the ex-peasantry. Traditional music and dance signified the living memory

of the place of origin, while moral codes, traditional marriages, christening rituals, beliefs and “superstitions” of rural Greece, were all transplanted to the cities almost intact. Nevertheless, the entire package of this peculiar sort of cultural continuity, in conditions of radical social change, stood in sharp contrast with the new middle classes’ psychosis with education. The traditional petty-bourgeoisie and old city-dwellers along with the dominant ideology and discourse, although they deified a vague sense of “national tradition”, when it came to peasant customs and cultural traits (such as beliefs in oneiromancy, evil eye, customs of marriage, dowry and virginity and the like), they overtly scorned them as ignorant, backward, country-bumpkins’ manners and ways. Therefore, the struggle of newcomers for social recognition stood in front of a peculiar controversy: Whereas they saw in their children’s education the means of social ascendance and recognition, it was exactly this education that led to the degrading of their cultural identity, of which, however, they were, against all odds, quite proud.

This strange condition constituted an antiphesis between current identity and future expectations, a sort of divided self for the numerous new middle classes. This antiphesis resembles the -well known in European social science- conflict between modernity and tradition, with the difference that in Greece no one of the two parts of the conflict prevails. This unresolved antiphesis follows the generations after the first internal migrants and affects the personal histories of their members, like my own. In that sense, my own personal history was also the history of my class: Sealed by a tradition, which one should be proud of (or at least identified with) on the one hand, and a social expectation for social ascendance through education that contradicted this tradition on the other. Joining the communist party was a spontaneous response against

this controversy, since a communist society was supposed to give equal importance to both popular tradition and “progress”. Advocacy and respect for peasant cultures along with the promise for equality and justice attracted the members of the lower-middle classes to the communist movement, without challenging the principles of progress or the necessity of scientific knowledge. It was only the ownership, the direction and the gatekeeping of science and progress that was challenged by the communist opposition, by no means their content or social significance. As I already said, the collapse of the communist alternative (at least as it was built that far) in the late 1980’s, brought under serious doubt all this logic and in my view put under critique not only the alleged ownership and control of knowledge by the bourgeoisie, but also its content as well as the procedure of its production. In a strange way, though totally compatible with the class-history I described above, despite my indifference to social research and science that far, when I started to doubt the content and the production-process of scientific knowledge, I turned to academia and decided to join it in order to investigate my doubts.

## CHAPTER 3

### ROUTE CHANGE

One may fight in one's life-course against forces unknown to her/him. Conflict may be instinctive, unintended or unrecognized. In fact, it is so in most cases. As, however, the conflict goes on and on, one starts to recognize the opponent and learns how to survive in order to keep fighting if this is her/his choice. In football they say: "If you cannot win a game, make sure you do not lose it". In real life there are "games" one can never win, because the rules are so unequal. In this chapter I will start talking about a "game" in my life, which started back in 1996 and is still going on today. During the first years of this "game" I had not realised that it was that antagonistic. I did not see myself on one side and academia on the other side of a relentlessly antagonistic relationship. On the contrary, I believed that this relationship was rather characterised by co-operation, alliance or, in the worst case, neutrality. In 1996 I set forward my efforts to start a PhD (or at least, the process, which was supposed to lead to a PhD), initially in psychology. About this effort itself, I will talk in the next chapter. In the present chapter I will describe the events, which led me to take the decision



of pursuing post-graduate studies in social science instead of studying cinema, which was my initial purpose in 1990.

My endeavour to study film-making in Germany failed. Motivation and preparation were rather weak. They were based on an adolescent dream, which I had not really followed when I studied political science with any sort of parallel activity. I used to attend amateur drama-groups as an actor, but never attempted serious film-making. It was a vague intention for the future, neither well-planned, nor prepared and organized, rather connected to travelling abroad than studying film as such, more or less a way out of the contradictions and impasses I described in the previous chapter. I travelled to Germany in January 1990. I lived for six months in a village near Stuttgart called Schwäbisch Hall, and the next six months in Berlin, learning the German language at Goethe Institut, up to the level, which would allow me to take the exams at the Film-School in Berlin. I had planned to take the exams in January 1991. Although I did well concerning the language, I cannot say that I eventually liked living in Germany. Plenty of incidents that occurred to me and relevant observations I made, gave me the impression of racism and discrimination against foreigners, very often implicit and covered under the surface of behaviour, such as glances and intended “proper” language challenges of every-day encounters, but also overt and clearly visible in some cases, i.e. young children shouting “swartz-swartz”, “black-black” at coloured migrants. While in Schwäbisch Hall this sort of isolation of foreigners was not so annoying, since we, foreigners, all lived in a students’ residence and hanged out in our own groups, in Berlin, where I lived as a guest in a German family, I experienced the loneliness and the isolation of a foreigner in a big city.

Under those conditions, I had to prepare an outline (exposé) of a

script, a short script in images and a film review, put them in a file and submit it to the Film and Television Academy of Berlin before the end of January 1991. This was supposed to be the first stage of the exams, when fifty candidates out of approximately 500, would be selected. For the second stage candidates were supposed to shoot a short-film, to perform a theatrical monologue and finally give an interview. From this stage 17 candidate would be selected to, finally, enter the school. Given the fact that the total number of initial candidates were 500, and most of them had been already professionals in the film or tv industry, one can understand that it was extremely hard for me to pass the exams. Nevertheless, I prepared my file and submitted it. In February 1991 I returned to Greece waiting for the results. I had the right to take the exams at the specific school only twice. When I returned to Greece, I was puzzled with the dilemma whether I would try a second time, in case I (most possibly) failed, or not, whether I really wanted to live in Germany or not, whether I should insist with studying abroad or change my plans and the like. When I studied for my first degree, I used to work part-time either at my father's garage or during the summer-time at my uncle's restaurant on a Greek island. After some time, when I had lost interest in my studies, part-time became full-time mainly as a waiter or bar-tender in bars, taverns and restaurants in Athens and the islands. So, when I returned from Germany, I decided to go back to work until the results of the exams would come out. Up to that time I had spent much more time working than studying, something which I never regretted.

A complete reversal of fortunes and plans in my life occurred in April 1991, when two days after the Easter-Sunday my father was carried to the intensive-care unit of a hospital with a severe heart-attack; four days later he passed away at the age of 58. This was a

total subversion and a huge shock for me and my family. With regard to my plans, and my life in general, I lost my main financier, my refuge to working in times of crisis, and, above all, I lost the psychological support, as well as, the sense of security the father's figure offered to me. This loss dismantled psychologically, socially and financially both me and the rest of my family. A few weeks later a letter arrived from Berlin informing me that I had failed the exams. Therefore, the decisions I was supposed to take by choice, were forced upon me by necessity. I was not that young. When my father passed, I was 27, but my social destiny of ascending through education, determined by my middle-class status, had not been as yet fulfilled. Now that I had lost my main supporter, it was rather seriously undermined. The worst thing was that, after many years of traveling and wandering away from home, I stuck in my parental house, with a heavy burden of managing the unbelievably complex bureaucratic issues of my father's inheritance, essentially unemployed, flirting with the loss-related-depression and virtually lost with regard to my future-plans. Studying film fell suddenly out of my scope. Partly the traumatic experience of living in Germany, partly the financial difficulty, but perhaps more importantly the fact that studying film was strictly connected with my wish to travel and live abroad, led me to abandon this dream. A temporary solution for me was to start working again in bars and restaurants, falling back to the situation I used to live with when I was a student some years earlier. At that period, however, two developments that changed the course of my life, started to unfold.

First, as I was stuck in my parental house, having relatively nothing to do during the day-time (working majorly at nights), and as a counter-measure against mourning-depression, I did something I wanted to do for years, but travelling, working, serving the mili-

tarry, and learning German did not allow me to do: I started reading books! By “reading books” I mean books that I really liked, and not books that were imposed to me by school, the university or the party. With great surprise, I realised that this happened for the first time in my life. With the exception of a short interval between the period of my release from the military and the time I left to Germany, when I had read some post-Freudians, I had never systematically read other free-choice books (apart from literature and plays) before the age of 27! It seems, thus, that formal education and free-choice reading rarely go together. Reading during the years of formal education, is rather for exams’ preparation than interest in knowledge. What was even more interesting, was that I started reading stuff, from which I was previously excluded due to the binary structure of education in Greece (“humanities” on one hand and “science” on the other). Strangely enough, the death of my father instead of pushing me into philosophy or religion, made me wish to read things I never reached before, i.e. biology, molecular biology, theoretical physics, neuroscience and finally epistemology and history of science. It seems that this peculiar anti-depression activity was motivated by the sense of previous deprivation forced by the educational system, which had imprisoned me in the field of “humanities” as an opposite to “science”. It always needs something bold and unusual to fight depression.

The second development that changed the course of my life after my father’s loss was that almost immediately after his death, I started having vivid dreams of him. I actually could recall the dreams, since we all have dreams but we rarely recall them when we wake up. As said, in the period between the end of the military and my travel to Germany, I had read, at the suggestion of a friend, books by some post-Freudian psychologists and psychotherapists. One of them, Arthur Janov, had impressed me a lot. It is likely

that the impact of those readings came up again in a period of psychological stress. For whatever reason, the dreams were many and constant, while in almost all of them the main figure was my father. Gradually, I started recording my dreams and I looked for interpretations by comparing common patterns in different dreams. This urged me to start reading the relevant literature. Within two years I came across works of Freud, Young, Adler, Reich, Fromm as well as, new approaches on dreams by neurobiology and cognitive psychology. What led me in selecting my readings, apart from books themselves that led to one another, was my dream-diary with its notes and makeshift interpretations. Gradually, reading books and filling up my dream-diary became my main, if not sole activity. It was a way out of both depression -due to my father's death, and social pressure- due to my unfulfilled professional social destiny. I recall that I used to finish my shift in the tavern I was working at as a waiter at 3 o'clock after midnight, and then I went home and continued reading and writing until the next morning.

I kept doing this for four to five years. Social pressure for finding a permanent occupation intensified over the years; however, reading and filling up my dream-diaries was a much more urgent need for me than finding a "proper job". I made some efforts to get involved with music industry (mainly writing lyrics) and at some point, with journalism, but the efforts failed, since, as it happened earlier with film-making, this was not what I really wanted to do. Finally, in a glimpse of inspiration, in 1996, I decided to drop all other attempts and focus in what I already did for years: study dreams. Therefore, I started making contacts with university departments in order to begin research on dreams. I thought that the best way was to start a PhD in the Psychology of dreams. It was that period when a relentless struggle for the right to knowledge,

expression and recognition started for me; a struggle, which is still on today. Most of the initial details of the battle are now forgotten, but the essence is not forgotten. Before recounting the Phd-related adventures, however, I have to mention two major influences, which played a significant role in what followed.

The first influence was my reconnection with Sotiris Demetriou, the Greek anthropologist. I had first met Sotiris through my fellow-student Christos Dermentzopoulos during the third year of studies for our first degree. Christos and I have been friends since the first year, back in 1982. He is now professor in Anthropology of art, media and film studies in Greece. Christos had met Sotiris in the Centre of Marxist Studies, a scientific branch of the Communist Party. The Centre comprised many departments and study-groups and Sotiris Demetriou was in charge for two of them: the social anthropology group and the cinema-studies group. I first met him in 1986, just before I joined the military, with the intent to join his cinema-studies group. Sotiris was (he passed away in August 2016) a really rare case of intellectual and human being in general. He lacked the arrogance and competitiveness that a prominent scholar normally has. His knowledge on social science and philosophy was tremendous, his analytical capacity, writing skill and erudition were unbelievable for a person who never joined the academia. What, however, was the most important about Sotiris was that he was totally supportive to young people, and he treated all colleagues, however new in the group or young at age, as equals. He wrote many books on anthropology, semiotics and cinema-studies. He never joined the academia and when the University of the Aegean offered him a honorary Phd, he refused. Born in 1925, he entered the Polytechnic University of Athens during the German occupation, and, as a student, joined the Resistance and the Communist Youth organization. He remained an open-minded

communist till the end of his life. After the War he worked as a civil-engineer in the private sector. After a long trip for work in the -later called- “Democratic Republic of Congo” in the 1950’s, he discovered anthropology and since then he plunged into a life-long self-study in anthropology, social philosophy, semiotics and film-studies. He considered all those fields as the natural heirs of Marxism in the 20th century. He continued working as an engineer but everyday after work he read books and wrote articles. He wrote more than 20 books on the fields he studied, especially anthropology and semiotics, and if he were born in an English, or a French-speaking, country, he would have been a world famous anthropologist.

Although I knew Sotiris since 1986, I had not discussed with him anything “theoretical”, before I decided to pursue a PhD on dreams. When I decided to shift direction from art to social science, Sotiris was the first person I thought of for seeking advice. My intended domain was eventually psychology; however, Sotiris’s erudition was so broad that he could offer credible advice on any field of social science.

The second important influence I had while starting the effort for a PhD was the philosopher of science, Paul Feyerabend. I had read his book *Against Method, An anarchistic theory of Knowledge* in the summer of 1993. This was a crucial period for me, as it had been 2 years since my father’s death, and my readings were already numerous while the recording of my dreams was also pretty advanced.

At that specific period, I was concerned with epistemology. Just before Feyerabend’s book I had read the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn claimed that there is a normal process of evolution in science, which lasted periodically for ap-

proximately 50 years: A scientific revolution outbursted every 50 years, it established a “Paradigm” and scientists worked according to its principles, collected data and elaborated its methods until new data, new elaborations and critiques prepared the next revolution. Feyerabend challenged this schema and declared that there is no such thing as a “normality” in the evolution of science. Using the example of Galileo, he showed that scientific revolutions do not follow a normal flow of data-collection and methods-testing. There has never been a coherence in the evolution of science; neither a paradigm was accepted due to its logical superiority. A new theory or method was accepted not because of its “correctness” or its explanatory power, but due to its capacity to persuade and disseminate its sleight of arguments and strength of propaganda. Therefore, theories prevailed by virtue of their social balance of power along with the capacity to persuade the circle of scientists.

This sort of fundamental critique of science by Feyerabend undermined the entire edifice of not only the western epistemology but the western rationality altogether. I recall that, as I was trained in positivist Marxism up to that time, I first reacted negatively to Feyerabend’s ideas. However, many days after reading the book, while walking on the street, in a spark of illumination, I thought: Feyerabend is right! Nevertheless, Feyerabend’s colleagues, the professionals of science, had reacted harsher than I initially did, and they never changed their minds! They used one of his famous phrases -*anything goes*- in order to classify him as an enemy of science. By removing this phrase from its context (the history of scientific ideas), they accused Feyerabend of even justifying the Nazis. It was an unfair and vulgar criticism by people who wished to maintain their authority. A little later I read another book by Feyerabend, the *Science in a Free Society*. In this book Feyerabend



responds to the critiques against the *Against Method* and puts forward the case of the democracy of knowledge. He claims that western rationalism and western science comprise just one tradition among others in world-history, by no means *the* solely “correct” tradition. If it is to evaluate a tradition by its effectiveness, he writes, then myth and religion proved to be equally, if not more effective than science, since they helped humans survive for thousands of years prior to the modern era. At a point near the end of this book, Feyerabend writes:

It is conceited to assume that one has solutions for people whose lives one does not share and whose problems one does not know. It is foolish to assume that such an exercise in distant humanitarianism will have effects pleasing to the people concerned. From the very beginning of Western Rationalism intellectuals have regarded themselves as teachers, the world as a school and ‘people’ as obedient pupils. (Feyerabend, 1978:121)

I was strongly attracted to those ideas. They matched my loathing of hierarchy and oppression as I, a working-class boy, experienced it in school, from the elementary up to the university level. I had a natural distaste to discipline and difficulty to understand the rules, as I grew up in open spaces, unsurveilled and unattended. The fact that I came across someone from within the educational system, who shared my aversion to hierarchy, seriously enhanced my engagement with knowledge, which was ununder way at that time. As I see it now, I think that those who exert the harshest critique against hierarchy of knowledge, are the ones who really love knowledge. Consequently, in a strange way, the severe critique against academic knowledge constituted a motivation for me to join the academia, despite my previous contempt for its surrounding culture. The idea was simple: Since the ideas of Feyerabend were

born within an academic environment, this means that questioning the academic authority is possible by means of academia itself. This is what I believed by then. The events that followed in the next 30 years proved me wrong. But let us take the story from scratch.

## CHAPTER 4

### CLASS SCIENCE: EPISODE 1

My endeavour to pursue a PhD in psychology of dreams lasted three years, from 1996 to 1999. Too many years ago. A lot of episodes, names and facts have been forgotten. On the other hand, three years of attempts and struggles can hardly fit in a short chapter. What follows is just a short story of the main events. I started in spring 1996 with a more or less amateurish attempt. I knew (not personally) a professor of Psychology from my first degree in Panteion University. She then taught at the department of Sociology, but now, in the mid-nineties, a new department of Psychology had been established. I called the department's office and asked for her phone-number. They gave it to me and I called her. She was very kind to me (a complete stranger) but as soon as I told her that I am interested in dreams she gave me the phone-number of another professor, who was a psychoanalyst. It was quite common at that time to relate dreams with psychoanalysis but my approach was quite different, as I will show below. Anyway, I called the psychoanalyst. The psychoanalyst referred me to another professor, who was an experimental psychologist, the experimental

referred me to a cognitive psychologist and so forth. This incredible adventure lasted for three years! There were many factors involved in this story; some of them were related to status (I was a complete stranger, with no background in psychology, nobody knew me), some others were “scientific” (my approach did not fit in any of the established sub-disciplines of psychology) and some were related to the structure of the system (professors usually preferred to support students of their own entourage and influence). I describe some of the specific events of the story below.

Before contacting the professors of psychology, I had composed a short text of three pages, which included my conclusions after a five years-long self study on dreams. In this text my dream-diaries, as well as my readings, were combined. It was a sort of conclusions and research hypotheses for a PhD project at the same time. A sort of research proposal. This text has never been published, as the intended PhD never happened. The essence of this text, as well as of all my thoughts and endeavours on dreams, was my suggestion that the social significance of dreams has nothing to do with the classic psychological approaches, either psychoanalytical or neuropsychological. I claimed that dreams do not reveal the deep pathologies of an individual past, neither the neuronc background of some emotional and cognitive functions. They are, instead, tools for reality-recognition, useful to all humans for planning their every-day life, for evaluating the various circumstances, the behaviour of others, and possibly for predicting the future. This general statement was, surely, related to neuroscience and cognitive psychology, disciplines, which already paid much attention to the function of recognition.

The difference was the emphasis I gave to the social significance and the importance of dreaming for human beings in their every-

day life. Even more important, however, was the potential the dreaming process acquired under this perspective. The possibility of evaluating or even predicting reality with the help of dreams by anyone and not only the experts, had serious epistemological repercussions. Humans did not need to be passive subjects any more, waiting for the therapeutic intervention of psychanalists or the expertise of neurologists and neuroscientists. They could construct their own strategies with regard to social interactions, they could evaluate their own relationship to culture, nature, history and society, past, present and future. This kind of approach brought me closer to popular theories of dreams rather than “scientific” ones. What remained to be done, of course, was a research project, through which such a hypothesis could be tested and the specific mechanism or mechanisms, through which such a function is carried out, could be revealed.

I presented the text with my research hypothesis to Sotiris Demetriou, before starting posting it to the professors of psychology. Sotiris told me that it was scientifically valid. Since I knew nobody from the circle of psychologists, this draft was actually my letter of recommendation, and it was this draft that introduced me to all contacts I had for the next two years. As I see it now, 28 years later, the draft was really good and I would change very little if I wrote it today. Of course, it was a very rough and general statement of intentions and hypotheses, however, good enough to start research. During my meetings with the psychologists, I explained that my views were shaped by a five years long dream-diary and the respective readings. Hundreds of pages of personal notes were behind this draft.

At that time there was no google, and internet in general was just starting. Therefore, searching for bibliography, especially for an

independent researcher, was pretty hard. Communication with the psychologists was carried out through telephone calls, not emails, as emailing was also pretty primitive at that time. While meeting up with the psychologists, I explained to them that I did not intend to carry out a research based on autobiography. On the contrary I wished to test my assumptions on a sample of research subjects, as wide as possible, through a method determined by the co-operation with my supervisor, whoever this might be. The story was roughly as following. The psychoanalyst referred me to a jounior lecturer of cognitive psychology. She was positive towards my ideas however, due to her junior position in the hierarchy she could not become my supervisor. Therefore, she referred me to a senior professor of experimental psychology. The professor was also positive and she told me that she would let me know how and when we would start the PhD. Nevertheless, after six months she had given me no note. I started calling her and visiting her at her office, without result. Her responses were of the kind as “we will see”, “we have to follow the rules” etc.

As I did not want to waste time, I tried to prepare myself for the PhD while waiting for the professor. Since most of the bibliography on the cognitive psychology of dreams was in French, I started learning French at the French Institute of Athens in 1997. I attended the conferense of the Greek Association of Psychology in the same year and I also took the exams for gaining a post-graduate scholarship at the Greek State-Scholarship foundation. At the same time, I contacted a professor of psychology in Thessaloniki. The, also newly founded, Psychology Department in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was the only department in Greece that offered a Master’s degree. I wished to apply for a Master’s degree because I thought that with a Master’s degree in Psychology in my possession, I would surmount the objections by the experi-

mental psychologist to supervise my PhD. The problem was that, as my first degree was in Political science, the professor in Tessaloniki told me that they could not accept me even for a Master's degree! The autonomous Psychology departments in Greece were brand-new, established in the early 1990's (previously, they belonged to the "Philosophy-education and psychology" departments), and the professors wanted to consolidate their prestige within the academia by not allowing graduates from other disciplines, or from private institutions (apart from the previous Philosophy-education-psychology departments) to participate in a Master's degree. At the exams for the scholarship, I scored well (15 out of 20, was pretty good for a person, who had not BA in Psychology) but not well enough. I was third or fourth, but the positions were just two. I had exams in general, clinical, developmental, social and cognitive psychology. My performance was remarkable but it did not solve my problem.

As time was passing and nothing happened as to the prospectus PhD, I decided to contact another psychologist. A friend of a friend, who was the psychologist's student, arranged the meeting. He was a cognitive psychologist, well known beyond the circle of academics. When we met he was strange and a bit aggressive to me. I recall that he told me: "I am a well-known psychologist, TV-shows invite me all the time as an expert... And you? Who are you? Nobody knows you! You are nothing!". Initially, I thought this was a sort of testing, a fake-aggression by the professor in order to test my determination. However, when he finally referred me to a professor of Psychiatry, a friend of his, who worked at the University of Thrace in northern Greece, I realised that he was serious. The psychiatrist worked at the department of medicine and, since I had so many problems with psychology departments, the chances to be accepted by a medical school were virtually

null. Nevertheless, I had carried out so many readings in psychiatry, especially on the anti-psychiatry movement of the mid-1970s, that a conversation with a professional psychiatrist sounded pretty interesting to me. I called the psychiatrist and we met. I gave him my draft; after reading it, he told me: "What you suggest is too revolutionary! Extremely revolutionary indeed! But I cannot see how you can carry out a research based on such subversive assumptions!" My response was that I wished to make an effort. This was the last meeting I had with psychologists and psychiatrists in my search for a PhD supervisor. The psychiatrist did not introduce me to somebody else. He was the last person I met after two years of search, the last link of the chain. Amidst my anxiety to find a supervisor, I had never thought what the psychiatrist said before; namely that the main reason that nobody wanted to become my supervisor was not that I had not a first degree in psychology, but the content of my proposition.

The truth is that, although "recognition" was already a well known field within cognitive psychology, linking dreams to recognition had many ramifications, not all of them being explored by the discipline. First of all, connecting dreams to recognition challenged the existent taxonomy within the sub-disciplines. Traditionally, dreams belonged to psychoanalysis, clinical psychology, or experimental psychology, not to cognitive or social. Second, this connection opened new horizons, not well or not at all explored. A professor, who would supervise me, should be familiar with the topic, otherwise s/he could not control the entire process. Adding the fact that I was a complete stranger, it seemed pretty hard for me to be trusted by an established psychologist. French neuro-biologists had made great progress on the study of dreams. Among the psychologists, the only one I knew, who had been concerned with dreams, was a cognitive psychologist named



Montagerot. However, my knowledge of French language was elementary, and, at that stage, I did not want to pursue post-graduate studies abroad.

The most important difficulty, however, apart from the bureaucratic problems and the academic discriminations, was what the psychiatrist had said. The path opened by my assumptions was revolutionary for the following reason: Any sort of theoretical or empirical documentation of the hypothesis that dreams are in fact the recognition of present reality would put forward various consequences for many established theories of dreams. First of all, it would create a serious challenge to classical psychoanalytic theory. The suppressed desires of the past would no longer be considered as the main motivation of dreaming. They would just be auxiliary repository of images that served the recognition and understanding of the present reality. Emphasis would move from a “psychology of depth” to a “psychology of the surface”, a psychology of everyday life, of social reality and social relationships. Further on, no neurosis and no disorder would be considered as an exclusive by-product of a primal trauma situated in childhood (let us not forget that Sigmund Freud considered dreaming as a neurotic symptom altogether) instead of a current, repetitive and socially constructed distortion of relationships in the present. Dreams revealed aspects of those relationships again and again.

The most significant, however, consequence of my approach was epistemological and anthropological, that is it went far beyond the limits of psychology. According to the model of the “recognition of reality”, all the pre-modern popular and magic-religious “theories” of dreams could be considered as partly valid, instead of mere superstitions. Foretelling the future, the soul that travels during the night, spirits of the outside world that come into dreams,

all those can be valid cognitive and emotional tools of recognition, through the activation of the proper mechanisms of the brain such as substitution, metaphor, metonymy, transference etc. (mechanisms that Freud and his successors have well studied). Therefore, one could ask: Why are western and modern categories and theories on dreaming held as “scientific” and the rest, non-western and pre-modern theories as “superstitions”? This question would become the compass of my investigations ever since. My spontaneous response at the time was that either all theories should be held as scientific or all theories should be considered as superstitious. I was already too close to Feyerabend! The criterion on how useful or how much accepted a theory might be, could not be “scientific validity” but something else. The willingness to find out what this “something else” really is, was probably held by the professors I contacted as either extremely ambitious or totally superfluous. Perhaps, what lay behind their consistent negation to supervise me was that my approach challenged not only the “theories” but also the social prestige of the people who put these theories into practice, that is, the academics themselves.

My last attempt to get involved with academic psychology occurred in 1998, when I took the exams to enter a psychology department for a first degree in psychology! These were special exams for those who held a first degree from another discipline. My wish to carry out this research was so strong, that I could start from scratch, study for 3 years for a BA in psychology and then continue to the next level. I had already wasted 3 years in the search for a supervisor! However, antagonism was too high and I did not pass the exams. The fact that I did not mind to enter any level of studies in order to secure future doctoral research, proved that my interest was the research itself and not social or professional prestige. The research was anyway under way. All I needed was only an institu-

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tional cover, an academic legitimacy plus the support, without which no serious research is possible. Three years of efforts had no result. In early 1999 my friend and later best man, Manos Spyridakis, bounced the idea: Why don't you try in England?



PART 2  
THE ETHNOGRAPHY:  
ENGLAND, AFRICA AND ANTHROPOLOGY



## CHAPTER 5

### THE MASTER'S INITIATION TO ANTHROPOLOGY, THE END OF DREAMS AND THE CHALLENGE OF AFRICA

In October 1998 we met with Christos Dermentzopoulos, the sociologist and anthropologist of art and old friend of mine, and Manos Spyridakis, an archeologist and PhD student in anthropology, and we decided to establish a study group with an interdisciplinary character. We all knew Sotiris Demetriou from the Centre of Marxist Studies. We visited him, announced our decision and asked him to join. He accepted with enthusiasm. The group grew through the years, many people joined and even more people presented their work, many publications, books and journal issues emerged through its meetings and elaborations. It still exists and holds regular meetings today. Initially the group was called “Group for research and methodology” but later it was renamed as “Group of Critical Interdisciplinarity”. My first publications on dreams came out of this group. The initial purpose of the group was to establish a space, within which scientists from different disciplines with a critical perspective could meet and exchange ideas. Later we couched our

moto: “People before science and not science before people”. During the first couple of years our discussions revolved around two hot topics. The first one, introduced by Sotiris, was the role of anthropology. Sotiris claimed that anthropology is not just a discipline. It is a method, a mode of thought and, after the fall of the socialist regimes in eastern Europe, which was the outcome of the impasses of the positivist aspects of Marxism, anthropology can offer the global revolutionary theory of the 21st century. Those members of the group, including myself, who had no background in anthropology, reacted vehemently against this position. We considered it somewhat chauvinistic. The second topic, brought almost in every meeting by myself, was the epistemology of science, in line with Feyerabend’s ideas. The majority of the group-members were not ready to abandon the supremacy of western epistemology. Both topics were hot and caused vivid discussions and disagreements, but to the extent that they did not blow the entire project apart, they contributed to the intellectual vivacity of the group.

In 1999, I applied to Psychology departments in England for an Mphil/PhD in dreams, but all responses were negative. I will never know whether this was due to my first degree in politics, or due to my ignorance of the British system, or both. Perhaps, I should apply for a MSc first. Anyway, I am still not sure that they would accept me even for a MSc. I had lost any hope for a postgraduate study on dreams, when a new member joined our group, Stella Galani, who at that time did her PhD at UCL (University College London) with Charles Stewart. Charles Stewart, an American with classical studies, had turned into anthropology and had conducted fieldwork on the Greek island of Naxos on dreams and popular beliefs on demons and other supernatural beings. He was at that time senior lecturer at the department of anthropology at UCL. When I told Stella that I was doing a self-study on dreams, she



suggested that I should meet Charles. He used to visit Greece often. We met in Athens in Fall 1999. I told him everything I had done on dreams, as well as, all about my efforts for a second degree. He was then trying to start a research project with Greeks concerned with dreams in big cities, and I suppose that he initially saw me as a potential informant. In the course of the discussion, he said: "I do not know about psychology, their department is just beside ours, but I know nothing about what they do. We live in different worlds. Anthropology, however, is much more open. Most anthropologists, even I, come from other disciplines. Why don't you come to anthropology? You can take a Master's course in anthropology. It is only one year. If you like anthropology, you can pursue a PhD. If not, you will have a Master's degree anyway". For the first time, after so many years, a window of hope opened up. I followed the advice of Charles Stewart.

In the end of September 2000. I landed on Luton airport stepping for the first time in my life on English ground, and I got in the train to London in order to start a Master's course at UCL. After so many years of efforts my feelings were positive, and the horizon for the future seemed wide open. Nevertheless, adapting myself to the new environment was not that easy. In London I had arranged to stay at a students-hostel run by UCL at Gray's Inn Road near King's Cross Station, ten minutes walk from campus in Bloomsbury. Beside UCL campus, there were two colleges, Birkbeck and SOAS, the building of ULU, the University of London Union, the library of Senate House (the central library for all colleges of the University of London), while LSE was in 20 minutes-walk distance. My first hardest difficulty was to get used to the English accent. My second, but more important, was to fit in the very intense pace of the Master's course itself. It was a one year long master's course, and within this one year we were supposed to be taught

the basic themes of anthropological theory, to become familiar with seminal ethnographies from all over the world, and be able to follow the most recent debates in anthropological research. The syllabus contained the core-course, i.e. theory and methodology, one obligatory course on “Kinship and Social organisation”, and three courses of our choice (that is 3 courses per semester, including theory and methodology). In each course we had to write an essay. We had also exams in February and a short, 2-3 months long, re-search followed by a 12.000 words dissertation in the summer. Considering the lectures, the tutorials, the readings, the exams, preparing the essays and the research project, the schedule was really heavy. Apart from those courses, there was the weekly seminar of the department every Wednesday from 4:30 pm. to 6 pm. Although not obligatory, this seminar was the most exciting part of the Master, since famous anthropologists from all over the world were invited to present their work. We had the chance to meet people, whose books we had read, in person, while the only occasion we were allowed to enter the teachers’ lobby was after this seminar, to continue informally the discussion, which sparked within the seminar.

The Master’s course might have been quite intense, but it was extremely interesting at the same time. I recall my feeling when I entered the library of the department. While, back in Athens, I could hardly find the books I was interested in, I had it now all in front of me. And this was only the departmental library. I had also access with my student pass, to, at least, another five libraries of my interest in a walking distance. The UCL, the SOAS, the Senate House, the British Museum and the British library. With all this wealth of sources at my disposal, I felt like a child in a room full of free candies. I immediately plunged into books on dreams. The plan was, let us not forget, to continue with a PhD on dreams.

Then, I came across the very rich anthropological bibliography on dreams. Within two months I had read more than ten books and ethnographic collections including the various indigenous beliefs, theories, traditions, hermeneutic and healing practices related to dreams. I remember that period from the end of September to Christmas 2000-2001, as the "reading period". I did not go out. I only attended lectures and tutorials and read books. The only exception was when I joined a department's excursion to Wales some weekend in early November.

My contact with the anthropological literature on dreams, as well as, the anthropological theory in general, was crucial for my final shift from psychology to anthropology. Two important factors determined that shift. The first was the similarity between indigenous "theories" on dreams and my own assumptions derived from my self-study on dreams. Those assumptions included a tentative taxonomy of recognition with "four categories" as I called them. I called the first "direct recognition" when one tries to recognise reality as one does in awake life. I called the second "empathetic recognition" when one puts oneself in the place of another person in order to understand how the other person thinks or feels. The third category was what I called the "reverse empathy", that is, when somebody else attempts to empathise, or wants something from us. Although more difficult to be decoded, this category was not rare, since other persons appeared in dreams with simple substitutions from past experiences: parents, teachers, previous bosses, previous partners, frightening or beloved creatures and animals from fairytales and films. I had filed my own dreams according to these categories and the categorisation had proved quite successful. However, there was a fourth category, which I could not understand and classify according to my recognition-basic assumption. I had called it "the category of completely unintended action" and it re-

ferred to the dreams where we appear to do things we never intended or wished. I could not discover the condition of everyday life, to which those dreams related.

In my readings of ethnographic cases on dreaming-theories of indigenous peoples, I came across plenty of examples of dreams, which fell into this “fourth category”. Almost all “dream-theories” by indigenous peoples, regardless of geographical and cultural location from Asia to Africa, from America to Australia, treated such dreams as imposed in the mind and soul of the dreamer by an outside entity, a spirit, a local god or a witch. The purpose of such imposition was the dreamer him/herself. The witch, the god or the spirit (very often employed by an opponent) wished to conquer the dreamer, to make him/her follow its desires, to make him/her sick, or even kill him/her. This sort of interpretation was extremely intriguing to me, as it led me directly to power relationships. Apart from that, it also justified my epistemological position against the supposed western epistemology of the “deep” psychological individual. Since affliction came from outside, the current natural and social environment played a much more important role than an unconscious trauma of a forgotten childhood.

I was aware, of course, that indigenous “theories” talked about a world of spirits and gods. But this world was strictly connected with everyday life, natural elements and social organisation, it was not a distant and abstract world as it is in the big monotheistic religions (which are, not accidentally, pretty hostile against spirits). It was not difficult for me to make the theoretical leap and correspond the world of spirits to the social world. Consequently, I ended up calling this category of dreams “the pressure of social environment and power upon us” or alternatively “what others want us to do” or more simply “dreams of power”. In a nutshell,

with the help of indigenous theories I realised that, when we dream of ourselves doing things we never wished, the dream motifs do not depict a condition of recognition (not even a reverse recognition), but rather a condition of alienation. This condition included most of power relationships, as well as, all those phenomena like “evil talking”, “cursing”, “gossip”, “evil eye”, sorcery and witchcraft, recorded by indigenous and popular traditions.

Connecting dreams with the spirit-world and through it to religion, was a completely new and unexplored field for me. My initial motivation to take the “anthropology of religion”-subject as my first choice in the first semester, was due to the fact that Charles Stewart was teaching it. The plan was to continue for a PhD on dreams, with him as a supervisor. Although this plan changed later on (see below), I had the opportunity to come across a great deal of bibliography on witchcraft, shamanism, spirit possession and the like, by attending this subject.

The second factor for my final turn to anthropology was the reading of a book (all big turns in my life are connected with the reading of a book). The book was the *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, by Edmund Leach. The book, written in 1954, was about two ethnic groups, the “Shan” and “Kachin”, who lived in the highlands of Burma. What was revolutionary about the book was that, through the description of culture and way of living of the two “tribes”, Leach concluded that the most decisive criterion of belonging to one or another “tribe” was the method of cultivating rice. A family or a household could change its tribal identity by changing their cultivating methods in no more than two generations! I was greatly impressed by how Leach with his findings in highland Burma subversed the established ideas on “tribal” and ethnic identity. In pages 290-291 of the 1997 edition, Leach writes:

The cultural situation in the Kachin hills, as I have described it is both confused and confusing but it is not exceptional. On the contrary, I would claim that it is largely an academic fiction to suppose that in a “normal” ethnographic situation one ordinarily finds distinct “tribes”, distributed about the map in orderly fashion with clear-cut boundaries between them. I agree of course that ethnographic monographs frequently suggest that this is the case, but are the facts proved? My own view is that the ethnographer has often managed to discern the existence of “a tribe” because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity exist. Many such tribes are, in a sense, ethnographic fictions. (Leach 1997:290-291)

Leach’s book subverted two kinds of certainties: First, the stability of “tribal”/ethnic identity, and the second its geographical orientation within specific boundaries. I have always been attracted to subversions in general, but apart of that, I was pretty sensitive to issues of ethnicity, as the Greek elites always over-emphasized the purity and superiority of the “Greek-race”, as a permanent power-strategy. Immediately after I finished reading Leach’s book, I wrote an enthusiastic letter to Sotiris Demetriou telling him that he was absolutely right about anthropology and that I fully endorse his views!

Another important factor that rendered the Master’s’ experience definitely positive was my fellow-students and especially their various origin. In the hostel I shared the flat with a Chinese, an Israeli, a Jamaican and a guy from Costa-Rica. In the Master’s course we were about 20 students and only 6 of them were British. The rest were from Spain, Turkey, Pakistan, Brazil, Japan, Ghana, Switzerland, Greece and Ireland. This variety of origins made the coffee-breaks inbetween the lectures and tutorials exciting. We exchanged ideas and experiences from our countries and cultures.

We became good friends with Debbie Soothill and Tim Marshall from England, Jose Munoz from Spain, Tomoko Hayakawa from Japan and Ronald Lee from Ghana. Ronald showed special interest for my ideas on dreams, ideas, which were very close to his own cultural tradition. We started long conversations about religion and spiritual traditions, and we became close friends, a friendship that lasts till today. Ronald was by then already 49 years old and I was 36. He had been in England for 25 years, he worked as a psychiatric nurse, he had a family and fathered three children. Most Master's students were mature students with social and professional experience, a fact that made me feel comfortable. This was a very good period despite the intense pace of the course. Only two or three Master's students had first degree in anthropology! Group-work, solidarity, friendship and the common cause of discovering anthropology united us all.

From the optional subjects I took "anthropology of religion" and "Gender" in the first semester, and "Political and Economic Anthropology" and "West African ethnography" in the second semester. I chose "West African ethnography" because the teachers who taught it were Phil Burnham and Barry Sharp, and I liked the way they taught the obligatory subject "Kinship and social organization" in the first semester. As I said, the "anthropology of religion" was taught by Charles Stewart. When the time came to write our essays in the end of the first semester, I decided to write an essay on dreams. The purpose was to gather and elaborate all my recent readings and, in a way, to introduce myself to Charles Stewart, since the perspective was to continue with him for a PhD. This essay, which I still fully endorse, is subjoined in the appendices (Appendix 1). It was a complete and crystal-clear text, which depicted clearly my approach on dreams, enriched by my anthropological readings and free of the psychological conventions that

were included in my research proposal to the psychology-departments four years earlier. The title was “Dreams and the world of spirits from the perspective of critical anthropology” and the subtitle “...What if they are right?”. The title and the subtitle alone show very clearly the direction of the essay. In this essay, I advocated indigenous theories on dreams more boldly than ever before.

Unfortunately, the reception of the essay by Charles Stewart was unexpectedly negative. Apparently, the essay would be a surprise for him, as well. Probably, he did not expect me to have such views. His remarks were negative and critical. Above all he accused me of essentialism (=the tendency to accept indigenous beliefs as axiomatically valid). By then I did not know that such accusation would escort me for many years ahead. I thought that it was just Charles Stewart’s personal view. However, as we shall see below, this was the general “climate”, which was, and still is, dominant in the universities. Even hypothetical defending of popular metaphysics automatically classifies you as a religious advocate, a superstitious at the outskirts of or completely outside “science”. This sort of reaction bothered me, for the simple reason that my intentions were completely misunderstood. While I was putting forward an assumption, that is, I asked “what would be the consequences, *if* indigenous theories were valid”, the other side took it as a statement. They took it as if I said: “Look! Indigenous theories *are* valid”. It was clearly a biased misunderstanding, because such a claim was pointless. When one evokes belief or disbelief no dialogue and no further investigation is possible. I would be too naive to say within an academic environment, “Look! This is what I believe”!

It was extremely annoying to be attributed with such a naivety. But above all, it was disappointing that people could not discern between the *what if* and the *they are*.



Within the ambience of enthusiasm for anthropology, as I had already covered a lot of distance, it seemed to me hard to compromise. It seemed difficult to find a common ground with Charles Stewart. On the other hand, I had decided to focus in the fourth category (witchcraft and the like) of my dreaming-taxonomy, and possibly connect it with religion and the belief in spirits. The new horizons that the study of anthropology opened up to me, intrigued me and made me drop the idea to do fieldwork in Greece. I thought that this was a life-time chance to get to know a completely different culture, to carry out fieldwork somewhere, where my assumptions could be proved right, to become an ethnographer of distant places myself, like those I admired in books. I liked the teachers Phil Burnham and Barry Sharp from the subject "kinship and social organization". They had done fieldwork in West Africa and I followed them in the subject "West-African ethnography" in the second semester. The long discussions with my friend Ronald played a role, as well. I thought that this was a unique opportunity, through the doctoral fieldwork, to get to know a new continent, to experience the anthropological work in an unknown culture, and above all, to plunge into the world of popular religion, popular metaphysics and magic. I felt already that what I was looking for, lay far beyond dreams. I planned to take the exams for a doctoral scholarship by the Greek State Scholarship foundation. It was a fair scholarship lasting for three and a half years. In some way, sometime after Christmas I took the decision: I would pursue a PhD on witchcraft in Africa with Phil Burnham and Barry Sharp as my supervisors.

## CHAPTER 6

### STUDYING ENGLAND: ANTHROPOLOGY AND IDENTITY. INITIATION TO RESEARCH

The plan was put into practice with some necessary changes. When I started the Master's course my plan was to write my dissertation on dreams supported by a short (about two months-long) research, which I would conduct during the summer in Greece. In the beginning of the second semester, I changed my plans. Impressed, as I was, by the new world of anthropology I had just started to discover, a fervent idea grabbed my mind to do my dissertation-research in a foreign country instead of Greece. Of course this was neither obligatory nor necessary. Many years ago, a serious criticism against the idea that anthropology is exclusively about traveling to distant, exotic places had been developed. The main argument of this criticism was that, since the basic field of the study of anthropology is "otherness", i.e., the other, the stranger, the culturally different, all societies include otherness within their own culture and structure. Culture was no more held as a homogeneous entity but as an aggregate of different elements and social conflicts. More than a century of both sociological and anthropo-

logical studies had proven that all societies had their own “others” within their boundaries and not only as real or imaginary outsiders. Within each society, however distant or near, conflicts and differences constitute everyday realities and identities, while power relationships are open and negotiable. In other words, the “other” was located not only far away but also “within” that is, in the next (or even the same) quarter. This sort of critique had gradually led to the so-called “home anthropology”. It was then, totally normal to me to carry out my research in Greece. Nevertheless, I was, somehow, reluctant to fully accept this notion about “home anthropology”. First of all, any theoretical and methodological approach develops against an ideological background. The critique against exoticism was in fact a critique against colonialism. Colonialism divided the world into civilized and uncivilized, that is, into two allegedly homogenized parts. Anthropologists, traditionally came from the “civilized” world, studying the uncivilized one, in order to discover the origins of humankind in a purported evolutionary continuum. According to this very tradition, Greece was studied in the past by British and American anthropologists. The new trend of “home anthropology” allowed Greek anthropologists to study Greece but it was pretty uncommon for them to study other cultures. The colonial legacy was then not quite overturned.

The second reason I was reluctant to accept the idea of “home anthropology” was similar to the first one. I believed that for someone who has grown up within a particular culture, it would be impossible to avoid participation in the social and ideological struggles of this culture. Therefore, even without realizing it, one’s starting point would be an already fixed ideological position. Although this is unavoidable no matter how far one will travel -there is no “objective” view-, it is undoubtedly easier to occur in the homeland,

wherein a native researcher will take so many things for granted. Another reason for being sceptical against home-anthropology might be my reactionary character. I recall myself telling to my colleagues: “why do Englishmen and Americans conduct research all over the globe, while Greeks, Turks and Poles carry out their fieldworks only at their home countries? Is this tendency not reproducing the distinction between the illuminated westerners of the imperialist core against the poor relatives of the periphery? The distinction between the ‘regular’ anglosaxon anthropology, which is international, and the peripheral ‘national anthropologies’”? All these reasons combined with the bad reception of my paper on dreams by Charles Stewart made me to decide to stay in England during the entire summer in order to do my Master’s research project in England. I decided to do something I was really interested in, no matter whether it was related to the prospected PhD or not. I combined my queries regarding my life in England with my newly acquired “anthropological perspective”, the perspective according to which, all social facts and processes in a country had been related to its cultural history. I decided to investigate ethnic-identities in England. The reason for that choice was my feeling that something different than my experiences in Greece was happening in England with regard to ethnicity. At that time, issues of ethnicity were much at the peak of public interest in England, since a relative political autonomy with local parliaments had been granted to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by the New-Labour government in 1997. I posed the question of how one constructs the identity of an English person or a British person. This question was pretty hot in the public debates at that time both within and without academic circles. I asked Sandra Wallman, a well-known and pretty experienced anthropologist, who was our teacher at the methodology-core subject, to become my supervisor. She had conducted fieldwork in eight different coun-

tries, in England among them as well, and she was famous for her books on anthropology of work and the social micro-economy of households. Supervision at the Master's level is not something very serious, I met with Sandra Wallman only once, however, I was really honoured that she accepted to supervise me.

The whole idea was that somebody from the periphery, a Greek, would conduct research in the capitalist metropolis. I thought that this would reverse the tendency, according to which, researchers from the ex-colonizing countries conducted fieldwork at the ex-colonized. Nevertheless, the time I had at my disposal was pretty limited for such an ambitious project. Although I had started preliminary research from February 2001, the real time I could focus exclusively in the research project was only after May, when the rest of papers and exams was over. I tried hard despite the short time I had in hand, and the results showed that I did quite well. In the Master's course the total mark depended 50% on the dissertation, 25% on the subjects-essays and 25% on the exams. I got 65 marks (in 100) from the dissertation, 61 from the essays and 55 from the exams. The dissertation, therefore, that is the effort, which was based on my Englishness-Britishness research, yielded my best score. I stayed in London for four months, during the entire summer of 2001, and I concentrated exclusively on the dissertation and the research. It was a fascinating and, at the same time, pretty hard period. My colleagues had all gone back to their home-countries, since all of them decided to conduct their research back home. My contract with the students' hostel expired in June and I moved to the room of a friend, who had travelled to Greece for the summer. The room was in Kentish town, in another hostel, which was totally empty, an ideal condition for reading but unbearably lonely, as well. The time I had was too short for such an ambitious plan. It takes years for a foreigner to understand what

makes a national or ethnic identity, if one ever succeeds on that. I had started in February with some unstructured interviews, however, without reading I was going nowhere, since the topic was vast. I started reading books intensively, on British history, English political history, social geography, political economy and cultural studies. I also looked for any ethnography, monography, book or article written on English identity. At the same time, I kept on taking interviews. Although I wanted to travel as well, my finances were awful and thus, I restricted myself in areas around London.

The deadline for submitting the dissertation (12.000 words) was the 17th of September. From May to the end of August I was studying and taking interviews. On the 1st of September I started writing the dissertation. In order to organize my material, I distinguished three levels of analysis, the historical, the ideological and the personal with the narratives I had gathered during the interviews. The historical level was necessary for getting to know the culture. It is this bulk of knowledge, which one is sure that possesses when one is native, whereas a foreigner is pretty confident that s/he has no idea about. No one is capable of becoming familiar with this sort of knowledge without systematic reading. The ideological level refers to the various interpretations of the historical facts. How do social groups, political camps and intellectuals of different backgrounds evaluate the course of history? The third level examines the same issues from the perspective of specific individuals, who I met and talked with, personally. In fact, I started from the third level, with the interviews and this level guided me towards the other two. Issues that raised during the interviews led me to read the relevant books, and information taken from reading was put back in the conversation in the next interviews, with one level inspiring the other. In my dissertation I recounted this process. It was more or less a narrative. I described

my initial preconceptions and how they turned upside down in the process of talking with people. By that, I discovered the dialectics of anthropological research. The central issue was common people's voices, something that was missing from other sciences, sociology, psychology etc. In those sciences the theoretical schemata are fixed and research comes to either confirm or modify them. In anthropology there were no preconceived, fixed theories; only questions that looked for answers. The fact that we sought those answers from common people whom the questions concerned and not from the scholarship of an expert, historian or philosopher, was the very revolutionary element of anthropology. This process had in most of the cases an unexpected turn: since we had posed the questions before we started the research, they were influenced by our ideological preconceptions. Through mixing with real people, not merely unexpected answers were given, but also the validity of the questions themselves were challenged, and this is perhaps the most important. In simple words, the researcher usually poses different questions than the persons who s/he investigates. By living and spending time with these persons most of the initial questions of the researcher prove to be irrelevant. The reformation of the initial research questions is the creative process of anthropological research.

With regard to the case of "English ethnic identity", I had started with the anticipation that a sort of "national pride" would constitute the feelings of common origin and common characteristics of the English "nation", based on its unique institutions, its history and the biological continuity of the people. It was exactly this sort of national pride that I had experienced myself while growing up in Greece. Greeks believe they are a unique nation among all others due to their history. Therefore, I started with the assumption that any nationalism is based not merely on the difference from "others"

but majorly on the sense of superiority against all the other nations, strongly affected by my own experience in Greece. After a couple of my first interviews, however, I realized that this sense of superiority did not exist in England, at least in the way I expected it. Most of the people I talked with, responded that they did not feel they were English, but British. Some said they did not feel either English or British but Londoners. “British” was the most common answer, as it was an identity that included all peoples of the British Isles, the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish, but also the British citizens originated from the colonies, first, second and third generation Indians, Pakistani, Africans and Caribbeans. By choosing to feel rather British than English, the people I talked with renounced the colonial and racist past, which was linked to the label of an “Englishman-Englishwoman”. “Englishness” was connected by my informants with aristocracy and colonialism. I would share this claim too, if I did not realize, at a particular moment, that I was talking, almost exclusively, to people belonging to the educated middle class. When I started contacting working class people, I saw that the identity of an “English” person did not mind them at all; they felt perfectly all right with it. In contrast to the people belonging, more or less, to an academic environment, with whom I used to talk, working class English people regarded “Britishness” an artificially constructed identity, destined to show that English society is tolerant and multicultural, an identity, however, which does not really exist. On the other hand, the far-right-wing BNP (British National Party) used the “British” label instead of the “English” one, probably in order to remind the “great” white, male British Empire. Within this mess, I had to discern what “Englishness” and “Britishness” meant and to whom. Public discourse mainly expressed by the mass media, as well as the official political rhetoric, were more than obviously in favour of “Britishness”. “Englishness” was restricted to some sub-cultural



traits like football and music, as part of the multi-national “British” culture. Public discourse promoted the idea of a multi-ethnic nation, the British nation, within which, the English were just the most numerous ethnic group. By studying history and political geography in the library, I realized that such a political discourse and rhetoric was only a recent development. It grew along with Thatcherism and went hand in hand with de-industrialization, the “new” economy of services, tele-communications and the financial sector, as well as, with the aggressive war against trade unions and collective social and cultural expressions of the working class. Hence, it made sense, when working class people defended their “Englishness”: What they really defended was the collective traditions of their class, which were threatened or even killed off by the “new economy”. On the other hand, the far-rightwing members of the BNP when they talked of “Britain” they meant the old racist and imperialist British Empire, while the middle-class intellectuals by “Britain”, by the very same term, meant a contemporary multi-ethnic and tolerant democracy!

The conclusion was that different people used the same terms with different meaning. Behind “Britishness” there lay a political strategy, which aimed at destroying working class institutions within the context of de-industrialisation, neo-liberalism and globalization. The alternative use between “Englishness” and “Britishness” hid the deep class-division of society in England, as well as, the attempt towards its reconstruction according to contemporary economic and political developments. This situation had nothing to do with the Greek case. Therefore, I reached the conclusion that there are many kinds of nationalism and not only one. This research on “Englishness” and “Britishness” taught me two very important things: First, that the assumptions we make before starting a research are always affected by our own experiences,

our own evaluations and categorizations back home. This means that it is inevitable for our assumptions to be subverted during the research. Second, the most important factor that leads to the subversion of the initial assumptions and certainties is the narratives of the common people themselves, the real protagonists of any culture. The voices, the ideas and the perceptions of common people are usually missing from the books of History, sociology, economics etc. etc. Nevertheless, the fact that there are plenty of different voices, ideas and perceptions among people, makes the obligation of anthropology to include all those different voices in its scope, unquestionable. Only with the representation of all possible voices is the research complete. Of course, among the different voices, official history, hegemonic public discourse, as well as, political and media rhetoric are also included, however not as “exclusive”, “unique” or “correct”. On the contrary, anthropology strives to shed light on the voices of common people, exactly due to their exclusion from the public sphere and official history. This is what anthropology actually does, in a nutshell.

The research on Englishness gave me great satisfaction, while my intention to better understand the English culture was fulfilled. The experience of the Master’s course was generally positive. However, in order to achieve a positive outcome, I had to take a serious deviation. I might have discovered and joined anthropology but I had deviated from my initial target, i.e. to conduct research on dreams, or at least something which would include dreams. As I said above, during the Master’s course I had decided that if I took the scholarship from the Greek foundation I would start a PhD on witchcraft in Africa. Finally, I did not take the scholarship that year (2001). I scored third and the scholarship was given only to the first two. It was difficult to study for the scholarship-exams and the Master at the same time. Despite that, I contacted Phil

Burnham, I explained to him what I wanted to do, and he accepted to become my supervisor, although with some hesitation, since he was not an expert on religion (he was majorly doing human ecology). I submitted my proposal for a PhD to UCL starting next year (2002), and in October 2001 I returned to Greece in order to study for the scholarship-exams of 2002. This time I took the scholarship. In October 2002 I travelled back to London for the PhD. I was 38 years old. I had started my endeavour for a Phd six years earlier. I thought that now I was starting the journey without any more obstacles.

## CHAPTER 7

### CLASS SCIENCE, EPISODE 2: UPGRADING PROPOSAL

The truth is that, with all those changes and deviations, it was not clear at all what I wanted to do with the PhD. I had in my mind a general direction, according to which, common people's metaphysical beliefs should be taken seriously instead of dismissed as superstitions or cultural artifacts. However, things with witchcraft were not as clear as they were with dreams, on which I had put forward a basic assumption, or with the Master's dissertation, which was based on a fundamental question of belonging. My PhD proposal was too general to guide me, I do not even recall what I had written in it. I guess the proposal played no role. The department accepted me because they already knew who I was from the Master and Phil Burnham had accepted to become my supervisor. Despite the vagueness of my proposal, some other factors had made me feel relaxed and complacent. First, I had taken the freedom we had during the Master's course seriously. Except the exams, the rest of the Master had been a totally free enterprise. In essays and the dissertation I had written up my views freely. Sandra Wallman, my dissertation supervisor, never put any con-

dition, she did not even have a look at my dissertation before I submitted it. Thus, I had acquired the illusion of freedom and I thought that the same conditions applied for the PhD. I had forgotten the reception of my essay on dreams by Stewart, I considered it as an isolated incident, as a matter of personal disagreement. I also underestimated Phil Burnham's reservations about his lack of expertise on religion. I thought the second supervisor, Barry Sharp, would cover this gap. I thought we had a good relation with Phil Burnham. The truth is that we shared the same perspective during the discussions after the seminars, that is, we both defended the value of classical ethnographic method against some current tendencies within anthropology, which questioned the usefulness of long-term fieldwork, the trademark of anthropology that far. For all those reasons I thought that the PhD would be as smooth and free as the Master and the supervisors would be as supportive as Sandra Wallman. I was wrong. The difference from the Master was evident from scratch. We had agreed with Phil Burnham about the general direction of my research and the country of Africa where I would conduct my research, before I travelled to London. We had agreed that I would go to Ghana, because it was an English-speaking country, there was no civil war, and some remote areas, renowned for intensive religious activity, were relatively under-researched. We ended up choosing the Nzema area in South-western Ghana, near the border with Ivory Coast (Image 1). The Nzema ethnic group, a relatively small in numbers (about 200.000) ethnic group lived in the area. Some time before I travelled to London in October 2002, I searched for African language lessons in London. Ghana may consist of 40 different ethnic groups and respective languages; however, the language that prevails is Twi, the language of Ashanti, the most numerous and culturally and historically strongest ethnic group. The country's official language was English, since it was a former British colony; however,

Ashanti, due to their domination politically before the colonial period and economically during the post-colonial era, had managed to impose their language as the second official after English. There was a Twi-learning course in SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies, a few meters away from UCL); I applied, but I was unlucky. They told me that there were limited vacancies and the course was already full. This was my first setback but many others followed.



Image 1: Nzema area (spotted with the red-arrow).  
The area I conducted my research

As I said above, the positive experience of the Master's course, the fact that I was accepted for the PhD and, perhaps above all, the fact that I had gained the scholarship and I would not have a financial stress for the next three years, made me relax. The scholarship-foundation sent the money to the bank relatively late, thus I traveled to London rather late, in mid-October 2002. I did not have a place to live. A students' hostel was not a choice, since those places were given to the undergraduates and the Master's students. The few remaining rooms were very expensive. I started

searching for a place, living temporarily with friends here and there. It was a stressful and time-consuming search. Finally, after 3-4 weeks of searching I found a room at Walthamstow, an area in north London, north of Tottenham. It was a room in a two-bedroom house. A friend of a friend lived there and she was looking for a house-mate. The room was cheap and the house was nice, but it was too far away from the center. I rented it because I was fed up with searching, and I did not want to be a burden to the friends who hosted me any more. The English girl who lived there was working as a secretary at Birbeck college; at the same time she took a course at the same college. Birbeck college is renowned for the courses it offers to mature students and working people. All lectures and tutorials took place in the evening. My house-mate spent all-day at College. Most of the times she preferred to sleep at a sofa in her office. Her parents lived in Western England and most of the weekends she visited them, as well. Thus, most days and nights I was all alone in the house without a person to talk with.

Nevertheless, the place I lived was not the worst thing when I started the PhD. The atmosphere at the University was pretty different than that during the Master. We had a class with all the first-year PhD candidates, which was quite as poly-ethnic as the Master's one; however the ambience of group solidarity and collectivity, so characteristic of the Master's class was missing. We met once a week and we were supposed to discuss the preconditions of fieldwork. Each one of us presented one's own project and discussion with questions and answers followed. Two professors, each one per semester, co-ordinated the group and managed the discussions. The individual projects were quite diverse and different to each other. All candidates were interested in their own projects. They did not pay much attention to the projects of others,

nor to opinions of other colleagues about their own. The only thing they cared about was the opinion of their supervisors. Thus, this class of “preparation”, so to say, for fieldwork, was, more or less, a pretext, something that the department would present as a first year PhD course, without any useful content. After some years they added some lectures to this course by students finishing their PhD who had returned from the field. This was much more interesting. I gave one such lecture in 2006 after I had returned from fieldwork. But in 2002 these lectures had not yet been established. The course was meaningless and boring. Above all, it was indicative of the individualising and isolating character of the entire PhD process. Each candidate was isolated and concerned with one’s own project. Although we met just once a week for the course plus the Wednesday seminars, our schedule was pretty intense. The entire academic year was supposed to lead to the writing up of a long text, called “upgrading proposal”, which would be our detailed plan for the fieldwork plus a display that we are aware of the theoretical premises of our topic. The size of the upgrading proposal was equivalent to a Master’s dissertation. The proposal should be approved by an official viva-exam, within the department, some time near the end of the semester in June. The committee comprised the two supervisors and a third member, another professor from the department. The third member was, in fact, the independent observer and the essential examiner. The two supervisors were supposed to know and have approved my proposal.

The entire process of the upgrading proposal was not at all “just a formality”. No one was given permission to leave to the fieldwork site, had the proposal not been approved. Some rare cases of final disapproval were known. In those cases the candidate was given just an Mphil and the PhD process stopped. Therefore, we were all terrified before the upgrading proposal-exam. Besides that, it



was barely clear what the content of the proposal should be, and its composition was a very hard riddle to us. Ideally, one should, first, cover the entire bibliography, which was relevant to one's topic, second, describe the area of one's research, third, make clear the research questions and fourth, expose one's "methodology". The word "methodology" was a terrorist-word for all of us. No one was never sure about what one should write within this section. Especially for us, who came from the South, and we were not used to the anglosaxon discipline, orderliness and rationality, it was really hard to understand what the department wanted from us with this upgrading proposal. Thus, despite the sparse weekly program, the course caused loads of anxiety, and was definitely much more stressful than the Master's course. Another indication of that was the rigidness of the supervisors. My supervisor was all the time sceptical and he seemed to try to reduce my enthusiasm. Communication was not always easy. The reason for all that was quite simple. The Master's course was just a professional qualification, useful for the labour market. Master's graduates had more chances to find a job in the public sector, in education, or at museums, at local councils and NGO's. The PhD, however, was not just a professional qualification. It was the passage to "Academia", the verification that one belongs to the "anthropologists", the elite of the discipline. It was the "rite de passage" of anthropology and that is why one should pass a number of trials. One of them was the "upgrading proposal".

Day by day, the first year PhDs we started to shape the various groups of friends within the class. The way we formed the groups was interesting. South and East-Europeans formed one group, North Europeans, Anglosaxons and "good" students formed another group. We were not all one group, as it happened with the Master's course. I became friend with Anna Apostolidou from

Greece, Nico Tassi from Italy, Konstantinos Tsikkos from Cyprus, Aybil Goker from Turkey and Barbara (I forgot her surname, she abandoned the course a couple of years later) from Argentina. The geographic delineation is evident! The truth is that there was barely any English student in the class. There were two English girls that almost never came to the class, and an English man who I later got to know –a very good guy, he now teaches at SOAS–, Joe Trapido. All the rest (some 15 persons) were foreigners. The proportion of English students in the Master's was definitely larger than that. The PhD studies was a class-issue in England. Very few working-class young people could afford PhD studies, which meant at least five years excluded from the labour market.

Anyway, my problem was not the friendships at the university. My big problem was to understand what exactly I needed to write in the upgrading proposal. I had great difficulty to write about Ghana, since I had never been there before, while I was not yet pretty sure what exactly I wanted to do down there; moreover, how I would do it. It seemed to be a hugely hard task. Around February 2003 I started writing up the proposal. One day I asked Phil Burnham whether I should travel to Ghana for a pre-fieldwork trip in order to help myself write the proposal. He responded that this was not necessary. The truth is that a trip to Ghana was not a simple case. The air tickets costed £700, save the entire preparations with vaccinations and the like. On the other hand, it was not that certain that I would make clear what I wanted to do by staying a couple of weeks in Ghana. A few weeks in Africa are not enough even for finding a proper accomodation, let alone conducting preliminary research. Thus, in a way, I paid the cost of my choice to pick Africa as my research-area. My position was disadvantaged in relation to those of my colleagues, who would conduct their research in their home-countries, or in Europe. But this was my

choice, anyway. Under these circumstances I started my endeavour. I followed my way. First I delineated the area of knowledge I wished to investigate, and this was “witchcraft”. As I had done before with “dreams” and “ethnic identity”, the core-concept was my starting point.

Months ago, before starting writing, I had started reading anything on “witchcraft” and Ghana. I read mainly anthropological collections and ethnographies, but also history, geography and economy of West Africa. The material was enormous. There was not enough time to read all this stuff. Inevitably I did the reading and the writing at the same time. It took me four months, from February to June to finish the first draft. The difference from the Master’s dissertation was evident. It took me 20 days to write up the Master’s dissertation and 4 months to finish the upgrading proposal! With the proposal I tried to do the same as I did with all original texts I wrote that far. I took the core-concept, in that case “witchcraft” and attempted to analyse its origin as a concept, as well as its historical use and its social significance across cultures. That is, where and when we meet the term, which social relationships it refers to, which social conditions it describes and attempts to give meaning to or to interpret. This attempt was, as much as I could, informed by the various theories on witchcraft based on bibliographical material. My title was “The political economy of witchcraft”, more or less indicative of what I really wanted to head to. After a lot of reading and writing I ended up with a working hypothesis: Witchcraft, that is the belief that some people possess the supernatural capacity to harm other people leading them to bad luck, sickness or death, is not a general trait of all pre-industrial cultures, but appears in those places and at those historical periods when a hierarchical social organisation meets a pre-existent tradition of social equality, which is horizontally organised.

A rather complex series of arguments based on historical data and theoretical assumptions I had gathered led me to this conclusion. When I finished my first draft, I was rather satisfied, since I felt that I had reached a point, I had formed a basic hypothesis, which I could test on the ground. I am not appending this proposal here, since it is too long, however, one can find it at my page in academia.edu (<https://eap.academia.edu/IoannisKyriakakis>). In the proposal I worked with a specific method, which I used in all my writings: I gathered material that I hoped it would lead me to the formation of a hypothesis. The best thing I could do at that stage was to couch the hypothesis as clearly as I could. The empirical research that would follow had to confirm or subvert the hypothesis either partially or totally. The particularity with this specific proposal was that the material I had gathered was not empirical, it was not a selection of my own research findings. Even with my research on dreams, some material was empirical, no matter that it was derived by my own dreams. The Master's dissertation was based on 3-4 months of fieldwork. The upgrading proposal was exclusively based on secondary sources, on bibliographical material. I imagined that this would be ok, since my supervisor had discouraged me from travelling to Ghana for preliminary research.

The outcome was catastrophic. In our meeting with Phil Burnham in the beginning of June 2003, after he had read my proposal, my proposal and I personally received a tremendous bashing! Phil told me that I did not really want to do a PhD, but I just wanted to deceive the department and the scholarship-foundation in order to pocket the scholarship-money! I replied that I took exams to earn the scholarship, it was not gifted to me! He responded that my proposal was rubbish, it had nothing to do with a proper upgrading proposal! I could not understand what was going on! For the next

days I was depressed and angry. I really wanted to give up! But what to give up? I had the scholarship after so much effort and I was about to leave to Africa. The same night that the incident with Phil Burnham had occurred, I met my Spanish friend Jose Munoz. He was also Phil Burnham's student and he told me that he was surprised with Phil Burnham's reaction. He said that Phil Burnham spoke of me with admiration that far. I was puzzled. I could not understand what the problem was. It seems that Jose informed Phil Burnham about my depression afterwards, since the professor called me to his office a couple of days later and he apologised for his behaviour. Nevertheless, he told me that the proposal was bad and I had to re-write it from scratch. He told me that I had not grasped what the department asks from such a proposal. They did not want a theory or a working hypothesis. They just wanted a description of the topic, along with a descent literature review, a description of the research area, and finally a description of the method I would use. It was hard for me to believe it. *They did not want to know my view on the topic. They just wanted me to prove that I am capable to do empirical research regardless of assumptions, theories and research outcomes.* We are talking here of two different languages, two different worlds. The weird thing is that both of us, my supervisor and I, had not realized before, that we belong to those different worlds. Each one of us thought that the other is like-minded. It was a huge misunderstanding.

Although at that period I was confused, and it was hard to me to consider calmly what exactly was at stake, I think that with all that mess with the upgrading proposal I clashed with two traditions, one relating to the British academic system, and the other relating to academic anthropology in particular. I guess that whatever I did, whatever my topic, whoever my supervisor, the clash would have been unavoidable. The fact that it did not occur before the

PhD course was due to the non-professional character of the Master's course. The Master was just an additional qualification for the labour market; it was not a rite of passage for the "profession" of "the" anthropologist, "the" academic, as was the PhD. One might say that the disagreement was ideological. The supervisor might just disagree with what I wrote within the proposal. However, his remarks did not show anything like that. Phil Burnham had a reputation of a strict and meticulous professor. What he was mostly interested in, was his students to follow the rules. Thus, I did not take his offence personally. It was a matter of the "system". One must consider that the "upgrading proposal" was a procedure followed by all universities and all departments, regardless of whether it was anthropology, engineering, chemistry or Mathematics. It was, then, a testing for the PhD candidates, as to whether they were suitable for the degree or not. Additionally, the dominant tradition in England was empiricism. One should prove that one could *support empirically one's research*, no matter what one's topic had been. This was an element of English culture that I had missed during my previous project on Englishness. Everything should be practical, countable and controllable. No theories, no phantasy, no assumptions without empirical documentation. Although my supervisor was American, it seems that he was fully accommodated to the local culture since he lived in England for more than 30 years.

With regard to anthropology, the late years the schema "hypothesis-research-documentation" had been seriously challenged as eurocentric. However, it had not been replaced by anything else, resulting in the substantial theoretical impoverishment of the discipline. Combined with the British empiricism, anthropological challenge of theorisation led to a profusion of particular cases without any sort of generalisation. Under this perspective, my en-

deavour to “define witchcraft” seemed awkward and outdated. However, this dominant tendency, seen from another angle, was probably in favour of a neoliberal model of university, where particular cases were not allowed to be linked in a neo-colonial world-image of contemporary capitalist over-exploitation. My objection was that by debunking all generalisations and all theories, we are not merely deconstruct the dominant ideologies, but also the critique against them! While, dominant ideologies have at their disposal various means to widespread and reproduce themselves, beyond the educational institutions, the critique against them, which was earned through tough struggles from members of lower classes entering the Academia, was now subverted in the name of the deconstruction of all theories, no matter critical or conventional. Conventional and critical theories, however, did not possess the same amount of power outside the Academia. Therefore, the call for abandoning grand theory ended up to abandoning only this grand theory, which was critical to capitalism and neo-colonialism. I was personally sympathetic to relativism in philosophy of knowledge, but not in politics, since I considered inequality and class-conflict in the world as real and not imaginative.

Within this ambience, resorting to simple ethnography without theorization looked like a convenient compromise among all parties, for the reproduction of the academic system. It was not convenient to me though. I was not used to it. The issue was not personal. It was a class-contrast. Anglosaxon rationalism on one hand and south European social idealism on the other. It was not accidental that all my friends that read my proposal, liked it very much. And my friends were not exclusively Southerners. English working-class friends (not in my course) liked my proposal too. Therefore, the issue was not geographical but social class-related. At the end of the day, it is our class-experience, which determines

whether our stance against culture will be consensual, critical or marginalized.

At that time, I found myself before a serious dilemma: I had either to quit, or accept the suggestion of the professor and write a new upgrading proposal from scratch. Finally, I decided for the latter, after considering how much time I would spend searching for another supervisor, probably at another university, in a process that no one could guarantee that it would be much different. I accepted the suggestions by the professor hoping that “I do this now just to pass the upgrading viva” and when I went to Africa I would do whatever I wished. This is, eventually, what Phil Burnham used to tell me all the time: “follow the rules now, and after you finish the PhD you can express your own views”. I disagreed. I used to say that with continuous reductions and compromises one does not develop one’s own views, one does not work with them, one does not test them on the ground. With employing alien perspective, one forgets to work with one’s own. I was right! I had forgotten and devalued this upgrading proposal, which was rejected by then, until I started writing my book in Greek. I was convinced that it was not a “proper” upgrading proposal, it was a “mistake” of my own due to my tendency for over-theorization. When I read it again, twice in order to include the incident in the book, I realized that the proposal was, in fact, very good! Very little if anything would I change 15 years later. My arguments were sound and well documented. It just did not conform with the academic spirit of the time. I wonder how many proposals have been rejected in a similar way in all disciplines at all universities.

The fact is that, while I initially planned to leave to Africa in September, I did not merely postpone my departure, but also spent the entire summer in Greece writing the new upgrading proposal.



I returned in the end of September with the text. Phil Burnham made his final remarks and in October we did the viva (=oral examination) with Charles Stewart as an external examiner (!). The text, modified according to Phil's suggestions, had nothing to do with the initial proposal. The title had changed to "Religious pluralism and social differentiation in Southwestern Ghana". No relation to "the political economy of witchcraft"! The two supervisors, being, obviously, much more familiar to African reality than I was, tried to combine my wish to be concerned with religion with the complex reality between Christians and traditionalists on the ground, and suggested "pluralism" than "witchcraft" as my central topic. It was a significant change. Although studying social differentiation was my goal as well, the revised upgrading proposal had nothing to do with my own method of reasoning. What I used to do that far, that is to take a core-concept, "witchcraft" at this instance, and analyse it, was absent from this proposal. The method changed. I was supposed to focus in a geographical region, looking for the religious expressions in that area etc. etc. It was a bland proposal overflowed with tasteless academic neutrality, without assumptions, without ideological orientation.

Stewart said that the proposal was weak without a clear direction but he approved it because I had to leave to Africa, that is he did me a favour. I totally agreed with his opinion! At that phase I was interested to finish this meaningless procedure and leave to Africa. Although I still believed that when I arrived there, I would do whatever I wanted, the idea of "religious pluralism" finally dominated. Wherever one goes, one needs a compass. The Intellectual endeavour to compose a writing after a lot of reading and thinking is not simple. It is not an easy thing to write down a plan and do differently in action. Without realizing it, religious pluralism became my compass. I hoped, of course, that all the material I had

gathered, all the reading I had done about witchcraft would be useful to me at a later stage, perhaps at the writing up of the thesis-stage. This never happened. Exactly as it had happened with my study on dreams, my assumptions on witchcraft never led to a testing through research and my work was in vain. This time, however, I would be at a real research field despite my curtailed assumptions. This did not mean that my struggle against the academic establishment had come to an end. In fact, it was just beginning.

The scholarship foundation delayed to put the scholarship-money in the bank, and as the upgrading proposal should be approved by them as well, in order to let me enter the second year of the PhD, I delayed to depart to Africa even further. I had not rent a place. I was moving from one friend to another as a guest. It was a hard and totally wasted time. A period of misery and anticipation for no reason. In the meantime, I received my vaccinations from British Airways, I bought my malaria pills and I waited. I ended up departing to Ghana on the 30th November 2003. It was noon when we flew from Heathrow to Accra, the capital of Ghana. The flight would last six hours.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE TRIP TO GHANA. LANDING ON REALITY, LOST IN TRANSLATION

We landed on Accra airport at 8 o'clock in the evening. It was full dark. In the airplane I was impressed by how people tried to cram their, obviously overloaded, hand-luggages (not that "hand-" anyway) into the cabin selves. Most of the passengers were Ghanaians, just two or three of us were whites. The trip was expensive, some £700 to £800 allez-retour. Most people could not afford to travel often. Migrants and visiting relatives made sure they could take with them as much stuff, presents and provisions, as they could carry. After we entered the terminal, I went to pick up my small suitcase. Everything I carried with me was just a small suitcase and my laptop. Anxious to pass the upgrading nonsense in order to fly to Africa, I had not even bought proper clothes. The only things I had taken with me from London was a tiny electronic photo-camera, some pills for diarrhoea, and a mosquito-repelling lotion. I had also taken my anti-malaria pills, ofcourse. The latter were very strong; I had to take one once a week, throughout my stay in Ghana. I picked up my tiny suitcase and went out. There

was no waiting room, we went directly outdoors and a cordon kept the waiting crowd away from the airport entrance. It was dark. I do not recall whether my hosts held a sign with my name or they shouted “Mr. Yannis, Mr. Yannis”, I think the latter, however, it was not difficult for me to be spotted. We were two or three whites in the flight. We had agreed with my friend Ronald that his relatives would wait for me at the airport, and they would host me for a few days. I was supposed to stay in Accra only for a few days before finding a contact from the Nzema area. After that, I would leave immediately to the fieldwork area. I am now recalling that period like a dream. Many years have passed by. However, the time distance is not the only reason. I was so confused after the three wasted, semi-homeless months in London and the entire adventure with the upgrading proposal, that my arrival to Africa was not as pompous as I imagined when starting the PhD. What I recall as my first impression is the darkness. Public lighting was poor if any all over the capital, all over Ghana. This impression became permanent after a while. Ronald’s relatives waited for me outside the airport: his mother Beatrice, one aunt of his, aunty Maggie (unfortunately both deceased by now), and the driver of the family, Daniel. I can’t recall whether anyone else was present. Perhaps a grand-son of aunty Maggie or someone else. Ronald had bought a taxi many years ago. Daniel was his driver, he drove the taxi during the day, but he used it as a family-car too, in occasions like that.

Many Ghanaians who had migrated to England and the US did the same thing. They bought cars or mini-buses and they used it as taxis or private transport buses within and across cities. Their families back home used those cars occasionally for their own transport. The normal family-structure in Ghana was the extended family. In a house might live together usually three generations of

the family: Grandfather and grandmother, one or two of their sons with their wives, grandchildren and probably some nephews and nieces, as well. There were also houses wherein nobody lived because their owners were in England or America. In those houses, guests of the family were occasionally hosted. The family had arranged to host me in one of those houses, as well. It was in the suburb of Haatso, not far from the airport. From the airport we went first at Mama-Beatrice's house for dinner. It was located at the same area. Outside the car it was totally dark, I could see nothing. At Beatrice's house I met her husband, two or three nieces and a couple of grandchildren. I was told that the house I would live in belonged to an aunt who lived in America. When the driver brought me to the house I met Alfred, a cousin, who was also hosted there.

A second thing, after darkness, that impressed me this first evening in Ghana, was the awfully maintained roads. I felt the bulbs and pits of the road every single yard of driving after we left the highway. The house I was about to stay was a typical middle-upper class house of Accra. The walls in front of the living room were perforated for ventilation. There were four small bedrooms, a veranda in front of a large living room, one bathroom and a kitchen. When I woke up in the morning, I realized how tall the external wall was. One felt like being in prison. I had arranged with Daniel, the driver, to come and pick me up so that I could visit the city-center. I had many things to do: First to buy clothes. The heat was high but bearable, around 35 degrees of Celcius, but I had only long trousers with me, suitable only for European weather. I should also exchange money, since I had only British pounds with me, to get a local sim-card to find some tobacco, apparently some provisions for the fridge, as well. There were also things to do in the long run, such as to open a bank account, to search for buying a

car and, the most important, to find a connection to the Nzema area. I owed the idea of buying a car to my second supervisor Barry Sharp. He had told me that it would be useful if I wished to visit many places. I was sceptical. I knew nothing about transport conditions. In my first morning, I woke up early. I could not wait for the driver and I went out for a walk. I immediately realized the bad conditions of the roads. They were dirty, obviously not maintained. Deep pits were formed by the rain. The houses in the neighbourhood were, more or less, similar to the one I stayed, all with high walls around. One could not see what lay behind. There were also some unfinished buildings, occupied by squatters, or by keepers hired by owners to keep squatters off. It seemed, therefore, to be a neighbourhood of relatively wealthy families. Most owners were absent. They were migrants in Europe and America.

I was impressed by the sunlight. It was different from Europe, somewhat duller. On the contrary, the ground and the tree-leaves were brighter and at the same time sweeter and softer. I liked the brown colour of the soil. I walked two blocks away from my host-house. I met something like a kiosk by the road, where I made my first acquaintances. It was Alex, a university student, 25, and Aba, a migrant from the provinces, 28. Alex was the owner of the kiosk and Aba worked there for some pocket-money. I asked for tobacco but they did not have. It was not a kiosk in the European sense. They sold petty things, biscuits, batteries and the like. We got to know each other with Alex and Aba and we became friends as long as I stayed in Accra. They asked me thousands of questions about Europe and I asked them everything they could tell me about Ghana. That day I walked up to the main road, about 1.5 kilometres away. At the main road, which was regularly asphalt-paved, there were a couple of stores, two restaurants and an internet-cafe. I became a regular customer for the next period. While

walking towards the main road, I observed houses similar to the one I lived there, unfinished buildings, open fields inbetween, and some “spots” as they called them, i.e. huts made by bamboo trunks and palm leaves, where they cooked and sold food and drinks. The area was sparsely populated, full of detached houses, only few of which were inhabited. Probably it was considered a “good” suburb by the locals, but my impression was that it was abandoned and in decline. In every second corner there was a church. Basically, in each case it was an unfinished building with a sign outside, which was the only indication that it was a church. They were all different, with different names: “Lord’s salvation”, “the Name of the Lord”, “International church of God the Savior”, “the Light of the Earth”, “Eternal-Life church” and the like. Later at noon, Daniel the driver came and we went to Mama-Beatrice’s for lunch. They cooked chicken with rice for me. They considered it as a European food. The next day we went downtown, I bought clothes and changed money. What, however, started to become disturbing, was that I could nowhere find any tobacco. I had some pouches with me from London but I wondered what should I do when my provisions finished.

Waking up in another continent triggers peculiar feelings. I had experienced this before, when I had travelled to Asia, but now it was different. I recalled the wave of heat and humidity when we had landed on Jakarta. Fortunately, humidity was not that high in Ghana. I recalled the weird white light in Dubai, the grey streets in Canton, China, a phantastic rice-soup for breakfast in Hong-Kong, the guy who wanted to sell weed to us in New Dehli, the huge bazaar at the edge of the slam-city of Jakarta, but all those memories came from a few days-long trips. We went to places, we met people and then we returned to our hotel, to our protected zone of the western way of living, western food, western sleep,

western tv. Now I was not just a guest or a few-days visitor. I had to organize my life for a long stay, that is 9 months before my return flight to London. Although I always boasted that I could easily adjust to any condition, and I regarded myself as a natural talent in ethnography, the next weeks in Accra developed in an almost tragic way. Africa proved itself a completely unique setting in comparison to my experiences in Europe and in Asia.

If I wished to categorise the fundamental preconditions of surviving in a foreign place, I would have discerned six basic categories: first accomodation, second food and everyday provisions, plus cooking-stuff (tobacco as well, for me at that time), third transportation, fourth communications, fifth relationships to the authorities and the institutions (state, banks, post-office, police, migration-office) and sixth relationships to the local people. Depending on where one travels to and for what purpose one category may be or become in the process more important than the others. Nevertheless, when one plans to stay abroad for long, the usual order of considerations is the one mentioned above. When I went to Accra, the problem of accomodation was supposed to be solved for the period I would stay there. However, my plan was to stay there as shorter as possible. My aim was to settle in the Nzema area, some 400 kilometres west of Accra. As to finding a connection to that area, as the days passed, my progress was slow if any at all. The family that hosted me had promised to find a connection through their Church. I met a pastor three or four days after my arrival and I explained to him what I wanted to do. He promised he would return with some connection to their branch in Axim, the capital city of the Nzema East district. I imagined I would travel there as soon as I got the address and phone number of the connection.



In the mean-time I had noticed that the family was somehow over-protective towards me. They considered I was an easy target for crooks and scams. It was true that from the first day I had noticed that almost everyone stared at me while I was walking in the street. I was something like a spectacle. Children ran after me shouting “good afternoon”, “good afternoon”, many asked for money, but in general terms I was not disturbed. I assumed that most whites stayed at hotels, isolated from the outside world, and moved around only with leased cars, so I was a remarkable spectacle indeed, since I walked alone on the streets. I cannot say that I sensed danger. Once a guy tried to trap me in a scam saying that he was a relative of a civil war victim from Sierra Leone and he needed some money to unblock his relative’s money from the bank. He failed. Nevertheless, mama Beatrice insisted that I should not walk around like that, nor make friendships with locals. It was hard for her to understand that making friendships with locals was the highest priority of my entire journey.

This sort of misunderstanding with the hosting family was not the most serious. The misunderstanding with the pastor, who was supposed to help me find a connection to Axim was much more important. After our first meeting, the arrangement was that he would come back with a name, an address and a phone number of a person from Axim, who would help me to settle there. This arrangement looked pretty simple, but unfortunately it never happened. The Church was the “Deeper Life Church”, a rather Christian fundamentalist church, with strict morals, originated in Nigeria. During my first Sunday in Accra I joined the family to the Sunday-service of this Church in an openair space with benches at the Haatso main junction. The service was pretty boring, since no drumms and no dance were allowed at this church. Luckily, the service was not long; it lasted only one and a half hours (in most

Churches that I describe below the Sunday service lasts for between three and four hours). It included some prayers, some hymns and a lot of preaching, half in English and half in Twi. The pastor had promised he would come back to me in a few days but the days became weeks and we, actually, never met again.

My “initial” stay in Accra became something like an imprisonment for a lot of reasons. Perhaps I would have avoided most of them, had I made that trip the previous “upgrading proposal” year. It was not only the pointless expectation of a response by the “Deeper Life” pastor (much “deeper” than my standards as it was proved). A series of meaningless movements around the city took place in a time span of the two first weeks in Accra. Most of them were spent driving to a bank in order to open an account. Some existent ATMs at the center did not accept my British debit card, they accepted only credit cards, and I tried to open a Ghana bank account so that Ronald could send me there my scholarship from London. After two weeks of incredible bureaucratic difficulties and recurring visits to the bank, I ended up without a bank account! Driving back and forth to the bank was a real nightmare, since traffic was huge and one spent two or three hours on the street just because of the traffic. I was finally forced to use a Greek credit card for as long as I was in Ghana. The scholarship would stay at the British bank and I would cover the expences when I returned to Europe. Of course, this was not the only disaster. After a couple of visits to the three or four busy, central outdoor-markets in Accra I realised that there was no tobacco for rolling ciggarettes in Ghana. Thus I messaged my friends in Europe and asked them to send me some pouches. This meant that I had to visit the post office, which was in the city-center, as well. And this meant another three-four hours stuck in the traffic.

Driving a car in Ghana meant incredible trouble. First, all cars were old and badly maintained, if maintained at all, and this resulted in heavy air-pollution. Second, the roads were in a really bad condition with pits and bulbs everywhere, except for some central avenues, which were in a relatively good shape. Even some parts of the national roads were so bad that one could not drive with more than 40 km per hour. Third, the unimaginable traffic in Accra. Especially in peak hours, that is mornings and afternoons, the traffic was so big that one usually stopped in the same place for half an hour before one moved again for some meters. It was in such conditions when dozens of peddlers moved around cars selling bottled water, snacks, batteries, flip-flops, cigarettes and the like. The fourth element of driving-adventure in Ghana, probably the most important of all, was the checkpoints of the police and the army. Although Ghana was a democracy for more than 15 years at my arrival, there were roadblocks and checkpoints almost everywhere by the police, and in some central junctions by the army as well. They supposed to check for driving-offences, however, they just wanted their “gift”, that is their baksheesh, their bribe. Soldiers usually did not take, but policemen took regularly, all the time. They charged you with an offence, real or imaginative (in most cases the latter) and then they said “give me some money, and I will let it pass”. The fifth element, not occurring every day, was the case when a car had a damage or a breakdown. Finding a repair-shop, spare-parts and the like was an odyssey. The sixth element that never occurred to me was to be stopped on the road and be robbed by armed gangs. I had heard of such incidents but they occurred in remote areas. Out of all these six nightmares, what affected me most, while in Accra, was traffic. One could spend the entire day, had one been entangled with it.

A basic component of surviving away from home, apart from ac-

comodation, communication and transportation, is food. In Greece, Germany and England, where I had lived, I used to cook at home to save money. Thus, a basic every-day task was cooking and buying stuff from the super market. Here in Ghana things were not that simple in that sector. There were no supermarkets apart from one or two near the airport and in the touristic zone at the seashore in the areas of Osu and Labadi, perhaps one more at the government's buldings in the city-center. Only those looked like the European super markets with fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen meat, milk and cheese. At the rest of Accra and all the other places I visited, the structure of shops, where one could buy food, was the following: There were grocery-shops like the ones that existed back in Europe during the 1950's and 1960's selling dry food like rice, buiscots, tincans, eggs and, if there was a fridge, chicken. There was no milk and cheese, apart from those petit-triangular cheeces for children that do not need to be freezed. There were also "spots" selling only one thing, most often frozen chicken. Essentialy, all food selling took place at the open markets, as well as, at the sides of the streets by food vendors. One would find fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and fish at the markets. There were all on benches. There were no fridges. At the markets all posible items, beside food, were sold. Batteries, shoes, clothes, pots, small animals, etc. etc. Every village, every town and every city-region had their own market place operating every day for food and small items and once a week for animals.

What impressed me most by markets was filthiness. Markets were usually situated by rivers or creeks, and all litter was thrown to the rivers, or the nearby gorges if rivers were not that close. I soon realised that food-preservation was a big problem, due to long power-breakdowns. There was a power black-out almost every day, lasting for four to six hours, sometimes even eight hours.

Thus only a shop or a store-house with a private power-generator could effectively preserve meat. This situation made the provision of food problematic. Against this condition the various “spots” sold cooked food, more or less, safer than meat or fish sold in the market. It was pretty cheap, as well. Ghana’s currency was the cedi (¢). When I was there one pound equated 17,000 cedis and one euro 12,000 ¢. A portion of cooked food at the spots costed 1,200 to 2,000 ¢, that is 15 cents or 10 pence. A portion of chicken with fried rice at a restaurant costed 80 cents or 60 pence. One can safely assume that it was much preferable to me to eat out. At the spots people ate with bare hands but there were soap and water for washing hands before and after the meal. Most common meals were soup made by palm-oil or coconut-oil (both pretty heavy for cholesterol), tomato and hot pepper souce, wherein goat or pork meat, or fish (or all those together) floated. The soup was escorted by a homogenized ball of starch boiled and smashed. One took a chunk of starch by one’s hand, dipped it into the soup and ate. The meals were named after the starches used and not by the soup. The most common was “fufu” made by cassava, after that was “banku” made by a mix between cassava and corn-flower, and then it was “kenke” made by ground and pounded corn. There were also yams and cocoyams another sort of starches, common in the south hemisphere, which were cooked fried and plantain a sort of banana also fried. The greens were few, most common of which was okra and a sort of spinach. Another common meal was beans with rice. I never saw green beans. All beans were dry. I never saw salads at spots. Only at restaurants was coleslaw served.

The fact that all cooking oils for the soup were pretty heavy and the rest of foods were all fried, along with the lack of vegetables, made my diet problematic, by any means, quite different than what I was used to eat back in Europe. I ate everything but I

cannot say I was happy. I tried to match my poor diet in vegetables with eating a lot of fruits. Fruits were sold not only in markets but also by street peddlers. Most common fruits were pineapples, bananas and coconuts. Some oranges and occasionally mangos and papayas were also available, but only during the time of harvest. Generally speaking, fruits and vegetables were pretty limited in comparison to my Mediterranean experience. Dairy products were absent. My assistant, Lawrence, later explained to me that dairy products are produced only in the North of the country by Muslim ethnic groups who live in the Savannah and are all herders. I suspected that power black-outs and transportation problems made the provisions of dairy products, to the ordinary shops in the South, difficult. Another problem was bread, which was thin like foam. Eating Ghanaian bread caused constipation to me and after a while I avoided consuming it. Although all these things were not that pleasant, I got used to them pretty soon. The problem that seemed to be unsolvable was to find a way to go to Nzema, the area of my fieldwork.

Three weeks after my arrival to Accra, I had no news from the pastor of the “Deeper Life” church. Inbetween the fruitless visits to the bank and the time-wasting trips to the markets, the post-office, the internet-cafe and the long power black-outs, I had attempted to start some lessons of the Twi language. My friend Aba had introduced me to somebody from her Church, called “the Rock of Life”, who claimed that he could teach me. We arranged to meet three times a week, but the guy proved to be quite incompetent. He had no method and we made no progress at all. I stopped after two weeks. I had reached a complete impasse. While Christmas were approaching, one day, mama Beatrice called me at her house, where she told me that the “Deeper Life” pastor had messaged her that I should not be concerned with witchcraft. He suggested

that I should change my topic, as well as, alter my fieldwork area! The news came as a thunderbolt, although I should expect it after such a long delay. I had lost three weeks. After that, I moved fast. The same day I met my friend Alex who studied at the university in Legon, the area of Accra where the campus lay. I asked him to try to find students who came from the Nzema area. Alex had news for me after three-four days. We visited the campus together just a couple of days before classes finish for Christmas-holidays. Alex introduced me to Johnnie Fayemi and Emmanuel Effatue, two students of sociology, who came from the Nzema area. They told me that if I went to their village to conduct my research, they could help me. I did not think it twice. It did not matter which specific village I would go to, save it would be at the Nzema area. We arranged to meet us up in the village during the Christmas-break. It was located around 350 kilometres to the west and it was called Teleku Bokazo. I told Johnnie and Emmanuel that I would need an assistant-interpreter and a place to stay for the next eight months at least. On January the 2nd 2004 we travelled with Daniel the driver to Teleku Bokazo. I had lost an entire month, but I was finally ready to start the research.

## CHAPTER 9

### TELEKU BOKAZO, MY VILLAGE FOR 13 MONTHS

While travelling towards Teleku Bokazo we passed by the entire west coast of Ghana. We encountered three or four colonial forts in our way. The road was awful for the first 50 kilometres, but after that it was normal, still with only one lane per direction. We passed by two big cities, Cape Coast, the old colonial capital city and Takoradi, the capital city of Western Region, and some smaller cities and towns, the last of which was Axim, the capital city of the district, which by then was called “Nzema East” but not it is called “Ellembelle District”, whereto Teleku Bokazo belonged. Along with those cities we encounter three or four police check points. In two cases they said they would fine us for imaginative offences, they received their “gift” and let us go.

The environment was mild with low vegetation with sparsely grown high trees around Cape Coast, whereas when we entered Western Region we saw successive dense plantations of palm trees, rubber trees and lastly coconut trees. Those plantations had replaced the old tropical forest that thrived in the area before, so





Image 2: The route Accra-Teleku Bokazo.

that farmers and merchants would make money by cultivating cash crops. We reached Teleku Bokazo at noon. It was a village in the interior but not far from the coast, five kilometres from the sea shore. From the coastal national road, which led to Ivory Coast, one reached a town called Esiam and then one turned on the right. After 4 kilometres there was a village called Nkroful, which, as I soon found out, was the birth place of the first president of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, and just after Nkroful behind some hills lay Teleku Bokazo. As we drove by a lot of small towns in the journey, I had observed many bazzars taking place in the market-places, usually by the main street. It was Friday and most weekly bazzars in Ghana took place either on Fridays or on Saturdays. The most striking feature of those bazzars was the filth they left behind filling the nearby rivers and streaks with tones of waste. I was expecting that the situation would be a bit different in a small village, and all this dirt I had encountered in the cities and towns would be absent. Fortunately, my expectations came true.



Image 3: Living with litter.

As soon as we arrived at the central “square” of Teleku Bokazo, we did not need to search for Johnnie and Emmanuel, they were waiting for us there. The centre of the village where the marketplace also lay, was relatively clean. The village spread around the centre and three roads cut it through. The first led south, to the coast and the national highway. This was the road we came from. The other two roads headed to the north, one north east to the goldmines and the city of Tarkwa and the other north west to the cocoa plantations. The entire landscape around the village was filled by coconut trees. It seemed to be a one-crop area. Coconut tree is similar to the palm tree, with the difference that it is higher and with a thinner trunk. Beside its fruit, coconuts, which people used to eat raw, or use them in pastry making, coconut was the main source for producing cooking oil. Basically, in Ghana people used two sorts of oil for cooking: palm oil and coconut oil. The former was pretty heavy but they still used it in soups and boiled food, coconut oil was lighter but still not that good for cholesterol. They used the latter mostly for fried food. It was then, an important crop. In books and articles I had read before coming to Ghana,

Nzema area was reported to be full of coconut plantations, 15 kilometres deep, across the entire coast. It was quite so. There was also a coconut-oil processing factory by the road between Esiamia and Nkroful.



Image 4: Coconut trees over Ankobra river, en route to Teleku Bokazo.

We met with Johnnie and Emmanuel in the market place and they introduced me to the person who, as they had suggested, would become my assistant. His name was Ehoma-Lawrence Agyarko. Ehoma was the local name and Lawrence the Christian one. It was common for Nzema people to have two names, one Christian and one indicating the local lineage. Lawrence told me he was 25 years old. Later on he revealed he was actually 23 but he added 2 years because he was affraid I would not hire him due to the young age. I did not care about age, of course. I trusted Johnnie and Emmanuel, who assured that Lawrence was capable to be my

assistant. All I needed was someone to translate from the local language. The language was the Nzema language, a variation of Twi. Twi was, as aforementioned, the language of Ashanti, the dominant ethnic group comprising approximately the 50% of the population covering the central area of Ghana. Relative ethnic groups to Ashanti were the Ga (living around the capital city of Accra), the Fanti (along the Atlantic coast), the Nzema and the Ahafo (in the West), who had their own languages, rooted in Twi, but different enough so that they were considered autonomous. The ethnic variety of Ghana was complemented by the Ewe in the East and various groups of Hausa in the North, the latter being Muslims. In total, there were 40 ethnic groups possessing their own dialect. The official language of the country is English and this is the main language taught at schools, in every region however, the local language is taught as well. Nevertheless, at the national television network the Twi language was dominant, at the time I was there. In the region of my fieldwork, people spoke the Nzema language and after that, English. We agreed with Lawrence that I would pay him with a salary of 350.000 ¢ per month (in 2004 rates), which was the equivalent of an elementary school teacher's salary, that is €30 or £20 by that time, plus his meals. This was good money for a young man like Lawrence at that time.

Johnnie suggested that we stay temporarily at a state owned-hostel at Nkroful. We slept there over the night but it was not cheap. I had noticed a hotel nearby called B&Q and I said to myself that I would stay there for a couple of days, when I came back to settle for good. Johnnie suggested that I should try to stay at the hostel for my entire fieldwork, however, when I went back two weeks later and visited the district office in Axim they asked too much money (perhaps due to my whiteness) and we abandoned the idea. After visiting the village and completing the arrangement with



Image 5: My assistant Lawrence on the left and Johnnie on the right (2004).

the assistant, I had nothing else to do in Teleku Bokazo. I told my friends that I would go back to Accra to pack my things, perhaps buy a car and return to start the fieldwork. The idea of buying a car had been given to me by my second supervisor Barry Sharp back in London, as mentioned before. He considered a car necessary in Ghana. He had conducted research in the Brong Ahafo area at the central-west part of the country, an area in the Savanna, with very few urban centers and hardly transportable. I was not that sure that in my case a car was necessary. Here in the South the roads were generally bad, but the coastal road was good, and despite the lack of public transportation, there was a pretty numerous network of private mini-buses (“tro-tro”), which connected towns and cities with a relatively low fare. There was a “station” for tro-tros in every town as well as, at least one taxi in every village connecting the residents to the “stations”. The ticket at the

mini-bus was 10 to 20 cents of the euro one way, whereas a tankful for the car costed 4 to 5 euros.

As I see it now, what had affected me by then, was not that I had noticed a problem with transportation in Teleku Bokazo and the surrounding areas, but that I had a traumatic experience during the long month I stayed in Accra depending on the driver Daniel to move around, or queuing for hours in order to take the tro-tro to get to the center, the university or the banks. Locals were impressed because a white man used the tro-tro and mixed with them; nevertheless it was an ordeal to wait for a tro-tro and get on one, only after four or five attempts at the peak-hours. I also had to travel to Accra every two months in order to renew my visa. For those reasons, I finally decided to buy a used car. I had already told a friend of Daniel the driver, who issued insurance and arranged driving lessons, to look for a relatively cheap car for me. Two days after I returned to Accra from Teleku Bokazo I received a notice from Daniel's friend that he had found a car for me, an old VW Golf. It took me several days for the papers, taxes, licence, insurance and the like. It cost me altogether €3,000 with all the gifts I had to give in order to finish all the procedures quickly, plus the commission I gave to the guy who found the car. As I had not managed to open a bank account in Ghana, I got the money through Western union by a friend in Greece with the promise to return it from the money of the scholarship when I returned back home.

Finally, I headed towards Teleku Bokazo on January the 15th 2004! I had "lost" exactly one month and a half during all those processes and difficulties of communication and adaptation to the Ghanaian reality. My stay in Accra was a nightmare. Nothing went as planned but perhaps this was a valuable part of fieldwork. It seemed that

bad lack followed me from the upgrading proposal-story on and on.

I hoped, however, that bad lack would stop following me as soon as I would settle in the village. I went with my own car, and Daniel the driver accompanied me. We spent the night at the hotel and the next morning Daniel took the tro-tro back to Accra. Afterwards, Johnnie, Lawrence and myself went to the district office in Axim to negotiate the rent for a room at the hostel for me. The price was too high. Finally, Johnnie suggested that I could stay at a prayer and healing center in the village: “The Lord of Calvary Prayer and Healing Centre”, founded by a Catholic teacher at Axim-High school, Mr. Antony Nyame. Johnnie took me there. I met with Mr. Nyame and I saw the place. It was located on the south-western edge of the village, some 100 meters from the main road, on a relatively quiet and isolated space. The center was actually four rooms in a row built by cement-blocks and plastered. In front of them there was a narrow veranda and beyond the veranda there was the ground yard covered by a large canopy made by Raffia tree-leaves. Raffia tree is similar to bamboo and most houses, canopies and churches in the village were covered by its leaves. An alternative was tin-roofs but this was expensive. On the left side of the yard there was the water well and a place for bathing. There was no running water in the village. Sugarcanes and banana-trees lay beyond the yard, and coconut plantations at the further side. We were at the edge of the village. The veranda was packed with benches piled up one over another. They used the benches at all-night services. As Lawrence told me, this took place once a month.

The place was ok. One room was empty; it was intended for me. It looked like a cell, but it was clean and decent. The bath was not a problem. To take a bath with water from the well, under that heat, was not a trouble. The only real problem was the toilet.

There were very few toilets in the village due to the lack of running water and sewerage. It was expensive to build a cesspit. A proper cesspit needed digging deep wells building cement walls around and the top, and placing a pipe for ventilation. Only rich families could afford building proper cesspools and then place a toilet on the top. Since the toilets were very few, neighbors could use them too. There was no chance of emptying the pools. When they were full, people just used to build new ones. Mr. Antony told me that there was such a toilet at a household nearby and he had arranged with the owner that I could use it. We talked about the rent, as well. In the beginning he told me that I could give whatever I wished but I insisted that we should set a fixed amount. We agreed in ₦100.000, that is € 9 or £ 6, much less than the €120 that the district Authority asked for the hostel in Nkroful. I decided to stay at Mr Antony's place. It was Friday afternoon and the next day there was the weekly bazaar in Takoradi, the capital city of Western Region. It was a much smaller city than Accra, with all shops and markets gathered in the center. It was also much cleaner. Takoradi was 90 km far from Teleku Bokazo. I would travel regularly to Takoradi for the entire period of my stay in Teleku Bokazo since there one could find the nearest internet-café, bank, western type restaurant, and (unfortunately, very soon necessary) car-repairing shop, as well.

The same day we bought with Lawrence a gas-cooker and a gas cylinder so that we could cook at home, a fan and some cooking vessels. We returned in the afternoon; we placed the cooking staff on the veranda and then I went to the hotel to pay for the room and pack my things. I settled to the room at Mr Antony's prayer center.



## CHAPTER 10

### FROM WITCHCRAFT TO RELIGION

After all those troubles I had before I reached my fieldwork site, the fact that I was finally there looked like a blessing. However, the difficult phase was just starting, as I had to plan my research, what exactly I should do and the steps I should take next. There was always this idea in my mind, to follow the line of my initial upgrading proposal back in London, the one which was rejected. This meant I had to be concerned majorly with witchcraft. The upgrading proposal that had been finally approved contained nothing useful for my fieldwork. There was no specific direction. I only wrote that I would contact representatives of all religious expressions in the area and then I would try to trace their connection to social differentiation. This was too general, too vague. Focusing is very important in social research. Focusing means to restrict the area of your research, since the wider it is the more difficult is to cover it. On the other hand, one's aims have to be related to real people's problems and interests instead of constructed on one's own head. As I see things now, my initial upgrading proposal was equipped with all those elements that make a well focused research.

My hypothesis was there, and it was quite clear: witchcraft-accusations emerge when a relatively “equal” social organization comes in contact with a relatively hierarchical social organization. This hypothesis was not something new; it was based on a chapter of a previous-generation anthropologist, Edwin Ardener, who had conducted research in the 1960s in a banana-production community in Cameroon. He maintained the same idea. Ardener did not merely conduct extended fieldwork research, but also looked at historical records and narratives from the past in a time-span of more than 70 years, almost the entire colonial period in Cameroon (Ardener 1970). He found out that in times when the community controlled production witchcraft accusations disappeared, whereas when the colonial administration enforced cash-crops and hierarchical distribution through agents and merchants, witchcraft accusations increased tremendously. My rejected proposal had been to a great extent based on this specific chapter.

However, with the rejection of my initial proposal my focus on inequality had been nearly forgotten. On the other hand, the somewhat traumatic experience of my first month in Accra made me instinctively struggle to understand the present than delving into the past. Additionally, a historical ethnography requires special preparation and design with serious study of archives combined with life histories targeting at selected issues in advance. My focus should be heading to people’s memories plus the study of various historical archives. However, it was pretty hard for me to launch such an attempt towards the past, since I had not a clear image of the present. Any research starts from the researcher’s personal interest, which then intertwines with two “realities”, the academic reality with the methods, theories and traditions and the reality of the “real world”. These (personal interest, academia, “real world”) are the three building blocks of any research. With regard to the

personal interest, my own interest revolved around phenomena like witchcraft, as representative of situations wherein people are threatened by forces beyond their grasp, will, or agency. Those situations bring in mind the Greek word for authority/power, “exousia”, which literally means essence (ousia) from the outside (exo). Within the largest portion of bibliography that far, the main motivation for witchcraft was held to be jealousy and grudge. There were, however, a lot of unclear and “dark” aspects in definitions and descriptions of witchcraft. Witchcraft in most cultures was held to be a property that could be inherited, just like a disease, with no knowledge or agency of the host. The witchcraft-agents, the witches, were held to acquire supernatural powers by getting transformed into animals, more frequently birds, which gathered at nights in secret meetings and ate the souls of their victims bit by bit. Those narratives were fascinating but it was quite debatable where exactly the line between social metaphor and popular fantasy lay. Scholars disagreed in almost every single aspect of the debate. I had the tendency to take people’s beliefs seriously but this tendency was not accepted within the academia. In a way, since I settled in Teleku Bokazo, I expected to find people who believe in such things and start talking about them seriously.

Unfortunately, as I maintain in this book, out of the three components of any research (recall: personal interest, reality, academia) the third one, that is the academic tradition and power relationships within the academia, is the most important factor, the one that determines in the last instance the direction of the research. It is even stronger than reality itself and even if reality does not correspond to the established theory, this is too bad for reality, not for theory! The worst thing in that condition is that the “tradition of the discipline” usually “kills” the innocent motivation of personal interest, a trait inherent in the educational system in the modern

world and industrial culture. Anyway, at the time I settled in the village of my research, I thought that I had gotten rid of the authority of the university and I was ready to deal with the other big challenge of the research: reality. Of course, I was wrong: the horror of the “correct methodology” and the “collection of the appropriate data” was always present, even if it was implicit. Nevertheless, I had to face “reality” anyhow. There were two major elements of “reality” with regard to my research interest, witchcraft, I had experienced that far in Ghana during the one and a half month of my presence there: First, it seemed that people did not concern themselves with the notion of “witchcraft” as such. This did not mean that they did not care about metaphysical agency in general. On the contrary, supernatural agency was present everywhere, in the preaching of all churches, in signs by the streets and in logos printed on cars and trucks. The difference was that, whereas anthropological records of the past referred to a variety of different spiritual afflictions, one of which might be witchcraft, now all those afflictions were put together under one and the same label: “traditional religion”. In a few words, no one talked specifically of witchcraft because everything traditional was witchcraft whatsoever. Traditional religion and witchcraft had come to be synonymous. This, in a way, explains the great hesitancy by the “Deeper Life Church” to help me when they found out that I wanted to do research for “witchcraft”. Witchcraft meant the diabolic pre-Christian traditional religion. Christian churches stood at the opposite side.

Christian churches was the second element I was not expecting to meet to this extent when coming to Ghana. I have already referred to it in previous chapters. It was the most striking characteristic along with the badly maintained roads and the “spots” of my neighbourhood in Accra. I was expecting that the phenomenon of

too many churches would not follow me in the village. I considered it as a majorly urban phenomenon with reasonable explanation. I thought it was due to the strong waves of urbanization, when young people from the countryside sought for a sense of belonging in the city-churches. My thoughts were proven wrong. Along my trip from Accra to the village I met dozens of churches by the road, most of them made by makeshift canopies, others by mud and few by cement blocks. Immediately after my second arrival to the village I asked my assistant Lawrence about the number of churches in the village. He informed me that there were twelve different churches, each one following a different Christian denomination! This appeared strange and hyperbolic to me. When I asked how many people lived in the village, Lawrence and Johnnie replied about 1500. Although later I discovered that the number of village-people was a bit higher, the number of Churches in relation to the village-residents was still extremely high. The fact of the existence of so many churches along with the lumping of all traditional religious traits in the label of “witchcraft”, were the two aspects of surrounding reality I could by no means ignore. Very soon I realized that I could not insist on examining “witchcraft” as a separate phenomenon, since nobody around looked at it as such. I had, therefore, to see it in the wider framework of “religion” as a part of a “belief system”. Even within this framework, however, my interest was much greater into traditional religion than in Christianity, as I thought I already knew Christianity from my own culture. I was, then, glad when Lawrence told me that there were still five traditional priestesses in the village. Lawrence called them fetish-priestesses, a label that was obviously imposed by Christian missionaries. As I saw it at that time, what I was looking for was probably there, with the “fetish priestesses” of traditional religion, since they appreciated dreams, visions and spiritual activities as a source of knowledge, much more than Christians did.

Let us not forget that the appreciation of spiritual phenomena as a source of knowledge was my initial hypothesis and motivation even before I get involved with anthropology. I believed that this was the opportunity to test my hypothesis.

The term “fetish priest” was held as disparaging by western researchers, since it was imposed by Christian missionaries. In ethnographic and other texts the term “local healers” was preferred but this was too narrow as it restricted the priests’ activities to healing. Local people were indifferent to academic debates, they preferred the “fetish priest” term and I followed them. There was also another term in use, “witch-doctor” but it was not as frequent as the “fetish priest”. Apart from the five women, “fetish priestesses” there was a man who cured with herbs, “herbs-man”, but he was not a priest (we will see the distinction below). I decided to start the interviews with the fetish priestesses. According to my fieldnotes I took my first interview on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, a few days after my settling in the village, from the fetish priestess Agnes Enutsi Akesi (image 6). We went with Lawrence at her houseyard, it was late afternoon and the entire interview was taken in the Nzema language with Lawrence translating into English. Agnes Akesi spoke English fluently but she decided to speak in Nzema, either due to insecurity or because she wanted to test Lawrence’s translation. With this interview with Agnes I started taking photos and I soon taught Lawrence how to do it, as well. It was not accidental that before that I did not take photos. I have not taken a single photo from my first period in Accra. I was overtaken by such an anxiety and stress to finally get to my research place that I could not take any photo.

Agnes, who was 50 years old, recounted to me all the basic information about how she became a fetish-priestess and how she

worked. She was 15 years old when she got sick and a local god came to her sleep, the god “Kondu Baka” (Kondu=Banana, Baka=tree, that is the Banana-tree, which did not mean the tree as such but the god who lived within it). Agnes claimed that Kondu-Baka was the most powerful local god. The god told her in her dream that, if she wanted to survive the sickness, she should serve him for the rest of her life. Agnes recovered, went on with her life, studied at college and became a teacher. She also got married and had a family. When she was 40, she got sick again. Then Kondu-Baka came again in her dream and told her: “Now it is the time for you to quit everything you do and become my priestess. Otherwise you will die”.



Image 6: Agnes Aketsi.

Agnes obeyed the god and became his priestess. This pattern of how one would become a god’s priest or priestess was very common. I came across it many times in many interviews, not only

with traditional priestesses but also with Christian prophets who saw God in their dreams. I will open here a parenthesis in order to briefly describe the hierarchy of local gods and spirits as it was explained to me by Agnes, as well as, by the other traditional priestesses and the herbsman to whom I spoke at a later stage. According to local religion, the world was created by a higher god, who, however, after creating the world withdrew to heaven and did not get involved with human affairs ever again. Immediately below the higher god were the lesser gods. Lesser gods were usually stones, trees, creeks, rivers or winds. In fact, they were spiritual beings who lived within all those natural elements. Lesser gods had or had not a gender, they were local or came from afar, or in some cases they operated everywhere in Ghana or even West Africa. Such a translocal goddess was the famous “mother of the sea”, who was known in many west African countries. Underneath the lesser gods were the bush-spirits and the spirits of ancestors. After that, at the lower rank, there were the dwarfs (creatures that one can come across at many European popular traditions, with different names). A separate category were the witches. I just mention these categories and ranks here. Later on, I will explain them in detail, following the descriptions of local people.

Agnes told me that each one traditional priestess had a protector-god, in the same manner she had the Kodu-Baka, however, a priestess could talk to other gods and goddesses, as well. She, for example, talked often with the “mother of the sea”. The most important task of a priestess, apart from running a three days fest to honour the protective god once a year (I attended Agnes’s fest a couple of months later), was the diagnosis and healing of people’s sicknesses. According to traditional religion all sicknesses, except for few that westerners called “natural” and had discovered medicine to cure them, like diarrhoea and malaria, were spiritual. Being



spiritual meant that the sickness, no matter the symptoms, had been caused either by a violation of a strict rule imposed by the gods or the ancestors, or by a curse of a feud, or by an attack by a witch. All these spiritual causes could be very serious and fatal. All priestesses had rich experience in treating sicknesses, since dozens of patients visited them each month. Although they gained great experience with time on what herb and what method to apply on each case, they never proceeded to a therapy without the guidance of the protector-god or goddess, or another god-godess, who was involved in the sickness.

The procedure was to pour libations from an alcoholic drink, calling the god-godess to come, then to enter a small room, which was the private room of the priestess. In this room they burned some local herbs capable of causing hallucinations, and they usually entered a condition of trance. In this condition, the god-godess is supposed to contact and beyond this point the god-godess possesses the priestess and speaks through her. While discussing, I asked Agnes whether I could enter her private room, where the possession of gods took place. She refused. No one except for the priestess got in there. When the god-godess spoke through the priestess, there was always an interpreter nearby, an assistant fully trusted by the priestess. This was necessary because in most cases the priestess spoke an unintelligible language, or even a foreign one coming from remote tribes (Hausa from the north or Ewe from the east). The position of the assistant was thus crucial. Assistants were usually husbands or sons of the priestesses. Agnes's assistant was her husband. When the priestesses came out of the trance condition she did not remember a thing out of what she had told before. Sometimes, Agnes told me, the god-godess possessed the priestess even without libation or without a call, in cases that the god-godess had something important to tell.

Within the rite of trance, the god-goddess revealed the cause of sickness and suggested the path of redressing. Sometimes one session was not enough and the priestesses had to call the god many times in order to uncover the cause of sickness. The most common causes of sicknesses were: 1. When somebody had forgotten to fulfill an obligation to the ancestors (the appropriate funeral, a sacrifice in their memory, a thanksgiving sacrifice in case of inheritance, a failure to payout a spiritual or material debt inherited by ancestors). The spirits of the ancestors return and punish with sickness. 2. When somebody had not fulfilled an obligation to gods (libations and sacrifices for the harvest, on inheritance, on transactions of animals and property, on ceremonies, births, sicknesses, marriages and family events in general etc. etc.) 3. When somebody insulted the gods by throwing away fruits and nuts instead of consuming them, by defecating in the woods, or by having sex in the woods, or by going to the woods in a woman's period, or by polluting the elements the god-goddess was living in. 4. When somebody fell a victim of a curse by a jealous relative, neighbour, colleague or a love-competitor. This (the curse) was the most common cause of sickness and it occurred in two ways. First, it happened when someone uttered a curse against someone else in a place near the god's habitat. The god heard the curse and executed it. This was the "intangible" way. The second way was when someone went to a fetish priest on purpose, asked the priest to construct a magical object, called "juju" made by parts of a lizard or a spider, hair and bat-bones connected with nails and needles, and cursed the opponent with libations to the gods. After that the person who started the curse placed the juju somewhere near his/her victim, usually under the victim's front door, bed or place of work. The latter is also known as sorcery.

I did not learn all those details by Agnes alone, but I gathered them from all the interviews with traditional healers, and discussions with my assistant and other friends in the village, later on. Agnes told me that she did not make juju nor did she execute curses for sickness and death. This was a very sensitive issue, and I will come back to it below. 5. The fifth group of causes was when someone fell victim of witchcraft. Since my interest in witchcraft was too vivid already, and I was still thinking at that time to direct my research specifically to it, I asked Agnes many questions on this issue. She told me that there are two kinds of witchcraft. The first is hereditary witchcraft and it is incurable. The second kind is transmitted through food, objects and clothing and it is curable. She told me that witches are human beings, who, however, have acquired some properties of spirits and gods, and they are capable of harming or killing people, usually driven by envy or desire. Nevertheless, lesser gods are more powerful than witches and they can make them set their victim free and run away. 6. The sixth group of causes of sickness is possession by a spirit or a dwarf. These creatures live in the bush and they are at the bottom of the spiritual hierarchy. They are not capable of killing. They usually inflict a bad habit in the victim, such as alcoholism or adultery. They possess their victim and the victim will be led to self destruction if the spirits won't be thrown out. There are also some good spirits, those who are connected with talents in music or in handcrafting, and some bilateral, capable for both good and evil. In general terms, lesser gods can easily deal with spirits and they usually chase them away from the first session.

This amazing hierarchy of spiritual causes of almost all sicknesses was complemented with details in every single interview I took from the other traditional priestesses in the village in the next period. I met successively Mame Ama Bletzane, 85 (Image 7),

who told me that she was a “fetish priestess” for the last 50 years, Agnes Ehuma, 40, (Image 8), who was possessed by a spirit and not a god, Lisbet Kufiaka Ebuaso, who told me that she was 100 years old (Image 9), and Euzowa, 39, the youngest (Image 10), who practiced the vocation for just 3 years. Those meetings took place infrequently, since I had started visiting the Christian churches as well. I started going to the services and then to their leaders’ houses for interviews. Thus, the last interview with a traditional priestess took place in June, a short period before I travel back to Europe. I had arranged my return ticket to London for the end of July. From London I would travel back to Greece for a break plus to attend the Olympic games which took place in Athens that year. In autumn 2004 I had planned to return to Ghana in order to complete my research. All meetings with the “fetish priestesses” were extraordinary, pretty rich in information and illuminating with regard to understanding local religion. In all narrations on the part of priestesses were many common points, and only some personal interpretations were different. A very crucial common point was the relationship to Christianity. Mame Ama Bletzane gave me a very interesting interpretation. She told me that lesser gods were once upon a time servants of the Christian God, but they ate the forbidden fruit and God expelled them from Paradise. All priestesses accepted the existence of the Christian God along with the lesser gods whom they regarded as His creations. It is obvious that they regarded the Christian God as the God-creator of the traditional religion. All traditional priestesses were members of a Christian Church, as well! Enutsi-Akesi, Bletzane και Ehuma, were Catholics, Euzowa was a member of the Sacred Action Church (I will talk about the Churches below) and only the oldest, Lisbet Kufiaka Eboaso, declared herself non-Christian following the traditional religion alone.



Image 7: Mame Ama Bletzane.

Lisbet used to tell me that among all Christian Churches she appreciated only the 12 Apostles Church (see below) because this was the only Church that used holy water to diagnose and cure sicknesses. The way they diagnosed sicknesses differed from priestess to priestess. Enutsi-Akesi burned herbs, Bletzane threw kaolin-powder to the air and from the schemata of the powder she “saw” the causes of sicknesses (there was a small kaolin quarry outside the village - Kaolin is a soft white mineral like a white clay having many applications in chemical industry). Euzowa *ka* Ehuma threw shells and stones to the ground (something like dices) while Lisbet mainly used water in a bucket. All entered a trance-condition and all had an interpreter to translate their unintelligible words. During therapies they also used similar techniques with some individual differentiations, as well. Depending on the sickness, the ancestor, the witch or the spirit involved, one followed

the relevant treatment. The herbs of the bush, known by experience or indicated by the god during the trance, played a major role in the treatment. Herbs were drunk by the patients or the patients took a bath with water mixed with the herbs. Other means of therapy were sacrifices to gods or ancestors. They sacrificed fowls or goats or even cows (the latter in very extreme cases). Patients also bought alcoholic spirits for libations. Finally, a means of therapy was also money. Money was supposed to be used for maintenance of gods' and ancestors' shrines, as well as for financing rituals and in the end paying off the priestesses. The god during the trance decided about the exact amounts of money for each purpose.

With this treasure of information, my thoughts on witchcraft faded out. Within the spiritual hierarchy with regard to the causes of sickness and misfortune among the Nzema witchcraft occupied only a small space. Lesser gods, curses, ancestors and bad spirits played a much more important role. On the other hand, Christian leaders, with whom I had started to discuss, regarded the traditional religion as a whole as demonic, putting their emphasis on lesser gods and their servants, that is priests and priestesses and not that particularly on witches. Therefore, there was no meaning to insist on witchcraft. It was only after a month on the field, when I decided to focus in traditional religion in general and especially the hot issue of the relationships between traditional religion and Christianity, which was an issue that concerned local people, as well.



Image 8: Ehuma.



Image 9: Lisbet Kufiaka Eboaso.



Image 10: Euzowa.



## CHAPTER 11

### THE 12 CHURCHES OF TELEKU BOKAZO PLUS A SHORT HISTORY OF GHANA

It is pretty hard to understand Ghanain Christianity without knowledge of many different fields of study such as history, politics, economy, geography, colonial and religious studies. Above all, history. I had no previous engagement of any kind with Christianity. I was ignorant of African Christianity in particular, since my intention was to study witchcraft. However, from my first interviews with fetish-priestesses I realized that they found themselves in a constant dialogue with Christians from a defence-position. Although their art was based on the traditional religion (respect towards natural order, social arrangements, ancestors etc.) plus their local knowledge (herbs and therapeutic plants of the bush), the priestesses were obliged to stress in any occasion that they do not exercise black magic nor they use the power of lesser gods in order to harm people. On the other hand, the number of Christian Churches in the village was too big and this needed to be somehow explained. I was culturally accustomed to a single Christian denomination, the Greek orthodox church, which was something

like an ethnic trait and the scene with too many different Churches of the same religious tradition was a riddle to me. But even for the protestant, plural standards the number of 12 Churches in the village was still big. Thus, from my second week in the village I started to investigate the Christian Churches. The first step was to record the Churches that operated in the village. The second was to arrange interviews with representatives of each one of them.

The next move was to visit the Sunday services of the Churches, each one at a time, every Sunday. In some Churches with special services (like exorcisms and the like) the visits took place also during the week-days. Considering the number of the Churches it would take me three months at least to visit the Sunday services of all Churches. Participation in the services and interviews took place within the same, more or less, period of time, however, in most cases the interview came first. In table 1 we can see the Churches in Teleku Bokazo at the time of my fieldwork. The numbers in the table have been informed by a survey we conducted later on with Lawrence, Johnnie and Emmanuel, about which I will talk below. The number of each Church's members recorded in the survey coincide with the information I gathered by the Churches' representatives during the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and contained more or less the same questions in each case: What was the particular set of beliefs and practices of the Church, what was the difference to the other Churches, when was it founded, when did it come to Ghana (if it came from abroad), when did it come to the village. After that I asked about the rites and services, the Church-hierarchy and structure, the rules of the Church and the way they converted followers. Finally, I asked about their stance towards traditional religion, and traditional priestesses in particular, since I had understood that this was a hot issue among all Churches.

Church/Faith	Members	%	Origin	Arrival in Village
Roman Catholic	265	25.4%	Europe/SMA	around 1925
12 Apostles Church	80	7.7%	Local /Western R.	1945
Methodist	94	9.0%	Europe/UK	around 1970; renewal 1991
Church of Pentecost	100	9.6%	Cape Coast	1979
Sacred Action Church	89	8.5%	Local /Western R.	1983
Christ Apostolic Church	64	6.1%	Eastern Region	1991
Assemblies of God	52	5.0%	USA	1992
Church of Christ	35	3.4%	USA	1994
New Apostolic Church	21	2.0%	Germany	1995
Seventh Day Adventist	43	4.1%	USA	1996
Deeper Life Church	9	0.9%	Nigeria	1996
Other Christian churches not represented in the village (Anglican, Baptist, Jehovah Witnesses etc.) and Musama Disco Cristo Church previously in the village but now disbanded	24	2.3%		
Traditional	15	1.4%		
Muslims	51	4.9%		
No church	101	9.7%		
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,043	100%		
St George of Calvary Healing and Deliverance Prayer Centre	approx. 150-200 regular attendees			1997

Table 1: Religious affiliation in Teleku Bokazo according to survey conducted in April-May 2004.

I soon realized that the central issue that concerned the Churches was their stance against traditional religion. The time of arrival of each Church to Ghana, if it came from abroad, or the time of its emergence and foundation if it came from a local prophetic movement (see below) was crucial, since the growth of each Church or Christian movement related to wider political, economic and social developments in the area.

The need to study the history of religion in Ghana became evident from the first two months of my fieldwork. However, as I was not prepared to study Christianity and its historical course in Africa, considering also my inability to have access to libraries, the internet and bookshops from Teleku Bokazo, wherein I lived, this necessary study was conducted later, at the time I was back in London. I will now describe in brief the outcome of this study, so that the reader can follow the developments of the Christian scene both in the village of my fieldwork and in Ghana in general. Socio-economic and political developments are strictly interconnected with religious movements in Ghana as we will see.

Ghana did not exist as a political entity before the time it gained its independence from the British domination in 1957. The name "Ghana" belonged to a kingdom that thrived during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD in an area between the nowadays Ghana and Burkina Faso. Before independence the nowadays Ghana was called "Gold Coast". This was the name of the British colony. The recorded history of the area goes back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD when commerce between locals and Arabs is recorded. Arabs exchanged salt for gold with locals. There are two major ecological zones in the area, the tropical zone, which is very humid, it spreads along the coast and it was covered by tropical forest in the past, and the savana zone, which covers the interior to the north, it is dry and covered

by low vegetation. The most gold-reserves have been in the north part of the tropical zone towards the west of the country, that is near the area of my fieldwork. Reserves of gold in a way followed the flow of the rivers and during the old times the reserves were even further north. In this area, that is in central Ghana, kingdoms had emerged in the past. Kingdoms were centralized structures of power revolved around a royal lineage, based on the exploitation of the goldmines, on raids against the neighbouring ethnic groups, and on trade with Arabs. The most powerful kingdom from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century was the kingdom of Ashanti. Around Ashanti there were some smaller kingdoms founded by the ethnic groups of Fanti, Ahafo, Ga and Ewe, who payed tribute to the Ashanti, while at the outskirts of the kingdoms and beyond lived more or less egalitarian groups of hunters and gatherers in the South and herders in the North. The North had also a dominant ethnic group, the Hausa, who were nomads and spread all over West Africa. They had accepted Islam long before colonialism. Northern groups did not play such a significant role in the history of Ghana, since Europeans approached the area from the Southern coast.

Europeans started to land to the coast of the entire Guinea Gulf that washes the whole of West Africa from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. First came the Portuguese and the Dutch, the French, the Danes and the British followed. The tendency of the Europeans from the 16<sup>th</sup> up to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was to build castles along the coast (most of them stand there intact up to date) and establish military and trade stations within the castles. The most precious goods they traded were gold and slaves. Slave-labour was common in the wider area before the arrival of Europeans. The strong kngdoms raided the peripheral ethnic groups or launched wars against each-other in order to save labour force for the gold mines or domestic workers. The status of slaves in pre-colonial Africa, however, was

not as inferior as we know it from the American case. After one or two generations, slaves were either incorporated to a host-lineage or left free to go back home. Europeans did not launch raids for slaves themselves, at least during the first phase of contacts (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries). They made deals with local chiefs and kings along the coast, who in reality provided the slaves. As said, buying and selling slaves was not considered something too bad or inhumane since the status of a slave was not fixed forever as it became in the American plantations from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Possession of slaves in West Africa did not signify economic power as it did in pre-industrial America. It rather signified political prestige and power instead of wealth and “means of production”. In Ghana the trade with Europeans benefited most the coastal ethnic groups of Fanti and Ga. Nevertheless, there were castles all along the coast and not only on the Fanti and the Ga-lands. There was also a castle in Axim the capital city of the Nzema-East district where Teleku Bokazo was located. It was built by the Portuguese during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Social and political organization among the Nzeama were very loose. There were seven clans spread all over the area with no king or royal lineage. They were usually victims of raids. Sometimes, alliance with Europeans for some groups meant military protection against raids launched by the kingdoms of the interior. Other times alliances broke down and there were occasions when white population of the castles were slaughtered by neighbours, former allies. However the most common warfare around the castles was the competition among Europeans themselves, and this is the reason why all castles changed occupants during the centuries according to the military strength of the European powers.

This was very roughly the situation up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century things started to change due to conditions occurring very-very far from West Africa.

Slave trade was abolished and it became illegal in 1804. This was a big blow against the Dutch and the Portuguese who dominated the slave trade. On the other hand, the industrial revolution in England rendered Britain the strongest global power, which started to dominate in all serious trade-stations around the globe. Thus, England started to dominate on the coast of Ghana, as well, and the castles one after the other passed to British occupation. Only two castles in the East remained to Danish and German occupation and two others in the West remained with the Dutch. All the rest passed to the British. What was crucial for the development of colonialism was the process of transforming the former coastal trade-stations in Asia and Africa into protectorates and colonies. This happened because, with the development of capitalism, individual traders were replaced by companies, after the prototype of East India Company, established already from 1600, and companies were interested in the direct exploitation of the overseas raw materials for maximizing their profit. Thus military forces and administration was used by the emerging industrial powers to build protectorates all over the globe. This was the process that we now call colonialism, the process through which, from the castle and the trade station industrial nations went on to the occupation of land and the political and military domination over the local people. This extension led the European industrial powers to control not only trade but also the entire production in the colonies. In Ghana the British protectorate was established in 1844 on the land of the Fanti and the Ga and it was called "Gold Coast" up to the independence in 1957. Although it was restricted on a coastal zone in the beginning, in due course it expanded with annexations and conqerences. Key dates were 1896, when the land of Ashanti was conquered following a long struggle and a bloody war, and 1901, when the northern territories were annexed and thus the nowadays borders of Ghana were shaped. It is obvious that the borders did

not correspond to any ethnic coherence, they were only shaped according to the competition of colonial powers. People with no relation to each other, or even hostile to each other found themselves under the same administration and homogenous ethnic groups were divided in different administrations in both sides of borders.

The first and big change caused by colonialism proper (which lasted for about a century) in the area, and in Africa as a whole was the violent “nationalization”, that is the creation of “states”-administrative units with no pre-existent ethnic, linguistic, political or social unity. The outcome of such a process for Ghana in particular was the co-existence of 40 (!) different ethnic groups with 40 different languages! Having said that, one has to consider that Ghana is held as one of the most homogenous countries in Africa because Ashanti, Ga, Fanti, Ahafo and Nzema have similar languages and belong to an alleged common origin, the family of “Akan” groups. Anyway, the wide ethnic disparity of the populations in the colonies was treated in two different ways by the British and the French colonists respectively (the Germans lost the first world-war and with it lost their colonies in Africa, as well).

The French built a hierarchical beauraucratic and military structure, exerting total control upon it, themselves. Contrary to that, the British tried to exploit the local pre-existent structures (as said above, in many parts of Africa there were more centralized and less centralized ethnic groups). Thus, they established the so-called indirect rule exploiting the pre-existent relationships between local kingdoms and tributal peripheral groups. The most interesting point here is that the British “created” such relationship from scratch even there, where they did not exist before, either by fa-



vouring one ethnic group against the others, or by creating hierarchical structures (kings, council of chiefs and the like) in former egalitarian groups. They ruled through these local “partners” and in that way they saved precious administrative and military personnel and at the same time they created the impression of local partnership and consent. The British did that in the entire Africa, not only in Ghana.

As said above, there was a difference between the centralized ethnic groups and the less centralized or egalitarian, before the colonists took over power, however the difference could be seen only in the top of the hierarchy, there, where king and royal families ruled by gathering tributes and labour-force. At the lower ranks of the hierarchy, most ethnic groups organized their social life in similar ways. The structural units of ethnic groups were the extended family, the lineage and the clan. The extended family usually comprised a male leader with his wives one or two married sons with the wives, unmarried children and grand children and probably some other relatives (divorced brothers, sisters, inlaws, guests and the like). This unit, with the exception of polygamy was very well known in pre-industrial rural Europe. Extended families usually lived in village households and exploited pieces of land and livestock all together, in a more or less self-sufficient economy. The lineage comprised a group of extended families with common origin, and a clan comprised a group of lineages with common origin (often alleged or mythical). Clans usually had its own symbols, after which they took their names, usually wild animals. Lineages and clans had their own leaders and the respective council of leaders (the assembly of family-leaders is the lineage council and the assembly of the heads of the lineages is the clan council). Lineages and clans were not strictly locally oriented. Members of different lineages and clans could live in

the same village, and members of the same lineage or clan could spread all over an ethnic land. Nevertheless, some local orientation occurred, since it was rare to meet members of more than two clans in one village. A basic characteristic of all this organization was that there was not private property of land. The land belonged to the lineage. Either the head or the council of the lineage allocated the land to each extended family. In case of possible disputes that the lineage could not resolve the cases were examined by the head or the council of the clan.

The most common mode of cultivation was the fallowing system, that is to burn a piece of the tropical forest and plant there kasawa or yam or cocoyam, or in less dense forest tomatoes, egg-plants, beans and rice near the rivers. The farm would not withstand re-forestation for more than two-three seasons. After the forest took over the burned piece again, the farmers would burn another part and another and so on. After a period of time the farmers would return to the first fallowed piece of forest. Before colonialism there was no crop destined to long distance commerce, therefore, the exploitation of the land was limited. Palm trees were indigenous in the area, they grew near the rivers and at the outskirts of dense forest, and locals used their fruits to make their oil. Coconut trees were imported by the Portuguese from Southeast Asia during the 16th century. Lineage and clan councils did not allocate only the land for farming but also the territories for hunting and fishing. It is obvious that the power did not lay with land-ownership but with social hierarchy, since the lineage and clan councils decided over land distribution but also on matters of heritage, divorce and all matters of civil justice in general. The members of councils were the oldest heads of families, the so-called elders. It is easy to understand how this system in areas rich in minerals facilitated the formation of kingdoms, when the cyclical office of the head

of the clan became permanent for one clan and one lineage, which became the “royal lineage” either through a heroic deed, or simply through usurpation.

Religion played a major role in this hierarchy. Every clan and every lineage had their god/goddess protector, and every extended family had an altar at their household to make sacrifices to them, along with the family’s ancestors. In council-meetings they first poured libations to gods, while for each decision consultation by fetish-priests, representatives of gods/goddesses was necessary. In groups with kings a royal priest was standing by the king, with significant power and prestige. Although leadership of lineage and clan was hereditary, there was flexibility on this issue, and succession depended majorly on the signs given by gods/goddesses, transmitted through priests. Thus, religion played a role of confirming but also controlling the hierarchy of power. All this organization, along with the role gods, ancestors, spirits and priests played in every day life for good or bad luck, illness and fertility (of humans, farms and livestock) made religion an indispensable part of life both communal and personal. This was (very roughly) the reality Europeans met in Ghana, in the beginning as commercial partners, later as raiders and thieves and finally as colonizers and conquerors. Along with European traders came the Christian missionaries. The first missions in Ghana came at the south and southwest coast during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by Anglicans and French Catholics with no essential gains. The only gain this first wave of Christianization left in Ghana was some douzins of Christianized Fantis, who lived in the British-occupied castle of Cape Coast from 1750 onwards. Missions were sparse and infrequent; missionaries were usually monks of various orders or priests. Their fate was to be mocked in the best case or to be slaughtered by locals in the worst.

This condition went on even during the first phase of colonization, that is between 1844 and 1900, with some increased, but by no means impressive numbers of converts. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of the Christian missions in Africa. Many factors combined to bring this result. Thousands of Christian monks, priests and lay-missionaries of all Christian strands and dogmas from Europe and the US poured into Africa and Asia. This was the second big wave of missions after the first one in Latin America during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The factors that contributed to the phenomenon were colonialism and the theory of evolutionism according to which Africans found themselves in a “previous” phase of human evolution, the “savage” phase, and they needed to be civilized and Christianized. Another very important factor that led to the massive missionary movement from the Northwest to the South of the globe was the ever-growing secularization in the industrial countries. Christians from the capitalist nations sought to find evidence of their faith in the conversion of the “savages” as they were gradually losing their clientele in their own countries. In Ghana the most seriously organized missions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the ones of the Methodists, who came from the Ivory Coast in 1835, the Presbyterians of the Basel mission who arrived at Accra (then occupied by the Danes) in 1828, and the Evangelists of Bremen, who reached the Ewe-land on the East in 1847. The colonial occupation by the British facilitated the stabilization of the Christian presence, however, the agenda of the colonizers was pretty different than that of the missionaries.

The British were interested majorly in the gold of the interior, they did not really care about “civilizing” the locals. What they really needed was a restricted group of indigenous partners, trained to speak English and exercise trade. Missionaries, however, knew

well from many previous failed endeavours that they would have no success in conversion unless they performed along with preaching some sort of practical cultural change, some sort of attractive model of social organization. They then took advantage of the traditional hierarchical social organization, in order to attract the less privileged groups (the youth, women, the outcasts, former slaves and the like). With great hardships, illnesses, deaths (most first missionaries were reaped by yellow fever and malaria) replacements, drawbacks and heroic expeditions, which made missions a thyrlic story back in Europe, missionaries directed all their attempts towards the creation of local autonomous communities, after the tradition of New Testament, the Latin American first missions and the various Protestant sects in Europe and the US. The basic tool for creating Christian communities was for the Basel mission training in farming, while for the Methodists it was basic education in language and maths. This time there was a limited success. Perhaps, the demand for labour force in ports and transportation, as well as, an educated administration staff by the colonial government, led a number of locals to wage labour and played the most important role in Christian conversion. Nevertheless, and despite the favourable conditions the conversion progress during the first 50 years of missionary activity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was limited. In table 2 we can see the number of Christian converts in Ghana in 1885.

**1885 (Bartels 1965:119)**

Anglicans	800
Methodists	6, 855
Basel mission	6, 800
Bremen missions	717

Table 2. Numbers of Christianis in Ghana in 1885, after 50 years of missionary activity.

The turning point of the Christian presence in Ghana was the introduction of cash crops. Cash crops were introduced by missionaries and not by the colonialists. The Basel mission was experimenting with various crops already from 1830. Most imported seeds failed, while there was some limited success with palm farms. Attempts were constant and intensive since the Basel mission counted on a successful cultivation in order to support Christian communities. Finally, they made it after many years with a miraculous success in one new seed: cocoa. Cocoa farms started to grow after the 1880's and a proper production for export began in the 1890's. In Table 3 we see the evolution of cocoa production in Ghana between 1890 and 1930. Respectively in table 4 we see the numbers of Christian converts in 1934. The change from 1885 is impressive.

**Cocoa-exports value (Gold Coast-Ghana)**

1898	£ 9.616
1911	£ 1.613.468
1917	£ 3.146.851 (Smith 1966:137)

**Cocoa-exports volume (Gold Coast-Ghana)**

1895	5 tones
1930	218.895 tones (Larbi 2001:39)

Table 3. Cocoa production from 1890 to 1930.

**Christians in Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1934 (Bartels, 1965:207)**

Anglicans	24.000
Methodists	125.225
Presbyterians (former Basel mission)	58.454
Baptists	6.000
Roman Catholics	167.036
Presbyterians of the Presbyterian Church of Ewe (former Bremen mission)	27.000
Members of the Salvation Army	6.386
Members of the African Episcopal Methodist Church of Zion	7.064

Table 4. The number of Christians in Ghana in 1934.

The most impressive element in the tables above is that the 13,000 Christians in 1885 become nearly 380,000 in 1934. The number was in fact much larger since some new sects, prophetic movements and Pentecostal missions were not yet officially recorded. The connection between the introduction of cash crops and the increasing numbers of Christians is my own assumption. There may be other assumptions, as well. A major role was played by the Methodist schools, while the colonial rule was stabilized and expanded. A very important development was the first world-war which signified the final division of Africa between the British and the French colonies. Additionally, palm oil and rubber, which both grew in Ghana, became very important crops supporting the automobile and military industries. Along with the exploitation of coconut farms and the use of some new minerals (magnesium above all) beside gold, cash crops became endemic, wage-labour expanded and the monetarization of the economy became dominant. As we will see below these developments gave a big boost to Christianization and at the same time eroded the traditional social organization without totally erasing it.

## CHAPTER 12

### FROM RELIGION IN GENERAL TO CHRISTIANITY IN SPECIFIC, AND FROM BOKAZO TO ESIAMA

It would be a great luck for me, if the complexity of Christianity in Ghana had ended in the time of missions. However, nothing even close to simplicity characterized the Christian scene eversince. Not only new sects and Churches from Europe and the US continued to pour into Ghana but from 1914 onwards local Christian movements began to emerge with local leaders, the so-called “prophets”, which usually ended up to the foundation of a new Church. This tendency, reinforced by schisms within already established Churches, never stopped. Thus, in the period I went to Ghana the different Christian Churches in Ghana had reached the number of 2,500! Before I travel to Africa, I had read two books on Christian pluralism in Ghana written by Paul Gifford, a religious studies-scholar, who taught in the next to UCL College of SOAS, and whom later I met personally in a seminar. The books were useful but they talked of the present time. They did not talk about history and how the present situation was formed from the past.



Thus, I had to search in libraries. The ideal would be to find historiographies of each one of the Churches operating in “my village”. But they did not exist. Even the elders/priests of many of the Churches (especially those coming from Europe and the USA) I talked with, did not know the history of their Church! Where and when was it founded by whom and the like. The search for the origins, the special belief and the historical course of the churches proved to be as hard as fieldwork itself. It continued throughout the entire period of the PhD. Some books I found later in various libraries in London, helped a lot. It was a couple of general historiographies of West African Christianity, some rare, very old (from 1950’s and 1960’s) books on Basel mission and the Methodists, a thesis on the RomanCatholic mission and a book on the Pentecostal missions in Ghana from the 1930’s onwards. Searching for relevant bibliography I discovered that a particular local Church, the Church of the 12 Apostles, attracted the attention of researchers, historians, religious studies-scholars and anthropologists. This Church was present in my fieldwork-village with significant numbers of followers, and not accidentally it attracted my attention, as well.

The story for Ghana started back in 1914, but it had actually started even earlier in the neighbouring Ivory Coast and even farther in Liberia. Founder and inspirator of the 12 Apostles Church, was held to be William Wade Harris, who was born in Liberia in 1860. As I mentioned above, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of Christian missions in Africa. Many poor Africans, persecuted or marginalized by wars and raids, either by local kingdoms or the colonists, found refuge in the Christian missions. We have to consider that the slave-trade was abolished by the British in 1804, however, Portuguese and Dutch merchants continued to exercise the trade up to 1870 or even later. It was only the outcome of the American

civil war and the gradual abolition of slavery in the USA that stopped the slave trade near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Liberia was a special case. It was supposed that freed slaves from the USA, who had lost their links to their motherlands, returned to Africa, in Liberia as free men and women. Liberia then, was a sort of protectorate of the USA, it was never colonized by any European force. This condition made Liberia the playground of missions sent by the American Episcopal Church; a Church closely connected with the Anglican Church. Harris joined such a mission in 1881. He was trained as a teacher and a catechist. In 1910 he was arrested and imprisoned for his participation in a rebellion against the government. While in prison Harris said that archangel Gabriel visited him and ordered him to preach the word of God. After he was released from prison in 1913, he launched a big preaching tour, which lasted for 18 months. He started from Liberia, he walked through the entire coast of Ivory Coast and ended up in Axim, 20 kilometres east of Teleku Bokazo.

The most important feature of this course was that Harris converted to Christianity more than 100,000 people in 18 months, that is the triple number of people that European and American missions had converted in the previous 60 years! His message was simple: He called people to destroy fetishes and altars of old gods and pray to Jesus Christ for curing all illnesses and misfortunes. The only thing he rejected in traditional religion was faith to lesser gods and goddesses and their symbols. He accepted polygamy and traditional social organization. Another major difference to missionaries was that Harris preached that the miraculous power of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament, was still and ever active. This meant that this power was much stronger than that of lesser gods. The only things one needed in order to take advantage of this power was faith to Christ, prayer and running a

righteous life. Harris did not attempt to establish a new Church. He urged his converters to join any of the already existent Churches. The deeper analogy that inspired Harris was the one between African 20<sup>th</sup> century and Palestinian 1<sup>st</sup> century, the analogy between Roman empire and colonialism. His message was particularly attractive because it did not call people to abandon their entire culture but only one of its elements, however vital it might be. The “Wade Harris phenomenon” was not unique as it was proven a few years later. During the 1920’s various prophets emerged from within the missions. Gradually new local Churches were established, since the historical Churches considered these movements as heretical. I call these new Churches “prophetic” as they were all founded by a “prophet”. They also performed some similar traits, inspired by similar beliefs. Most of them accepted polygamy, traditional fests, music and apparel. They eventually incorporated local culture into Christianity (or the vice versa) and turned over the “civilizing” rhetoric of the missionaries. Traditional healers were replaced by prophets and the local magical tools were replaced by Christian symbols, the cross, the bible, olive-oil, candles, holy water and incense.

Wade Harris’s heritage (he died in destitute in 1929) created some new African Churches, among which the Church of 12 Apostles in Ghana, but also favoured the Roman Catholic missions, who arrived in Western Ghana relatively late (in 1905) and managed to become the most populous Church in Ghana within 30 years. From this wave of Christianization, the Methodist Church also made some gains. Well known prophetic Churches emerged also in Nigeria at the same time (the 1920’s, 1930’s) and religious scholars call all these movements “African Independent Churches” (AICs). Nigerian prophetic Churches spread all over West Africa. The “Church of the Lord” and “the Cherouvim and Sherafim”

founded in Nigeria, spread to Ghana as well, with many branches. Other prophetic Churches with local, Western Region, origin were the “Sacred Action” and the “Musama Disco Cristo” Churches. There were also many others in other parts of Ghana, which operated only locally.

Just the period little after the emergence of the AICs the first arrival of Pentecostal missions occurred in Ghana. Pentecostal Churches is a global phenomenon evolving from the first decades of the 20th century onwards. According to most researchers the Pentecostal movement started from the USA in 1906, but other researchers claim that it emerged in many different parts of the world independently and at the same time around that chronology. The former version is rather more accurate. The first Pentecostal group emerged in Los Angeles, California, from one of the numerous “renewal” Protestant groups. It was, probably, not accidental that this group comprised mainly Afroamericans. What happened then, was that the members of the group started to speak incomprehensible languages (“speaking in tongues”) in a condition resembling a collective trance. This was taken as a divine sign and the condition was compared to the Pentecost of the Jesus Christ’s disciples. The practice spread very fast and, in a few years, the Pentecostal groups formed their own Churches, since the traditional Protestant Churches did not accept that the “Pentecostal revelation” was really divine. Three basic traits characterize the Pentecostal movement and discern the Pentecostal Churches from all others: The baptism to the Holy Spirit and the “new life” (“born again”) acquired through it, the speaking in tongues or else “glossolalia”, which means that the Holy Spirit speaks through the members of the congregation, and finally the “faith healing”, that is the capability of curing illnesses and exorcising demons through faith (which manifests itself in the relevant services in the Church).

In Ghana some Pentecostal missions arrived during the 1930's but real success came in the 1940's with the arrival of the "Assemblies of God" from the USA and the "Apostolic Church" from Britain. The latter split in two parts in 1940 while already in Ghana, the "Church of Pentecost" and the "Christ Apostolic Church". The spread of Pentecostal Churches in Ghana was fast because their main characteristics resembled some elements of traditional religion. Nevertheless, they radically differed from the African prophetic Churches, since they vehemently rejected anything old African, and considered traditional religion as demonic and idolatrous altogether. Thus, people went to the prophetic Churches with their traditional garments, whereas they went to the Pentecostal Churches with their western suits and dresses.

With all those developments, three different historical currents of Christianity were fully active in Ghana, already before independence in 1957. It was the European missions, the local African Churches and the Pentecostals. Later on two other currents were added on the scene. First was the new-new Protestants, like the "New Apostolic Church" (from Germany), the "Church of Christ" (Mormons from the US, active there from 1830 but present in Ghana only after the 1970's), and the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists (coming from the US), who did not have any "magical" elements like drums, dance and faith-healing in their services, and kept distance from all other currents. Their theology was one of defensive communalism, according to which, the outside world is dangerous and devilish. Second was the new-Pentecostal or Charismatic Churches, which started to spread like mushrooms in Ghana during the 1990's. They are based on a charismatic-leader-prophet resembling the American Evangelical "Mega-Churches" (enormous congregations, with services, usually recorded in videos, wherein "miracles" occur). The most striking characteristic of the latter

current was that, whereas the old prophets did not take money for their services and usually died destitute, the new charismatic prophets preached that poverty is a sin and wealth is a sign of God's favour. This was the reason why this sort of preaching was named both in the US and in Africa "prosperity gospel". After the year 2,000, the most successful of those Churches had been transformed to big business corporations with trade and transportation firms, private universities and the like.

This was the situation regarding Christianity at the time I visited Ghana. The description here, of course, was pretty rough. A hot issue on the topic has been (and remains) the potential connection between all those developments in Ghanaian Christianity and wider socio-political and economic developments. There was a striking void in the bibliography on that issue. Theologians were concerned with theology and economists with economy but none with both. Historians and sociologists seemed to avoid the hot issue of Christianity or if they were concerned with it they usually ascribed the Christian currents either to Western imperialism or to African resistance. The Christian scene in Ghana, however, was much more complex than this simplistic schema. Some works stressed the connection between some of Churches and politics (Simms 2003) or the connection between mass unemployment and the emergence of new Churches (Guifford 2004) but these works referred to certain periods. A general overview on Christianity in Ghana for the last 160 years was missing.

It was a challenge to me to try to explain this plural setting of Christianity in Ghana. How did all these currents, missions, Churches, movements, manage to survive, expand and live side by side to each other? For sure, it was not only my own curiosity that led me. Social reality in Ghana was overwhelmed with the

Christian institutions. Churches, services, exorcisms, “prayer camps”, healing congregations and the like occupied a very large space of public life and everyday reality. On the contrary, two areas of public activity, very common back in Europe, politics and mass media occupied much less space in Ghana; especially in rural Ghana they were nearly absent. This was a radically different reality than that I had experienced that far in Europe. Although I was expecting that in the village things would be different than in Accra, where a Church leapt out in every corner, there was no difference at all! Even my own everyday reality was determined by the Christian institutions. I was living in a prayer center and many people from the village that came to visit me wanted to discuss with me theological issues! Finally, I bought a Bible and, for the first time in my life (!) I started reading it in order to be able to carry out those discussions. The interviews with the leaders of the Churches went on smoothly. Near the end of April I had spoken with representatives of all the Churches in the village and I had visited the services of all Churches at least once (in cases two or three times depending on the importance of the services). Gradually, the Christian Churches attracted my interest and my concern with traditional religion started to come second. On the other hand traditional religion was the central concern of the Churches themselves, therefore, I was not very far from my initial interest, modified of course, by all means.

As the time passed Christian Churches monopolized my interest and at a particular point in April, four months after my arrival to the village, I decided to change my topic from “religious pluralism and social differentiation” to “Christian pluralism and social differentiation”, that is to focus in the Christian Churches. I, thus, formed my research question accordingly. I decided to investigate why there are so many different Churches in Ghana and what

makes someone to join one Church and not another one. I cannot say that this question concerned local people, as well. Local people instead, were interested in which Church was closer to the original gospel, which one was “real Christian” and which one was “fake”. All Churches claimed that they alone were the “real” ones and this was the main rhetoric for conversion. The two questions, mine and the people’s, were related and I was not indifferent to the latter, as well. The issue of “true” or “fake” Christianity was crucial for the locals, since there were rumours that some “new” Churches with their charismatic leaders used the power of lesser gods instead of the one of the Christian God, in order to perform their miracles. This meant that the followers of these Churches ran the risk of becoming slaves of these lesser gods without knowing it, and thus of selling their souls to them, of going to hell and so forth. I found this dilemma fascinating, although I could not put it as a main question in my research.

I had learned from my experience with dreams and witchcraft that academia did not tolerate such questions. My own approach to dreams and witchcraft was more or less in line with “popular beliefs” which, for most of the academics are superstitions or in the best version “prejudiced”. To me the question of “who is a real Christian” was valid, to the academia it was irrelevant and the main issue was political and economic factors behind it. Therefore, the question of “what made different people to follow different Churches” was a product of compromise with academic conventions, equivalent to that I made during the “upgrading proposal”. I thought I would avoid troubles with the academia with it, but I was wrong. Anyway, the reality I was living in in the village had pulled me away from both dreams and witchcraft, which had been my initial goal. I had walked a long distance from Athens to London and from London to Africa, from dreams to witchcraft and from witch-



craft to religion and Christianity. In fact, the course was from personal interest to the real conditions of the outside world. It was not strange. The strange would be if I stuck with the initial plan and remained within the ivory tower of academic knowledge.

Anyway, at that specific turn of my research course, when I decided to turn to Christianity, the Teleku Bokazo Christian Churches became the main field of my research. If we return to table 1 of the previous chapter with the Churches, which were present in the village, we will see that all Christian currents I have so far described were represented in the village. Even the new current of charismatic leaders was somehow represented by Antony Nyame's Prayer center, the place I lived in. Therefore, the Christian scene of Teleku Bokazo was a tiny model of the entire Ghana, that is a good base for research.

The problem was that when I decided to live in Mr. Nyame's place I had no intention to be concerned with Christian Churches. After I decided to focus in the Christian Churches, I thought I had to move, in order to keep my neutrality towards the Christian institutions. As all Christian institution tried to take advantage of my presence in their services ("the white man comes to our services and this is a divine sign"), I had to show that I am not in particular favour of any of them. In this sense I should also not identify myself with Mr. Nyame's center. Near the end of April, I decided to move. I explained to Mr. Nyame that due to the needs of my research I had to move. He was not very pleased of course, but I could not act otherwise. I considered that it would be good to keep a distance and I found a room at the outskirts of Esiam, the coastal town 5 kilometres away from Teleku Bokazo. In the beginning of May I moved there. Research on the Christian Churches had just started.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE METHOD OR "THE TIME TO PAY THE PIPER"

Contrary to my previous endeavours (on dreams and on witchcraft), I had no "initial assumption" with the new project on the Christian Churches in Ghana. I had not an assumption to confirm or discard. The issue of "initial assumption" was crucial for my way of working. While being in Teleku Bokazo I had written a chapter for a volume edited by Christos Dermentzopoulos and Manos Spyridakis published in Athens in 2004. The title of the volume was "Anthropology, Culture and Politics" and the title of my chapter was "Ethnographic experience and the critique of culture". Within this chapter I argued that before fieldwork all anthropologists have some initial assumption on their topic, no matter explicit or implicit, assumption which is *always* subverted by the experiences on the field. I supported this argument by the simple fact that our initial assumptions are affected by our own culture, and the contact with distant cultures (or subcultures in the case of "home" ethnographies) reveals our cultural prejudices. I maintained that this principle does not apply to anthropology alone, but to any field of knowledge either scientific or social. Cultural contact always

helped to familiarize the distant, the unknown, the "other" and at the same time to critically review the familiar, the "well known", the "self".

In this sense, one can understand why the "initial assumption" is so important. Initial assumptions usually either idealize or underestimate "the other", as they measure her/him with the yardstick of the familiar culture. The deconstruction of initial assumptions does not merely reveal the image we have about others but also about ourselves. However, in my case, as I had abandoned witchcraft and had been caught up with Christianity, I had been left without initial assumption! Although I had set forward a research question of the type: "to what extent choices of joining a Christian Church are affected by socioeconomic factors?", I had not a tentative answer in mind, that is an "initial assumption". Although I did not fully realize it at that time, this basic change in the method of thinking was imposed upon me by the academia. It was no more fashionable to set forward initial assumptions, definitely not in social sciences. We just defined a general direction and moved on. This for me shaped a terribly uncertain ground. It was possibly due to my class origin. I had not been grown up in a bourgeois environment where the method of parole-manipulation and saying everything without telling nothing was something like a second nature. I needed a compass and a solid ground and not a general direction. Nevertheless, all that story with the "upgrading proposal" and the like, had already affected me and I had unconsciously accepted "the method of no method", which was dominant in the academia at that time.

As, near the end of April, I had completed the first round of interviews with the representatives of the Churches, and after I had moved to Esiam, I found myself in front of a deadend. I did not

know what to do next. A logic step would be to take interviews from lay-members of the Churches in order to see how they regard their membership to their Church. However, from many unstructured conversations I had with people in the village, I had realized that they repeated their leaders' rhetoric literally unchanged. To the simple question "why do you follow this Church and not another one" I received the stereotypical answer "because it bears the true faith". No one could really explain what this "true faith" was about. Discussions usually turned to the "other Churches", which worshiped fetishes, were unfaithful and the like. I found myself in front of what most anthropologists call "implicit knowledge of culture", that is what everybody "knows" but no one can explain to an outsider. Therefore, interviews that were based on explicit knowledge could add nothing to my information. The "true faith" was something that I had to decode, it symbolized a series of historical experiences and meanings lived by people, experiences and meanings virtually inaccessible by me. "True faith" apparently meant something different to different people and that is why so many Churches operated in Ghana. In front of such an impasse, I thought of something radically different than the usual ethnographic tradition within anthropology.

I thought of constructing a questionnaire and addressing it to the entire population in the village. The questionnaire would include all the crucial questions I considered as vital for shedding light on my basic investigation (what makes different people join different Churches). The questionnaire was the following:

QUESTIONNAIRE No....
(NEIGHBOURHOOD.....)

A. PERSONAL DETAILS

- 1. NAME..... AGE:.....
2. MALE [ ] FEMALE [ ]
3. SINGLE [ ] MARRIED [ ] DIVORCED [ ] CHILDREN [ ] (number)
4. ARE YOUR PARENTS: TOGETHER [ ] DIVORCED [ ] LIVING SEPARATELY BUT NOT DIVORCED/
5. YOU ARE LIVING WITH: SPOUSE [ ] MOTHER [ ] FATHER [ ] BOTH PARENTS [ ] ALONE [ ]
6. DO YOUR CHILDREN LIVE WITH: YOU [ ] YOUR SPOUSE [ ] YOUR MOTHER [ ] YOUR FATHER [ ] BOTH
YOUR PARENTS [ ] YOUR FATHER IN LAW [ ] YOUR MOTHER IN LAW [ ] BOTH YOUR PARENTS IN LAW
7. EDUCATION: ILLITERATE [ ] ELEMENTARY SCHOOL [ ] JSS [ ] SSS [ ] ADVANCED TECHNICAL [ ] UNIVER-
SITY
8. ETHNIC GROUP:.....
9. CLAN:.....
10. PLACE OF BIRTH:.....
11. FOR HOW MANY YEARS YOU LIVE IN THE VILLAGE? (If not born):
12. OCCUPATION:.....
13. DO YOU REGARD YOUR COMMAND OF NZEMA LANGUAGE (For non Nzemas) AS: ALMOST PERF-
ECT [ ] GOOD [ ] POOR [ ] ABSENT [ ]
14. DO YOU REGARD YOUR COMMAND OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE (For all) AS: ALMOST PERFECT-
[ ] GOOD [ ] POOR [ ] ABSENT [ ]
15. IF WE DIVIDE THE VILLAGE RESIDENTS IN THREE CATEGORIES, WHICH CATEGORY YOU PLACE
YOURSELF INTO: UPPER [ ] MIDDLE [ ] LOWER [ ] / DUE TO YOUR CONDITION REGARDING, MONEY-
[ ] LAND OWNERSHIP [ ] HOUSE [ ] ETHNIC OR CLAN AND LINEAGE ORIGIN [ ] EDUCATION [ ] PROFES-
SION [ ] AGE [ ] GENDER [ ] MARITAL STATUS [ ] OTHER

B. RELIGION

- 1. WHAT IS YOUR FAITH/CHURCH/.....
2. WHAT IS/WAS YOUR PARENTS' CHURCH: A. MOTHER'S..... FATHER'S.....
3. WHAT WAS YOUR PREVIOUS FAITH/CHURCH IF ANY/.....
4. HOW YOU HAVE BEEN CONVERTED/ ENTERED YOUR PRESENT CHURCH: FAMILY [ ] FRIEND [ ] MIS-
SIONARY/EVANGELIST [ ] REVELATION THROUGH A DREAM OR A VISION [ ] OTHER/.....
5. HAVE YOU EVER VISIT A FETISH PRIEST? YES [ ] NO [ ]
6. WHAT YOU THINK TRADITIONAL HEALERS MAINLY DO: THEY HEAL [ ] THEY GIVE JUJU [ ] THEY
PROTECT FROM WITCHCRAFT [ ] THEY CAUSE WITCHCRAFT [ ]
7. WHO HEALS MENTAL SICKNESS FASTER: GOD [ ] WHITE PEOPLE'S MEDICINE [ ] FETISH PRIESTS
AND LESSER GODS/ [ ]
8. WHO HEALS PHYSICAL SICKNESS FASTER: GOD [ ] WESTERN MEDICINE [ ] FETISH PRIESTS AND
LESSER GODS [ ]
9. WHICH OF YOUR PROBLEMS IS THE TOP ONE FOR WHICH YOU EXPECT HELP FROM THE GOD(S)
OF YOUR RELIGION: FINANCIAL [ ] UNEMPLOYMENT [ ] MARITAL [ ] EXTENDED FAMILY PROBLEMS,
INHERITANCE, PROPERTY, FAMILY CARE ETC. [ ] TO FIND A HUSBAND/WIFE [ ] HEALTH [ ] SPIRITUAL
(CURSE, WITCHCRAFT) OTHER.....
10. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AS KNOWING THE SPECIFIC DOCTRINE OF YOUR CHURCH: VERY
WELL [ ] GOOD ENOUGH [ ] NOT WELL [ ] NOT AT ALL, I JUST ATTEND [ ]
11. YOU ATTEND THE SERVICES/MEETINGS/RITUALS/PRAYERS OF YOUR CHURCH/FAITH: EACH ONE
OF THEM EVERY DAY [ ] ONLY SOME DURING THE WEEK [ ] ONLY ONCE A WEEK (Fridays for the Mus-
lims, Saturdays for the SDA, Sundays for the rest of Christians) [ ] SPORADICALLY WITHIN A YEAR [ ]
12. WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE SO MANY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN GHANA: MISUNDERSTAND-
ING [ ] FOR FINANCIAL REASONS [ ] FOR THEOLOGICAL REASONS [ ] I DO NOT KNOW [ ] FOR OTHER
REASON/.....

After I finished the construction of the questionnaire, I was quite happy, since I believed that I had managed to write down all the important questions. The idea to pose those questions to the entire population of the village was fascinating. I discussed the issue with my assistant Lawrence and my friends Johnnie and Emmanuel, who had come from the University in Accra to the village for the Easter holiday. They suggested that they conducted the survey themselves, allegedly for their Sociology department in Accra, since if I conducted the survey myself, most of the villagers would ask for money in order to respond. I accepted. We divided the village in three neighbourhoods and each one of my assistants would conduct the survey in each neighbourhood. I told them they could hire also assistants that they trusted. I also told them that I would pay them. We arranged a pay of ₵500,000, that was approximately £30 (at that time), which was well above the salary of a school teacher (£20 or approximately 350 to ₵400,000). They could share any amount out of it with their possible assistants. They all hired one. We agreed that I would not show up during the survey, however, every night we gathered at Emmanuel's house to discuss potential problems and review the progress of the survey. A couple of days before we launch the survey, I travelled to Takoradi, the nearest place with an internet-café, and I emailed my supervisor informing him about the questionnaire. Takoradi was 90 to 100 kilometres away and I could not travel there often. I travelled to Takoradi once every two or three weeks, to buy things, withdraw money from the bank, have a haircut and the like. So, I posted the email to my supervisor but I could not wait for the response. We started the survey on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004. My assistants did a great job and they finished after two weeks.

We gathered 1,043 questionnaires from villagers above 16 years old, a number more than satisfactory, since in Africa children and

adolescents below 16 comprise more than 40% of the population. A total number of 1600-1700 residents was consistent with other demographic informations (registered in elections plus pupils at schools and the like). By any means, the number was big enough for my purposes. After we finished, I gathered all questionnaires and went on with checking them out in three phases. First, I checked them out one by one for mistakes or omissions. There were some 40 questionnaires with such problems. They were corrected either immediately or with complementary questions to the people concerned. In the second phase I recorded all results in general categories for each question without relating responses to each other. Finally, I divided all questionnaires in files. Each file corresponded to a Church or a religious category (for example "traditional religion", "no Church", "Muslim" and the like). In this third phase I related responses about religion to demographic and relevant (profession, education, family condition and the like) characteristics. The third phase was really time-consuming. It took me more than one month and a half to reach some comparable results. My method of elaboration was primitive. I did everything by hand! Normally I should have a computer program and enter directly all data to the program, and then the program would do the rest. However, I never imagined that I would conduct a survey in my fieldwork and I was totally unprepared for such an endeavour. Whatever I did during fieldwork was product of constant improvisation and the alleged preparation of the "upgrading proposal"-process was just a waste of time. Anyway, the most common program used for surveys of that scale is SPSS, Statistical program for Social Sciences. I did not know how to work with it but I could learn. I had arranged a three months break from August to October that year. The program was too expensive to buy but I could borrow it from the University.

The problem was that I never thought to keep all the completed questionnaire-sheets, bring them back to Europe and enter all data to a program in a later stage. My desire to draw some conclusions from the survey in order to go on with the research was so strong that I thought I could proceed to vital comparisons fast and working by hand. I was obviously wrong. However, if someone more experienced in research consulted me to keep the questionnaires for entering the data to a program, I would certainly listen and do so. It was supposed that this “someone more experienced” would be my supervisor. However, for another time my supervisor acted contrary to my expectations. In one of my visits to Takoradi about a month after I had sent my initial email informing about my intention for conducting the survey, I found the response. The response was some 10 days old and we had already concluded the survey. The supervisor vehemently opposed the idea of the survey! He wrote to me that this was not an accepted method in anthropology, that we take interviews, conduct participant observation and record life histories, we do not do surveys, and in any case, if I wanted to conduct a survey I should make a pilot study first, and there are rules I had to follow, control the questions, set the sample and the like. For one more time I could not communicate with my supervisor. It was true that we, anthropologists, distasted statistical surveys, and conducted almost exclusively qualitative research, however, I did not make the survey in order to support some prearranged hypotheses, but in order to help myself continue with the research, to see, to whom I should speak next after the interviews with the fetish priestesses and the leaders of the Churches. My frustration with the stance of my supervisor was huge.

One would wonder why I still trusted my supervisor and did not do whatever I wanted without asking his advice. The issue was



not personal but rather institutional. I believed, and I still do, that whoever my supervisor might be, I would have similar problems. It was not a personal issue; it was about how the system worked. There was, however, an additional reason: Phil Burnham had the reputation of a particularly meticulous professor. I thought, then, that if I followed his advice, I would not have problems in the final examination for the PhD, the famous "viva" in the end of the process. This was the big issue (I will explain it in the third part of the book). In the case of the questionnaire, however, I could do nothing, as we have already done it with my assistants. I only hoped to persuade the supervisor that it was useful in the future. Thus, I continued my elaborations upon the data despite the opposite opinion of the supervisor. When I finished the third phase of elaborations, an unexpected result struck me. I placed Church-membership as an independent variable and then I related it successively to income, profession, education and social status. The correspondence between belonging to specific Churches and social status was not there! In essence, all social strata belonged to all Churches! Nevertheless, this was the general image. A more careful insight revealed interesting differentiations. Most people with the highest income, as well as, all university graduates belonged to the Catholic Church. However, a large number of very poor farmers belonged to this Church as well! The Pentecostal Churches attracted the most of the "professionals", electricians, mechanics, drivers, hairdressers, seamstresses and the like, but they also included a lot of farmers. The most striking differentiation concerned the 12 Apostles Church, which was populated almost exclusively by illiterate farmers. By any means the direct correlation between income-education-profession and Church-preference that I expected did not seem to be confirmed. I do not know which one of the two frustrations, the supervisor's discouragement or the unexpected results played the most important role, but two

months later, when I travelled to Europe, I did not take the questionnaires with me except from a small sample. Thus, I remained with the elaborations I had done in Ghana and I excluded the possibility of a future elaboration with a computer program. Many things I could see by putting many other variables as independent or by using complex variables, were thrown away. The questionnaire was constructed in such manner (addressed to the entire population) that I had to have either all samples or none. I was too tired and frustrated when I returned to London in July, that my mind was not at all clear and I had not the courage to resist the supervisor's suggestions.

The questionnaire might not have given me what I expected, but it gave me a lot of information, mainly it offered me valuable information about the demographic profile of the village. As it will be shown in the third part of the book, despite the objections of the supervisor, when the time came to write up my thesis, I used a lot of the questionnaire results. From the questionnaire responses I was quite impressed by the high numbers of divorces, the single-parent families, the young people under 20, who lived with aunts/uncles/grandparents or even alone, the girls under 20 who were single mothers. The numbers were really high for a rural area and this meant a tendency towards social disintegration. Perhaps this situation could partially explain the presence of so many Churches in the village, which substituted the disintegrated families offering security, protection and solidarity to their members. We cannot talk of a "welfare state" in Ghana by no means, I will explain this in the following chapters. Here are some of the results of the questionnaire with some brief comments:

Questions 1-2: Men 434, Women 609. Reasonable result since many men were absent working for weeks in farms, mines or in

the cities. Age-ranks, from 16 to 25, 499 persons, from 26 to 40, 339, and above 41, 205 persons. These numbers were also unsurprising since these are the rates more or less, all over Africa. Life expectancy in Subsaharan Africa ranges between 45 and 55 years. Question 3: Divorced 138, single mothers 75, very large numbers for a village! Question 4: 395 persons stated that their parents were either divorced or separated! Question 5: 142 persons responded that they lived with friends or alone. Question 8: 907 persons were Nzemas and 136 persons belonged to other ethnic groups. The most numerous non-Nzema groups were 50 Muslim migrants from Mali and 34 Fantis, a neighbouring ethnic group. The presence of foreigners was not significant enough to explain the presence of too many Churches. Question 7 (education): 382 illiterates, 166 finished elementary school, 274 Junior Secondary School graduates, 187 Senior Secondary School graduates, 22 Technical School graduates and 12 University graduates. Question 14 for English language command (official language of the State): 119 stated they spoke and wrote English fluently, 244 they spoke fair enough, 309 commanded only the basic (they could speak but not read and write) and 371 had no knowledge of English at all! This meant that 65% of the village-people could not read and write the official language of the State!

Equally interesting were the findings on occupations and social status. To question 12 on occupation 304 responded "farmers", a percentage of 30%, nearly half of the national average, which was 60%. We discussed the issue with my assistants and we reached the conclusion that many local people considered the profession of a farmer downgrading and if they had some complementary occupation like petty trading or occasional wage labour, they preferred to declare the latter as their main occupation. Even the children of farmers preferred to state they were unemployed in-

stead of farmers. 193 persons stated they were pupils and students. Given the fact that the 16-20 years category comprised approximately 300 persons, it means that many young people found themselves out of education. 12 persons stated they were shop-owners and entrepreneurs. Unemployed, 105, Seamstresses 19, and hair-dressers 5. Petty-traders and market sellers 198. Teachers 19. Civil servants 4. Workers (at the coconut-oil processing factory, in mines, at the poultry farm, in the bakeries, the saw mill, and the car-repair garage), 56. Craftsmen (carpenters, electricians, mechanics, masons, smiths, drivers, spirit-makers and the like), 52. The rest stated they were old age (the concept of pensioner was valid only for civil servants) some said "priests/ priestesses" (2 Christian, 3 traditional, the old ladies), some responded "no occupation" and some others did not respond at all. It seemed that the larger categories were five: Farmers, students, workers, craftsmen and petty-traders. If we add the shopkeepers/entrepreneurs and the unemployed we have 7 categories, resembling a Weberian, in essence, scale of social status. If I had kept the questionnaires, I could have later attempted a social status analysis according to a Weberian style sociology, where occupations are strictly connected with social status and the distribution of power within a community.

Although I did not quite follow the Weberian model, question 15 of the questionnaire included some sort of consideration on social status. The question asked respondents to place themselves to an allegedly high, middle or low social stratum in the village. Question 15b asked people to clarify, according to which criterion they placed themselves on the high, middle or low social stratum. 375 persons considered they belonged to the lowest stratum, 547 to the middle one and 102 to the higher. I believe this finding was equally impressive for a rural area, since more than half of the population considered themselves either lower or higher than aver-

age. Even more interesting were the classifying criteria. Highest on the list was occupation with 274 responses and second came education with 199 responses. "Money" followed with 189 responses, "age" with 166 and well behind land-possession with 78 responses. "Ethnic group" with 62 responses and "family condition" with 57, were also significant criteria. Findings seemed to justify the importance of status over strictly "economic" criteria.

The "religion"-part of the questionnaire yielded interesting results, as well. The most interesting category was the "no Church" category (101 responses). In questions B2-B3, "Which was your - your parents' previous Church" I was expecting to find the followers of traditional religion, who were reluctant to state that they still followed traditional religion. To my surprise, I discovered that the "no Church" people were Christians, who had abandoned a Church without joining a new one. Only 15 people overtly stated that they followed traditional religion, virtually the traditional priestesses and their close families. It seemed that we had a religion with no followers. In question B5, however, "have you ever visited a traditional priestess", 310 persons said "yes" a number, which in fact was much larger, as most Christian Churches prohibited this. In question B6-"what is your opinion about traditional healers" a sweeping majority of 70% (738 responses!) had a positive opinion: "they cure illnesses, they protect from witchcraft". The questionnaire, thus, revealed an image with an official religion - Christianity and an underground one- traditional religion. Another finding showed that both higher income persons and university graduates were by 80% Roman Catholics and by 20% "no Church". However, many poor farmers also followed the Roman Catholic Church. This fact showed the there was not such a thing like a social-class Church. Nevertheless most people regarded the Roman-Catholic as the "establishment Church" and it was not accidental

that most “new Churches” drew their clientele from the “old” Roman Catholic Church.

In general terms the questionnaire was successful and it would possibly lead my way forward, had I been bold enough to disregard the disapproval of my supervisor. Anyway, I did not follow this methodological line till the end and my problem of what to do next was not resolved. This would happen in my next visit to the village three months later.

## CHAPTER 14

### LIFE IN AFRICA, BREAK AND RETURN

It was the end of June when I made the final elaborations of the questionnaire. I had also completed the visits to the Church services. Living in rural Ghana was a rather hard task, especially for someone who had lived his/her entire life in Europe. The first big issue was electric power. Despite the fact that in the East of Ghana there is the biggest hydroelectric dam in the world by the river Volta, almost half of the country, at the time of my presence, was not connected to the electric grid. Fortunately, we had electric power in Teleku Bokazo, the last village towards the interior with such a comfort. The next village had no electricity. Nevertheless, even there, where electric power was available, cut-offs were very often. There was a lengthy cut-off nearly every day lasting from two to eight hours. The reasons were the inadequate and bad maintained infrastructures, as well as the extensive overloads of the network. Due to very expensive electric bills the usual practice was people to “steal” power from a neighbour, very often to the neighbour’s knowledge at an arranged price. Thus, a simple connection served three or four households. Many households re-

mained without power, anyway, for financial reasons. Another big problem was running water. Running water existed only in the cities and some towns, and even this was not drinkable. There were two types of drinking water, one from rivers and wells, boiled and filtered in small plastic pouches and one from springs from the mountains in plastic bottles. Both were sold in the markets, the pouches costed 2 pence and the bottles 10 pence. The latter was relatively expensive, as expensive as a meal at the “spots”, and this meant that it was a forbidden luxury for the poor. What actually happened was the majority of the population to drink water from wells with all the dangers of gastroenteritis and diarrhoea constantly threatening them. Apart from that, many working hours of the day were spent to fetching water from wells, a task frequently allocated to children. Swerage was also a big problem. Actually, there was not a sewerage system but only some pipes and channels towards rivers and the sea, or cesspits rarely or never



Image 11: Kitchen.



cleaned up. The problem was huge but more striking in the cities. The basic reason for malaria in Africa is the lack of sewerage system and the abundance of stagnated and polluted waters

No matter whether there was electric power or not, cooking was made for the vast majority of the village-people by burning wood. Therefore, along with fetching water, an every-day activity occupying children (and women when children were at school) was bringing woods from the forest. An alternative of wood-cooking was gas but this was a luxury only the rich people could afford. There was no question about electric stoves. These were available only in the cities and only for the rich people. When I had settled in the village, we went to Takoradi with Lawrence and bought a gas-cooker, a gas-container and a fan the most valuable tools for living in the village. There was already a refrigerator in the prayer center, but when I moved to Esiama, I had to buy a refrigerator, as well. Very few people possessed a refrigerator in the village, it was also a luxury. Thus, meat had to be consumed immediately. This condition explained, in a way, the existence of the so many "spots", that is the makeshift small places, benches or shacks, offering meals, soups with meat or fish and the local mashed starches of casawa, cocoyam or corn, fried plantain or yam and beans, spinach or okra with rice. This in fact was the range of available meals along with eggs. A couple of shops in Esiama provided also frozen chicken but it was very expensive. Vegetables were very few, small tomatoes, some white obergines called "garden eggs" and from time to time some carrots. Green vegetables were rare and one could find them only in the big cities. There were no dairy products. Lawrence told me that they had goats and cows but they never learned to exploit them for milk and cheese. "This is an art known only by the people of the North" he said.

After electric power, water and food, the important issues were communication and transportation. One of the weird things that had impressed me from the beginning was that except from some parts in Accra and perhaps some other big cities, there were nowhere telephone landlines. On the contrary, and strangely enough, there was a fully fledged mobile-phone network. In Teleku Bokazo there was a “call center” with a public telephone line, which however was not a landline but a satellite phoneline. Similarly, there were some card-phones along the national phones, also based on satellite. Therefore, communication depended on the two or three private mobile network corporations (all multinationals). The only public company in Ghana had been privatized since the 1980’s. With regard to transportation there was a similar situation. There was no such thing like State-owned, or State-funded public transportation. All vehicles, taxis, vans and buses were private.

Behind this scenery with the striking inadequacies of infrastructure there was a deeper and stronger social and political setting of corruption and anomie. Especially the police force in partnership with the judicial system and some ministries, was a constant incubator of corruption. It was impossible for anyone, who had an affair with police, to be fairly treated. The person who would pay the highest “gift” to the police was on the top of any dispute. Disputes and legal cases were settled by the police and never reached the judicial system, but even if they did, the judges were equally corrupted. Policemen threatened citizens that they would bring their cases to the judges unless they payed them “a gift”. Citizens knew that the judges would be even more “expensive” and they preferred to bribe the police. This condition made the heads of the clans and lineages more reliable in resolving disputes and most people preferred to resolve their cases within the lineage or the clan. Most common police-interventions, and thus sources of in-

come for the police, were related to permissions to sell in the markets and traffic offences. Driving in Ghana was a too risky adventure for three main reasons, first badly maintained cars, second badly maintained roads and third the police check-points. At the latter policemen stopped you and asked for “gifts” no matter whether you had committed a traffic offence or not. If you had not committed anything they made up an imaginary offence immediately on the spot. Owning and driving a car in Ghana proved to be a nightmare to me for the following reasons: I had to travel often to Takoradi, once every ten-fifteen days for provisions, the bank, the internet etc. and once every two months to Accra for renewing my visa. There was no single case when the policemen did not stop me two, three, or even four times in every trip. Especially when they saw a “white-man”, that is a rich man in their eyes, they never gave up bargaining their gift. Apart from the policeman, the car started to perform various mechanical problems two months after I bought it. I was forced to leave it in a garage and take the bus, twice to Takoradi and once to Accra. Car-repair garages was another nightmate, not only because of the fear of mechanics cheating on you but also due to the lack of knowledge and spare parts.

My whiteness was a curse. Apart from the double bribes asked by the policemen, there was a sense of reverse racism everywhere I went. I recall once in Takoradi, the car broke down suddenly, in the middle of the day, in the middle of the city. We called some young men to help us to push the car so that the engine could start up again, but they asked money in order to do so. I did not give them and they did not help. I guess they would act differently if I were black and not white. There were two very strong prejudices about white-people. The first was that all white people are rich, and the second that white people always want something

different than what they say they want. Both prejudices had a logic background based on the experience of colonialism. I tried to fight against the prejudices, I tried to tell people that all white people are not the same and some white countries like mine were victims of imperialism as well, however, the power of generalization in humans is almost unbeatable. Only people who got to know me well and became my friends could understand what I said, and this only after they recognized that I was a person like them, thought like them and acted like them. On the other hand, the claim that all whites are rich, was not far from the truth if we take into account the living standards for the majority of people in Africa.

To me three things were the most disturbing during my stay in Ghana up to the end of July, when I left. The first was this counter-racism mentioned above, the second was all these problems with the police and the car and the third the fact that my area was close to the equator and the duration of the day-light was the same throughout the year. There were no longer days in the summer and longer nights in the winter. The day started at 5:30 in the morning and the dark fell around 6:00 in the evening, and this never changed. Neither the temperature ever changed. It was 30 to 35 degrees calcium every-day throughout the year. Some slight change happened only during the rain season in July-August and in January during the "hamadan" (winds from the Atlantic Ocean) when it fell to 25 to 30 degrees. For the first and the third disturbing conditions I could not do anything to change them. For the second, however, I could do something. I had realized that buying a car back in December was a mistake. The thought that owning a car would make me feel safer in an unknown environment proved to be wrong. In reality, the opposite happened. Owning a car made me more vulnerable against the police. Moving around with tro-

tros, the common transportation minivans caused me much less trouble and it was cheaper. I did not really need a car. The only gain I had from the car is that I taught my assistant Lawrence how to drive, which was an important qualification for his professional future. Anyway, as the time to depart was close, I decided to sell the car, and I planned to use the public transportation when I would return two months later.

It was not difficult to find a buyer. People got to know that I would leave and two potential buyers showed up, one of them was my landlord. I set the price a little lower than the price I bought it (€30 million, €2,500) because of the many repairs I had made to the car. In the last repair the mechanics assured me that it was ok. Finally, I sold it to my landlord. I took the money in cash but I could not keep it. I felt guilty that I would travel back to Europe and I would leave back my co-villagers, many of them living in very hard conditions. I decided to give the money from the car to the village. However, I could not share it to each one resident since it would be little money in the end, and it was not fair since not everyone really needed it. So, I decided to share the money to the Churches, some one million and a half to each one of them. They knew who from their members was in more need, and I trusted that they would distribute the money fairly. As to the remaining millions, I asked Lawrence to pick the 10 poorest families in the village and shared the money directly to them. I told Lawrence to spread the news that I had given money to the Churches, so that people could check their leaders. I did not fear that the leaders would do something wrong with the money, in a strange way I fully trusted them, most of them were poor people, but there should be as much transparency as possible. On the contrary I told Lawrence that no one else should know that I gave money to the poorest families, as well.

When I flew to London I stayed for a couple of days before I fly back to Athens. I was like a ghost coming from another world. Everything looked strange to me. I recall the advertising posters in the tube, especially one about pets' life insurances! The contrast to Africa was chaotic and unbearable. When I met my fellow students, they were suprised at my appearance. They said I was thin and tanned while my gaze was one of a wild animal chased by hunters. I was away for only 9 months. but I looked like I was absent for many years. I guess that all those nine months with the problems of settling, communication and counter-racism, and the struggle to balance in the middle of two different worlds, Europe and Africa, had been reflected in my face. It took me few weeks to re-adjust. I flew back to Athens, rested and in October I returned to London. With all the beuraucracy I ended up travelling back to Ghana in November. This time, however, I did not delay in Accra. I stayed one night at a hotel and the next morning I travelled straight to Teleku Bokazo.

## CHAPTER 15

### HUMANS AND ILLNESS

We travelled to Teleku-Bokazo with Ronald's driver, Daniel. When we arrived, I went straight to my assistant Lawrence. I had not given him a notice and he told me he was expecting me the next month. I had to see where I was going to stay once again. The state-owned hostel in Nkroful remained very expensive. Lawrence told me about a small guest-house in Esiam. We went there. A very kind old lady was the owner. The price was identical with the hostel in Nkroful but they offered also two meals per day. I had given all my cooking stuff to Lawrence back in July. This time I had planned to stay 5 months. It was not a long period. A room with running water (they had this convenience in Esiam) with no need to cook was ideal for me. I could concentrate on the research without other concerns. Although the room was expensive for Ghanaian standards, some €100 per month, I rented it for the next five months. I settled immediately.

The next day we met with Lawrence in Bokazo in order to plan the next phase of the research. However, I had no idea about what

to do next. In August and September back in Greece I did not think about the research at all. I rather took my time to rest. I only read some books I had bought from the University bookshop in Accra. Mainly concerning Ghana's history. With regard to my research question I was rather confused. My first 8-9 months in Ghana had implanted two questions in my mind: Why there are so many Churches in Ghana, and what makes different people join different Churches. I did not know whether these were "scientific" or "anthropological" questions, appropriate for a PhD. I did not even know whether these questions could ever find an answer! However, these questions, along with that about the "true faith" concerned more or less local people as well. For sure, I made second thoughts on my questions. Why should I be concerned with the number of the Churches? Was I culturally prejudiced, since I was grown up in a "one-Church, one-faith" culture? Were my questions ethnocentric?

In a newspaper I bought and read everyday, *The Graphic*, I had read an article with the title "As we have so many Churches in Ghana, why is there so much corruption?" On the other hand, in the questionnaire I had a question asking "why do you believe that there are so many Churches in Ghana". Almost all participants responded to the question (90%), with the majority (547 persons, over 50%) replying "for financial reasons", while the response "for lack of mutual understanding" (179, 17%) and "for theological reasons" (166, 16%) followed. The rest of the responses referred to various reasons ("it is in the Bible", "due to arrogance" etc.). It seemed then, that the issue concerned local people. My question was, however, not accidental. In a way I shared the problematic of *the Graphic*. I was thinking that the predominance of so much religiosity, in reality, does not result in a strict, closed and morally oppressive society but in the opposite, a corrupted, underdeveloped,



chaotic society. In my mind the two conditions were related but I could still not understand how. A crucial point for understanding how religion affected society and the vice versa, was the attempt to understand people's motives, namely their motivation to follow one Church or another. That is why I had made the questionnaire, but now I had to move a step forward.

First, I thought that I had to go a little deeper with the "theological" discussions. The hottest issue was the relationship between the traditional religion and Christianity. I decided to pick two priests, one traditional and one Christian and conduct extended discussions on the topic with each one of them. I picked Mr. James Menza the Prophet from the 12 Apostles Church on the Christian side and Ms Lisbet Kufiaka Ebuaso, or Mama-Aka as people called her, on the traditional side. They were both very experienced, and most respected religious practitioners, and they both conducted healing rites. I had also gained their trust from my first period in the village. From my first discussions with the two selected religious representatives, I understood how important the issue of illness-misfortune and healing-redemption was for both religions. Everything started and ended up with the causes of illness and misfortune. The causes seemed common for both religions, sins, spirit-possessions and curses by opponents, but redemption was achieved by different means, sacrifices for the traditionalists, fasting, prayers and exorcisms for the Christians. The similarity of both religions lay in recognizing the causes of illness and misfortune. In a country (or, actually, in a continent) with disintegrated social relationships, lacking all the western benefits (technology, services, health, education, welfarestate, judicial system etc. etc.) there was a vast void with regard to the sources of power. Neither the State, nor the traditional institutes, the clan and the lineage held the power. The void was covered by supernatural entities: lesser gods, spirits, the

devil, the Christian God, the Muslim Allah and so forth. The most confusing element of this scenery is that it is neither “modern” nor “traditional”. Anthropologist James Ferguson (2006) calls this condition “non-modernity” defining as “a promise that was never fulfilled”. The outcome of this condition is that traditional healers, Churches and priests find themselves in a position they never held neither in the traditional past nor in the Christian Europe. It is as if History stopped at an intermediate stage between tradition and modernity. At the age of colonialism and the missions. I will return to this issue below.

One day we sat on a bench outside Lawrence’s house. The house was built by Lawrence with my financial help, short after my first departure back in July. Poor people’s houses did not need much money to be built. People built them themselves, with the help of relatives and friends. They made them with mud propped up in a framework of bamboo wood skeleton, while they used raffia and banana leaves for roofing. It required some skill to build a good and solid house, especially with constructing the framework and properly watering and drying the mud, so that it had no cracks and breaches. In essence the only thing one had to pay for was wooden windows and a door made by a carpenter. If one had money, one could buy cement for a cement-floor, otherwise one would leave the floor simply with clay.

One could also use tin-sheets for roofing and cement for plastering the mud-walls. But these luxuries cost money. Lawrence had built such a one-room house, with clay floor and raffia leaves roof, but with wooden windows and a door during my absence in Europe. Rich people built houses with cement-blocks, and the even richer with cemented roofs or roof-tiles. From the house type, one could see the class-rank the owner belonged to. We spent hours on the



Image 12: Prophet James Menza of the 12 Apostles Church.

bench outside Lawrence's house discussing about the potential next step of the research. One day, while sitting on that bench, about a month after my second visit, the idea occurred to me: We should speak with people who had been sick and were cured either by a traditional or a Christian healer. Although these issues were personal and sensitive, Lawrence assured me that we could find many people who would accept to talk with us.

The outcome with regard to numbers was neither disappointing nor enthusiastic. During the next two months we took some 30 interviews from people who had got sick and were cured or people whose relatives had passed away from an alleged curse or witchcraft. From the perspective, however, of the wealth of information we gathered this search was quite interesting and illuminating. At the same time I complemented the research with a third component, that of recording the healing rituals in detail, especially all night

rituals and exorcisms. In this chapter I will describe selected cases of illnesses and misfortunes, while I will talk of the rituals in the next chapter. I will only present the cases here and I will comment on them in the next chapter. I picked eight cases, which I regard as the more characteristic ones:

### **1. Affliction by the extended family**

*M.A., a 25-year-old woman, was sick for one year. She said: "I had a heart attack and I was brought to the hospital... Doctors gave me medicine but I still had problems. I could not breathe well, eat well or sleep well. My parents sent me to a prayer centre in Asanta called 'Christian Life Fellowship'. I stayed there for 3 months. I fasted and prayed. There were more than 50 people in the centre. There was a pastor and a prayer group and the patients. They used to hold a service every day and every Friday they had an all-night vigil. Every two months they had a big programme, a big gathering, lasting for an entire week... Two pastors were in charge in that centre..."*

I.K.: "What Church did these two pastors come from? Do you know?"

M.A.: "They are Methodists. When you go there, they ask you about your problem and then they pray with you. I went there with my mother and she stayed with me for the whole period."

I.K.: "Did they tell you where your sickness problem [affliction] came from? Who was responsible for it?"

M.A.: "They knew but they did not tell me. They only gave guidelines about praying. They told us to pray against demonic powers, pray against the spirit of darkness, pray against enemies,"

I.K.: "And when did this happen? Were you healed?"

M.A.: “It was three years ago... Yes! I was healed, after three months I was healed and the symptoms disappeared.”

I.K.: “You have no idea of who inflicted [gave] the sickness upon you? No suspicion?” [I asked this question several times during the interview, in order to elicit an answer that I knew that was there but which the woman, in the beginning, was pretty reluctant to give to me].

M.A.: “I suspect the relatives of my father. Because my father funded me to open this business [a small stand-shop selling clothes], they were jealous of me and they cursed me to die, but because I am a Christian, I pray for them to change.”

I.K.: “What is your Church?”

M.A.: “I am a Methodist.”

I.K.: “Are you married?”

M.A.: “Yes! My husband is a teacher.”

## **2. Antagonism and competition for status and survival at a work place**

*E.A.F. is a teacher, 28, and I found him in Mr. Nyame's prayer camp. The interview was conducted in English:*

E.A.F.: “The sickness attacked me four years ago. I went to big hospitals at Tema, Kumasi, Accra, Ekwe.”

I.K.: “Where are you from?” [I knew he was not from Bokazo].

E.A.F.: “I come from Esiam, and I was teaching in Boguaso [a town] near Tarkwa... For four years I ran from hospital to hospital... They gave me medicine, but it was effective only for one week. After that it came back. They thought it was hernia but they

could not locate it. I first went to the Twelve Apostles Church, the Nakabas at Boguazo and then at Akpandwe.”

I.K.: “Those were prayer camps? Did you belong to this church?”

E.A.F.: “Yes, prayer camps. ‘Gardens’ they call them. No! I did not belong to them. I was and I still am a Roman Catholic. I stayed there for 8 months and I took various herbs.”

I.K.: “What were the symptoms of your sickness?”

E.A.F.: “It was weakness and tiredness like HIV.”

I.K.: “Did you check?”

E.A.F.: “Yes! It was negative. I could not stand on my feet out of weakness and apart from that my heart was beating very fast. When I took the herbs, I felt better and returned home. I was ok for two weeks, but after a month the sickness came back. I started fainting and falling down all of a sudden. It happened twice and I went to hospital again. They gave me painkillers. Back home I felt something going round within the stomach. I felt also something like needles piercing my body all over. I could not eat or drink for three days and three nights. I had also constipation for three days. When I tried to catch, touch or hold something, all the parts of my body began shaking.”

I.K.: “For how long had you been in Boguaso before the sickness-outbreak?”

E.A.F.: “I was there teaching for one year.”

I.K.: “Go on, what happened next?”

E.A.F.: “It was like that for a long time, on and off, but it got worse and worse. One day somebody from the Fantsi [=word] of Life Church, a reverend saw me in the street and told me that I

was long bewitched and I had just one week before I would die!”

I.K.: “Hold on! Why did the Twelve Apostles let you go since you were not well? Did they ever tell you what the reason for your sickness was?”

E.A.F.: “They had told me that I was cured and I was free to go, they had finished everything and the sickness would not return. From the first moment they told me that it was the headmaster of the school who was responsible for my sickness.”

I.K.: “Why you did not try a fetish priest instead?”

E.A.F.: “I relied on Christianity. I am a Christian. If I were to die, I wanted to die in God’s hands” [At the time of the interview I did not know that the Catholic Church denied a burial service to those who had died in a fetish priest’s courtyard.]

I.K.: “What happened after the man told you that you were about to die?”

E.A.F.: “I decided to go back to my mother [in Esiamia]. I was certain that I will die. I have a wife and two sons, 3 and 5 years old. My wife is also a teacher, she is still teaching there [in Bogaaso]. I shared all my properties; I made my will and I went back to my mother. My mother told me to go to a fetish priest but I refused. The following day I planned to come to Mr. Nyame who was my teacher in school, to pay a visit. I did not know he had been a Reverend and that he had established a prayer camp. When I came here and we shook hands he told me immediately that I was sick from a spiritual sickness and I should come here for prayers. Then I went back to my mother. She insisted on a fetish priest, but I denied. I spent 3 days in Esiamia. I was turning white and thin. I could not grasp and carry things and I felt pain in all my joints. I came here to Mr. Nyame.”

I.K.: “When did this happen?”

E.A.F.: “It was 7 months ago. I came here and after 3 days I started fasting - eating nothing from morning to afternoon, then some porridge and fufu at nights. After 3 days I felt strong again and I told Mr. Anthony I wanted to stay here. After that I started having serious dreams, and all the causes of the sickness were revealed in the dreams. God gave me a gift, to see things in dreams.”

I.K.: “What did you see in dreams?”

E.A.F.: “The headmaster had put juju in my food to kill me. There was a paper from the ministry that I had to replace him because I had completed training college and he had not. There was a new law. I was not aware of the paper. He had hidden it. I never found out. I had nothing to do with it, nor did I want to become a headmaster. They were our friends, we invited them to our house, and they invited us. After I had the dreams, I told some people I knew to look for the paper, and the paper was there. It was all true.

I.K.: “Tell me E. Why do you think that the treatment in the Twelve Apostles camp did not work? They had made the right diagnosis, had they not?”

E.A.F.: “They deal with descended gods . . . lesser gods. When I was there they told me that I offended the angels because they had told me to buy red candles and I didn’t. Then they told me to slaughter a cock to appease the angels. They said I should bathe with water which had been used by the pastor. In healing sessions, they would put me on the ground and step on me. They do not have the power of the almighty God.”

I.K.: “Since you are healed, what are you doing here?”

E.A.F.: “I decided to stay here and help Mr. Anthony with the prayer centre. I have joined the prayer force [see next chapter]. I



have applied for a transfer to this village or to Esiama”. [Apparently the headmaster was still in Boguaso, and as is always the case one cannot accuse somebody of sorcery without evidence.]

I.K.: “Thank you for telling me your story. Thank you very much indeed.”

### **3. A rivalry-quarrel and cursing within a marriage and the Twelve Apostles healer’s intervention**

*M.A. is a woman, 28 years old at the time of the interview, and she had just returned to Teleku Bokazo from the village of Asanta after divorcing her husband.*

M.A.: “It was not quite a sickness, you know. When I was with my husband in Asanta, we were in the bush making *apoteshi*, and when we finished, I brought it to the house and somebody told my husband that I had another boyfriend. My husband believed the person because he used to remain in the bush for a long time. Because it was not true, I called upon God and I said to my husband that if it were true, God should cast a thunder on me and the thunder would hit me, but if it was not true the thunder would hit my husband’s head. After that happened my husband was lying down on the bed and suddenly raised and fell down on the floor. When he went out, he felt somebody calling him but he turned round and saw nobody. For some days afterwards he would at certain periods stand still without looking around and without doing anything. When these things happened, my husband attacked me and beat me because he thought that I was responsible... After that I took my husband to the nearest healer.”

I.K.: “Was it a fetish priest?”

M.A.: “Yes... No! She was a Twelve Apostles prophetess. The woman told us that my curse was coming upon him but she told

him also that I was innocent of adultery. She told us to buy some things to appease the lesser god.” [This is the case when a lesser god listens and executes a wish, see Chapter 4. The woman may have used a form of speech addressing herself to the Christian God, but a lesser god listened and executed the rhetorical (was it rhetorical?) wish.]

I.K.: “Like what?”

M.A.: “One packet of candles, wine, two fowls and 100.000 cedis. We did buy and gave all these things to the priestess and then they gave us their symbol of power, they call it “staff”, it was a cross. They gave it to my husband to hold it and they hit his head with the Bible, and they called for the curse to set him free. Then they did the same thing to me, and with me they said that I should not curse again. I said that I did not know that the curse will really attack my husband. After that, my husband was set free and the symptoms disappeared.”

I open a parenthesis for a brief comment with regard to the 12 Apostles Church. Two elements are worthy to be noted here. First the Twelve Apostles prophetess used the Bible and the cross in a magical way and she applied measures to appease the lesser god in the same way that a fetish priestesses would do. The difference with a fetish priest was that the Christian God and the lesser god co-existed here, each one in his own domain, and the power of the former was used in order to tame the power of the latter. Definitely, however, the practice of giving fowls and money for removing a curse had departed from Prophet Harris’s original teachings. The second element is that in the previous story, the teacher did not implement all the practical measures that the healers suggested because he considered them anti-Christian, but this was also the reason that he was not healed, according to the Twelve Apostles healers. In the story of the couple’s row however, the man and the

woman who were illiterate did exactly what the prophetess asked them to do, and they were healed. The status factor is evident here. The teacher trusted another teacher, Mr. Nyame, for his healer, but not the illiterate and “pagan” Twelve Apostles prophets. He was also afflicted by another teacher, who was however of a lower status, since he had not finished training college. On the other hand, the illiterate couple trusted the illiterate prophetess.

#### **4. The fight for education and the lesser gods’ involvement**

*I met M.E., a woman between 65 and 70 years, and her husband J. E., 87, both farmers with respectable land possessions. They belonged to one of the very old lineages of the village. I met them in their compound yard in the village. They had a son who had died four to five years ago, and the discussion began with that.*

J.E.: “Our son had a baby with a woman when he died. He was 30 years old.”

I.K.: “What happened to him?”

M.E.: “He was living alone in Esiamia. He was suffering with stomach problems. We sent him to the hospital. The doctor said that he should be operated and he died on the operation.”

I.K.: “So?”

M.E.: “It was the lesser gods. He was cursed.”

I.K.: “But how do you know this?”

J.E.: “My wife went to the spirit possessor [It was Agnes Ehoma,] to ask about the cause of the death. She told us that our son had been cursed. I used to have raffia palms and our son was looking after the trees. He had workers working for him. They made *apoteshi*. The workers envied him. They cursed him to the lesser

god. We suspected that for a long time. We wanted to help him to study, because he wanted to and none of our other children had studied [see Chapter 3: one of the children must study]. He went to NASS [National Agricultural Secondary School] but he was sick and he did not pass the exams. I sent him to Kikam [the next village after Esiama in the direction of Takoradi]. There is a technical school there and, in a sense, Kikam itself has been identified with the school; the old man here says that he sent the boy to the technical school in Kikam]. He passed, and after that I sent him to the raffia grove in order to work and raise money for the Polytechnic in Takoradi.”

I.K.: “But, since the boy went to the hospital and they diagnosed a disease, how can you be so sure that it was spiritual?”

J.E.: “He had hernia, but the curse increased the disease. If you undergo an operation, you do not die from hernia. The doctor said that all the intestines were spoiled and destroyed, but he did not have any cancer”.

M.E.: “He was good. He did not get married because he wanted to go to the university. If you get the symptoms early, then you go to a fetish priest, but he, he did not have the time.”

I.K.: “Is that all that you want to tell me?”

J.E.: “No! If somebody dies from a lesser god, the spirit of the dead person, still belongs to the lesser god. The relatives of the dead person must present sheep to the lesser god in order to free the spirit. The first month after my son died, his mother fell sick [“his mother” refers to his wife, but she is not his only wife]. The ghost of the son wanted to kill the mother because we did not offer a sheep to the lesser god after his death [see Chapter 4 about ghosts]. At first it was fever; she went to the hospital, but it was

not the red fever [malaria]. The spirit who possesses our relative told her that the son wants to take the mother.”

I.K.: “Who was the lesser god that took the son? Did the spirit of your relative reveal that?”

J.E.: “Yes! The lesser god was called Edudu”.

I.K.: “Who was the servant fetish priest of this lesser god?”

J.E.: “He said [the spirit] that there is no servant fetish priest but the lesser god lives there, nearby [the raffia grove]. He is the lesser god of the river. One can just go to the river, pour libation, put a curse upon somebody, and the lesser god will take action.”

I.K.: “One does not need the mediation of a fetish priest, or a juju person to do that?”

J.E.: “No! Only pour libation”.

I.K.: “What happened to your wife afterwards?”

J.E.: “We offered the sheep to the lesser god and she recovered”.

### **5. A complex case involving farming, ancestors, ghosts and a lesser god**

*Mr. G.A.S.'s story was very interesting and sensitive in many respects. He was 34, an active farmer and also came from one of the old families in the village. He is also a very active Christian in one of the village's Christian institutions. Although it would be interesting to know which this institution was, principles of confidentiality oblige me not to reveal it. I was friends with G.A.S., before I launched my “sickness and misfortune” venture, and this made the sharing of sensitive personal information considerably easier. The interview was conducted in English.*

G.A.S.: “It was last year, the first week of October, when I went to Eluku, a village at Tarkua road, before Bamiango [a larger village, which I had visited once ]. I have a coconut farm there and I had to go and apply fertilizers to the coconut trees. There are some NGOs from Cote d’Ivoire, they give improved seeds and the fertilizers for four years and then they get the new seeds from the trees. I was in that program. I went to apply the fertilizers.”

I.K.: “You do it during a specific time of the year?”

G.A.S.: “Yes, during the rainy-season or little after, it depends on the weather; once a year.”

I.K.: “How many trees have you got there?”

G.A.S.: “120 trees. Normally it takes me 5 days to weed and 4 days to apply the fertilizer. At that time, I was there weeding.”

I.K.: “How come you have a farm that distance away [About 10 km from the village]?”

G.A.S.: “The farm belonged to my grandmother and I inherited it.”

I.K.: “Go on. What happened then?”

G.A.S.: “While I was weeding, I heard [felt] that I was caned by somebody. I thought that somebody had hit me on my back with a stick or something. I looked but there was nobody there and I started weeding again. There is a certain weed we call “*achampo*” and I thought that it was this weed that had hit me as I was moving and cutting the weeds. But after that I felt strong pains in my penis. I sat down for 10 minutes, and when I stood up again, I could not work any more. I took my bicycle and returned home. I did not inform my mother or grandmother about the event. The next day I went to the farm again. I thought that it was because of

riding the bike that I was feeling this pain in the penis, but the next day when I arrived at the farm it was not just the penis but my whole body was in pain. For five days the pain did not go away. I then informed my mother and my grandmother. They gave me herbs. For three days I could not sleep, eat, or go to the toilet. It was particularly in the penis and in the bottom that the pain was strong. Then my grandmother went to the fetish priestess [Bletzane Mame Ama] and at the same time my mother went to the spirit woman [Agnes Ehoma]. Both of them said the same thing.”

I.K.: “And what was that?”

G.A.S.: “They said that in August last year, one of the grandmothers [as people call all matrilineal sisters, mothers and grandmothers] died, and they did [conducted] the funeral and everything. They knew that the lesser gods had killed the grandmother. Her husband had taken coconuts and threw them into the river so no one could eat.”

I.K.: “I do not understand.”

G.A.S.: “After he ate and used the coconuts he needed for himself, he threw the remaining fruits into the river so no one else could eat. The lesser god in the stream killed the man, because what he did was wicked. In such a case people usually sacrifice a sheep so that the lesser god may release the spirit of the person. The grandmother did not sacrifice a sheep and then she was killed as well. The family decided to do [perform] the sacrifice in December, that is 6 months after August when grandmother died [it is 4 months but I did not want to interrupt Mr. G.A.S., as I was amazed by what he was saying]. So, it was the ghost of the grandmother who hit me in the back in October. The fetish priestess talked with the ghost of the grandmother and she said that if the family did not sacrifice, she would kill me. In the meantime, it was three

weeks after the event and I was becoming thin and I had to drink a lot of water in order to be able to eat. My grandmother and my mother bought a sheep and they went to the bush and slaughtered the sheep. The lesser god came to the fetish priest and told her what had happened in the bush. A week later I recovered. It took me in total one month after the event at the farm to recover. My grandmother had worshiped the lesser gods for years. Every year she went and sacrificed a sheep; this was an agreement with them so that she could prosper in the farm. They did not want anything else from the family. At that time another fetish priest in Nkroful had told me that I had got gonorrhoea from sexual intercourse, but it was not true.”

I.K.: “You were really healed after the sheep’s slaughter in the bush?”

G.A.S.: “Yes! I was able to work again and the pain never came back.”

I.K.: “So the lesser god had killed your grandmother? And he would kill you too unless you offered that sheep?”

G.A.S.: “No, the ghost of her husband had killed my grandmother and her ghost would have killed me... not the lesser god.”

#### **6. A case of jealousy and hatred between wives**

*S.A. is 30, married with 3 children. She used to cook yam in the market before she fell sick, but now she does not.*

I.K.: “Does your husband live with you?”

S.A.: “No! He is in Aynashie but we are not divorced... he works there.”

I.K.: “Tell me about your sickness.”



S.A.: “It was 2 years ago when I fell sick. I was pregnant and I was sent to the hospital. At first, when I went to sleep, it was as if something came to cover me and killed me; and then I felt I had fever. I could not eat but I did not feel any pain. I was in the fourth month of pregnancy. I was taken to the hospital and I stayed there for 3 weeks but the doctors could not find any disease in my body. After three weeks I returned, and my mother took me to a fetish priest. When I was in the hospital the sickness had stopped, but my mother had already taken my clothing and she took it to the fetish priest. The fetish priest was in Ekwe.”

I.K.: “Was it a man or a woman?”

S.A.: “It was a woman. She said that somebody gave me to a lesser god to kill me due to jealousy [“give” somebody to a lesser god means to curse somebody to die].”

I.K.: “Did she identify the person?”

S.A.: “Yes! My husband had married a woman and then he had divorced her. It was she who cursed me. I know the woman, and she is now pregnant . . . [She gets angry while speaking]. I will not do anything to her, although I should.”

I.K.: “Is that woman here in the village?”

S.A.: “Yes! [My assistant nodded as if he knew the woman but I shook my head at him to show that I was not interested in finding out who she was, only whether she lived in the village or not.]

I.K.: “Are you a Christian? What is your church?”

S.A.: “My church is Sacred Action, but since I gave birth, I have not gone to the church.”

I.K.: “What happened after the fetish priest in Ekwe diagnosed the cause of your sickness?”

S.A.: “After Ekwe I visited a fetish priestess here in Bokazo [Agnes Enutsi Akesi]. She told me to buy drinks [schnapps] and fowls for the lesser god. I bought 10 bottles and then she mixed water and herbs and gave them to me to bathe in. She revealed to me that the woman had given me to 5 lesser gods. The woman knew that my husband was strong. She had used juju against him before, and then she attacked me. She wanted me to die from the time I was in the hospital. She was jealous of me because she had given birth to a child and the child had died.”

I.K.: “Is that woman childless?”

S.A.: “No! She has children from another man but she wanted to have a child with my husband in order to tie him [down]. Because he did not want her, and he wanted to be with me.”

I.K.: “But tell me! What happened after you went to the Bokazo fetish priestess?”

S.A.: “I stayed there for one and a half years. The fetish priestess should tell me when to go. I mean the lesser god who possessed her... because she was possessed every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday and the lesser god told her who was free to go and who should stay. It was like a church there. For the time I stayed I participated in all the rituals... the food offerings once a year and the dances throughout the year when the lesser god dictated. She finally told me that I was free to go but now they have told me that the lesser god wants two sheep from me...”

I.K.: “How much does it cost? How much is one sheep?”

S.A.: “A sheep costs ₦450,000 to ₦500,000 each.” [Approximately one month of a teacher’s salary]

I.K.: “And a fowl?”

S.A.: “₦ 15,000 to 20,000 [about the same amount is required for a

bottle of schnapps]... I had another baby after the sickness [the baby was there with her, during the interview, just a couple of months old]. This baby stayed in my stomach more than a year and it was only with the help of the lesser god that it came out.”

I.K.: “How do you manage with living?”

S.A.: “Before the sickness, I used to cook yam and sell in the market; now my husband and my mother help me.”

### **7. Competition in the market and cursing to death for a load of cassava**

*I met C.A., a woman of 56 years, outside my assistant's house. She had come from the fetish priestess's yard where she normally lived, just to talk to me. It was during this particular interview that I realised that all the people who agreed to talk to me were seeking also some kind of help, not in financial terms as was usual, but from a yearning for the truth or sharing the truth with an outsider.*

C.A.: “It was 6 months ago. I went to the bush and I bought 50 pieces of cassava from a woman. I used to cook the fufu and sell it at the market. I was good at it and people bought a lot. The woman who owned the farm told me afterwards that she had uprooted and given me 200 cassavas but I was sure it was 50, because I cook and I know what I have to cook. We were exchanging words... bad words. The river was near the farm, and the woman went and cursed me to the lesser god. A few days later I had fever and after that I went to the hospital three times. One day I went out and I felt that something had hit me. I could not see, I fell down and I hit my head against a mud wall, and I fell unconscious. When I woke up, I was at the fetish priestess's yard [Bletzane Mame Ama]. The fetish priestess informed me that it was the woman with the cassava that had cursed me. She suggested that I

should go and find her and settle the issue, which I did. I went to talk to her but she told me that, unless I paid for the 200, I should not eat cassava again on this earth. I paid the 100 but the woman demanded the other 100 as well and I did not have money. The fetish priest suggested that unless I paid for the whole 200 the curse would not be removed.”

I.K.: “But . . . Sorry. Since you had taken only 50 cassavas, why should you pay for 200? The other woman was not right and by giving her the money for 200 it is as if you recognise that she is right and you are wrong! What is the point here?” [ After a number of interviews, I had acquired intuition about whether people were telling me the truth or not, and I was more than certain that this woman was telling me the truth, whereas I suspected that the fetish priestess might have not believed her. However, what was more important in that case was not the truth, but who was more powerful.]

C.A.: “The fetish priestess told me that the woman goes everyday to her farm and because the river is in her farm she talks everyday to the lesser god and the curse is very strong, so I have to pay. The woman had cursed me not to eat cassava again in my life. A week after that, I put cassava on the fire and on the top of the pot I put plantain and I ate only the plantain but because they were in the same pot, I fell down and I almost died.”

I.K.: “What happened next?”

C.A.: “Nothing! I have not been discharged from the fetish priest. . . I still sleep there and at dawn I come back home. I had a small farm with garden eggs but because I am sick; I do not go there any more. I struggle to find the money to pay back the other woman. I do not make fufu anymore, but I make the bolo-bolo (a food with some herbs and eggs). My son goes to the JSS [Junior

Secondary School] and I have to help him as well. He cannot do any work to help me...”

I.K.: “How much is the money you must pay the other woman?”

C.A.: “¢ 420.000 [£ 25]”

I.K.: “Thank you.”

### **8. The man who killed 3 people (at least) and still walks free...**

*My assistant Lawrence Agyarko recounted this story to me. It was one of several stories he conveyed to me in the evenings after our exhausting search for afflicted persons. (Many times, people failed to show up at the appointed meeting times, or others changed their minds at the last minute and would not talk to us.) As we discussed people’s narratives, these stories occurred to him and would ask: “Are you interested in listening to this story? Is it relevant to what you are looking for?” I cite this story here because I believe it is an important example of stories that circulate among the village inhabitants and which everyone considers true. I use my assistant’s own words.*

L.A.: “The man had a drinking bar. It happened 8 years ago. He did not want any other person to run a drinking bar. Nor did he also want people to build block houses [houses with cement blocks]. He tried to kill someone who was a spot owner [“spot” means a drinking and refreshment bar in Ghana].”

I.K.: “How?”

L.A.: “He put the juju under the man’s spot.”

I.K.: “How?”

L.A.: “By digging a hole in the base of the wall. He did that and he killed the person. Then he killed a second person who had a

drinking spot, in the same way. Nobody knew at that time. No one suspected anything. Because the nephew came and continued to sell drinks.”

I.K.: “The nephew of the deceased?”

L.A.: “Yes... the juju killed the nephew as well. Up to that point nobody had suspected him. Next was Mr. Anthony [Mr. Nyame, the prayer centre leader]. He had a spot in the place where you bought the trousers [in village’s main road]. But Mr. Anthony was not selling himself; he was studying at that time in the university and he had opened the spot to raise some money for his fees. He had hired someone else to sell. Mr. Anthony fell sick and his tongue was rotting. Mr. Anthony went to a native doctor [it was before he launched the prayer centre], the doctor [“native doctor” is another term for a fetish priest] was not from Bokazo. The man came to Bokazo and they went straight to the spot in order to find the juju. The man dug... he used a hoe, but before that he let women urinate and he drank the urines. The urine gave him power to trace the juju. At times he touched the juju, but it burned his hands and he went for another cup of urine. The urine cooled the burning and he kept on. At last, when he found the juju, he got a woman to urinate on it. After digging it out and the woman urinated on it, he took it along with him.”

I.K.: “What was the juju... what substance?”

L.A.: “They usually use special herbs, something of the person who is about to die, like a piece of clothing or hair, and they tie them with needles and black thread.”

I.K.: “Go on . . .”

L.A.: “After that Mr. Anthony was ok. But the native doctor did not mention the person who was responsible.”

I.K.: “Why?”

L.A.: “I do not know why. Spiritual forces struggle against each other and the strongest wins... but sometimes the battle is not decisive because no part is strong enough to kill the other.”

I.K.: “Go on... What happened next?”

L.A.: “The man who had put the juju in place continued to do so. He went to another person who had a drinking spot. He dug and put the juju at this spot, at dawn. The juju walked [!] towards the interior of the spot, but somebody, by his bad fortune, was drunk and he was lying nearby and he saw the man and he recognised him. So, the next morning he told the owner of the spot what had happened. Then the situation turned into a fight. After that everybody knew that this was the man who had caused all the incidents in town. But the man was clever enough to take the juju back so that people could not find it. After this the male youth of the village did not like the man and they went and threw stones at the man’s store and they removed the roof-sheets but because it was a block house they could not break it down completely. At that time Mr. Anthony had become the assemblyman [the elected representative of the village to the district assembly] in the village.”

I.K.: “Did he encourage the action?”

L.A.: “He did not take part, but he supported it, yes...”

I.K.: “Do you think that the testimony of the drunken person who saw the man at dawn was enough evidence?”

L.A.: “The man had denied everything but nobody believed him anymore. The youths [mob?] had broken down the door of his store and they found a big bottle, a glass container and inside the container there were two snakes, alive, in water. One snake was with the head down and one snake was with the head up. After the

looting of the spot the man used someone who had witnessed the youths and took them to court. He accused the youths of stealing 7 million cedis from his store, but the court did not find enough evidence and no one was convicted.”

I.K.: “What happened next?”

L.A.: “The man is still here... he has built a second spot but he has not opened it yet. Now he has a chainsaw and he signs contracts with the gold-miners. The old spot is still open and operates regularly.”

I.K.: “But if the man was really guilty, why does he walk free and prosper?”

L.A.: “Before one decides to do things such as those he did, one strengthens himself so that he can withstand the counterattacks.”



## CHAPTER 16

### CLOSING THE CIRCLE AND THE CONCLUSIONS I COULD NOT SEE

The stories I collected through the interviews with, or about, spiritually afflicted persons were all breathtaking providing a treasure of valuable first-hand information. In parallel with the interviews with afflicted persons two other activities were going on. First my discussions with prophet James Dejene Menza (or simply James) from the 12 Apostles Church and the traditional healer Lisbet Kufiaka Ebuaso (or just Lisbet) went deeper and deeper. The other activity was the recording (in my notebook) of the healing rituals in detail. During those rituals, which took place usually once a month, various illnesses and misfortunes (for example women who could not become pregnant, men who could not find a job and the like) were dealt with mass exorcisms. They lasted usually a whole night or a whole day and they took place the last Friday or the last Saturday of each month. I had attended many such rituals by many Churches (to the respective trance rituals of the traditional healers, which were always individualized and never massive, I was never allowed to attend), but none from the begin-

ning to the end (lasting usually for 12 hours). I decided to concentrate on two specific rituals and participate in them from the beginning to the end. The first was an all-night healing service at Mr. Nyame's center and the second a peripheral all day rite of all regional 12 Apostles diocese, which took place at Anyinasie, a town 20 kilometres north of Teleku Bokazo. It was there where I saw a cocoa tree for the first time and also some timber exploiting places. My participation in those two rituals was very important, because apart from recording all activities, prayers, songs, dances, testimonies, preaching, and exorcisms in detail by dividing them in sequences, I also participated actively, at one I danced and at the other I gave a speech. This meant that I was step by step approaching closer and closer to the local culture.

Nevertheless, however helpful my participation in rituals and my discussions with Mr. James and Mrs. Lisbet might be, nothing could be compared to the importance of the interviews with the spiritually afflicted persons. The interviews were important not just for their emotional value and the crucial information concerning life and death of the interviewees, but also for another reason. The interviews gave answers to my forgotten initial research questions, the questions which had been buried under the conventions and the requirements of the academia. As a matter of fact, these answers led also to a subversion of my initial assumption, in quite the same way as it had happened with my assumption about ethnicity in England during my Master's research. My assumption, in the rejected upgrading proposal, was that witchcraft accusations increase when social inequality increases, in a direction from the "poor" against the "rich" in a desperate attempt to restore social balance. Although I had discovered significant inequalities with regard to profession, education and income in the village through the questionnaire, I could not match these inequalities with religious

preferences, with the exception of the 12 Apostles Church plus the traditional religion, where almost all followers were illiterate farmers. Nevertheless, the narrations of the afflicted interviewees showed why the poor, although a social majority was in fact a religious minority in terms of the noise they made in the village, the increasing numbers and the intensity of their rituals and other activities.

Under the neo-colonial domination of the World-bank and the IMF for more than 30 years, after the disintegration of social relationships and institutions, and the destruction of social policies by neo-liberalism, the direction of “witchcraft” (on that matter, also the curses, the ancestral and the lesser god’s afflictions) accusations was reversed. Instead of the direction from the poor against the rich for anti-social, anti-communal individual enrichment, the accusations now were addressed from the rich (or the prospected rich) against the poor for jealousy, backwardness and hindering “progress”. So, there were two kinds of “witchcraft”, two kinds of spiritual affliction, historically determined. Both “witchcrafts” were related to inequality but they were heading to opposite directions. The first one could be related to a sort of resistance against individual enrichment well above and unexpectedly higher than the rest of the community. I could understand well this kind, because of the rural background of my own family. I could see a lot of similarities between the stories I heard in Teleku Bokazo and relevant stories about the Greek evil eye, about the fairies and the spirits of the bush, the curses and the like, stories that I had heard by my own grandmother during my childhood.

However, I could not relate the second kind of “witchcraft” to any of my own cultural experiences. This second kind did not address itself to the greed and arrogance of the rich but against the bigotry

and jealousy of the poor. This second kind of “witchcraft” presupposed that the social strata concerned (that is the poor farmers, the wage labourers, the illiterates, the excluded) would have been totally defeated politically and economically first, so that their cultural, moral and ideological defeat would follow after. This was the condition in Ghana and in Sub-Saharan Africa in general. Some of the “affliction-narratives” were characteristic as far as the jealousy of the poor and the uneducated is concerned. On the other hand, the rhetoric of the “charismatic Churches” who praised wealth and “prosperity”, the ideology against the “diabolic” traditional religion and above all the disintegration of social cohesion and social institutions led directly to individualization and the incrimination of the lower social strata. Since material conditions continued to be underdeveloped and modernization never really arrived, the magical element in social life remained strong but it changed direction. The core of this “new” direction was the demonization and devaluation of local culture as “backward” and a major barrier to “development”. The balance of power was overwhelmingly against Africa. The symbolic and cultural capital (knowledge, tradition, discourse and symbols of power), which could be used as a weapon of resistance against neoliberal policies, either did not exist from scratch or it had been defeated in the course of time. There was no “nationalism” since African “nations” were artificial and arbitrary constructions of colonialism, there was no “religion” as the Christian Euro-American missions had destroyed local religious systems, there was no political opposition, since the liberation movements from the era of the fight for independence had been absorbed by corrupted State-bureaucracies and dissolved by inter-ethnic rivalries. This condition, the total absence of structural opposition, either social, cosmological or political, was something completely new to me, something completely unfamiliar to my European experience.

In essence, the PhD was completed as soon as I realized this “second” kind of witchcraft, the one of the “rich” against the “poor”. However, this realization referred to my own initial hypothesis about social inequality and witchcraft, and not the one I had presented to the University. In fact, I conducted two researches at the same time, one for me and one for the University. The latter was dominated by the question of what makes different people to follow different Churches. My own question was what kind of social inequality leads to witchcraft accusations. The question for the University was academically correct, the question for me was my real concern. Since I had to write up a thesis with 100,000 words, to present my “data”, my “methods” and my “conclusions”, the research was overtaken by the question for the University. With regard to my own question the subversion was dramatic, although I could not express it literally. When I started the research, I did not expect that “witchcraft” (and I mean all the related phenomena with this term, curses, afflictions by gods, ancestors, spirits and the like) would be a weapon of the “rich” against the “poor”, as they possessed so many other weapons, in political and economic terms. However, the alleged battle against the “witchcraft” of the poor aimed at rather expectations instead of realities. One should adopt “westernness” and reject “withcraft”, that is traditional religion, in order to *become* “rich” and privileged, in order to *become* “modern”.

This was a significant subversion to me, because, as a former marxist I expected that spiritual accusations would be addressed from the poor against the rich and not the vice versa. Among the narratives of afflictions, it was that of the two parents, who imputed their son’s death to the jealousy of his workers, but it was also evident in many other cases. Anyone, who wanted to “prosper”

seemed to encounter the “witchcraft” of the “underclass”, the “backwards” and the poor. There were only two stories that were different. The story about the bar-owner, who belonged to the powerful group and the story of the cassava seller, who was more powerful than her afflicted antagonist. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that these powerful persons were accused, they were never punished for their “witchcraft” and they never compensated for their victims. This meant that they were already in a better position to refute the accusations. Therefore, my initial hypothesis, this hypothesis that triggered the PhD endeavour in the first place, namely the hypothesis that popular religion always and everywhere, had an anti-hierarchical character in essence, had fallen apart! Here in Teleku Bokazo, we had a condition “all against all” with an exception of a tiny minority of educated Catholics or “no Church”, who did not participate in the circuit of curse/witchcraft-illness/misfortune towards healing/Christian or traditional and back again. Although I could analytically discern the two directions of spiritual accusations against the rich and against the poor in two different historical periods, in the colonial period the former and in the contemporary bankrupt modernity the latter, in reality all periods and all directions converged in the historical present.

This condition justified the co-existence of all Christian currents (“historical” missionary, prophetic, Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, “charismatic” and “prosperity” gospel) with the traditional healers. Despite, however, this co-existence, it was clear that neo-Pentecostal and charismatics, followers of the “prosperity” gospel, had gained the hegemony in the Christian scene. They had imposed not only their ideology but also their healing practices with their mega-congregations and massive exorcisms. Their ideology was simple: Praising the riches and the social ascendance as a sign of

divine favour! A sort of renewed Calvinism without the notion of the selected few. It was not accidental that these “charismatic leaders” accused traditional religion and lesser gods as the source of all evils. In reality, they accused the poor farmers and the outcasts, who still believed in traditional religion. This sort of demonization of tradition was not unprecedented. In fact, European missions 150 years earlier, used identical rhetoric. The difference, however, was that new charismatic leaders used similar practices with traditional religion in terms of healing and casting out demons. They allegedly performed miracles, and the infidels called them “tricksters” or just crooks. The contrast with the old prophetic African Churches was also striking. The old African prophets were and remained poor throughout their lives, they preached humility and were loyal to the New Testament’s message “blessed are the poor in spirit”. They, by no means, regarded poverty as a shame, nor did they praise the riches a sign of God’s favour. It was obvious that behind those serious changes lay not merely theological but also historical and political reasons. The IMF and the World Bank entered Ghana in 1982, after the official bankruptcy of the country in 1979. The consequences of the neoliberal policies the two international organizations imposed on Ghana (dissolution of the public domain, destruction of social cohesion, privatization and selloff of all public organizations, impoverishment of the lower social strata) became evident during the 1990’s when charismatic Churches and prayer and healing centres began to spread like mushrooms.

I will mention just one example of what IMF and World Bank imposed policies meant for Ghana. Sometime in the beginning of the 1990’s they imposed fees in all education tiers even in State elementary schools, because they considered that the State could not exclusively provide for their operation. One can imagine how

important may be the imposition of fees in the elementary school in a country where the half of the population do not speak the official language of the State. Families with many children could not afford sending them all to school. They sent usually one child, and the rest worked in farms or in petty-trade. The situation in secondary and tertiary education was not better. Fees increased in each next stage. Students deferred very often, went to work, and returned to continue their studies later. I met secondary school students who were 25 years old and most university students graduated in their 30s or even later. My friends Johnnie and Emmanuel were over 30, while my assistant Lawrence was 24 and he had not graduated the secondary school. One can imagine how a person feels, when s/he has made all these sacrifices to study, finishes school or university and his/her only future is unemployment. If he/she (in this case it is rather "he" but there were also female prophets in some cases) has the chance to become a pastor in a new Church s/he will grab it as a God's sent fortune. When unemployment rose up to unprecedented heights during the 1990s, new Christian Churches were a way out for the educated youth.

Within this complexity of reasons, traditions and tendencies, it was difficult to sort out why different people followed different Churches. A sort of compass was needed. For my interlocutors this compass was their own faith. However, this was not "faith" in the European sense, that is a private affair of the individuals, an affair that did not affect their public, social and professional life. It seemed to be a holistic and cohesive system of perceptions and everyday activities based on few elementary principles, understood by everybody, principles that applied in the same way to all issues, secular and cosmological, public and private, every-day and lifetime. In a word this faith was not faith in a "religion" rather than in an effective help to a decent living, a set of practices within the



world. Apart from fetish priestess Lisbet, during that period, I spoke also with the village's "herbsman", who was also the head of the clan, which was dominant in the village. This man was the only healing-agent in the village, who was not a servant of a particular lesser god, who was not a priest. Nevertheless, the herbs, which he knew where to collect from in the bush, and knew how to mix them in order to acquire their capacities, had magical power. For example, he told me: "if a market-seller spread some special herbs-mixture on his/her body, people would massively buy from him/her". "If someone in love uses the appropriate herbs, s/he will attract the prospected lover easily". To my questions the herbsman responded that he was taught the art of herbs by his father, that the way one prepares the herbs is very important, and that he knew how to make "juju" but he did not make them "because they could seriously harm people". I was rather sceptical on the last response.



Image 13: The herbsman.

Making juju did not presuppose divine instruction. It was an art. The curse or the libation to the lesser-god gave the magical power to the juju. To me it was reasonable for a herbs-artisan to make juju as well. It was not up to him how his clients would use it.

The herbsman, who was 75 years old by then, gave me valuable information. He also contemplated on religious and cosmological issues. I used some of his characteristic phrases in my thesis two years later. In the question that I posed to everybody, “why do you believe there are so many Churches in Ghana?”, he replied: “Why do you ask me this? You, the white-people brought all those Churches to us!”. Upon this simple response I based the entire first version of my thesis, namely upon the hypothesis that Christian pluralism in Ghana is imported and not indigenous (this version was rejected! See below). The herbsman was a philosopher, anyway. I asked him: “If you are a good Christian and someone makes a juju against you, can this harm you?” He replied: “If you are a good Christian, nothing can harm you!”. “However...” he told me, “Watch out! It is like a boxing-ring... Many powerful fighters fight on the ring but in the end, only one will win, the most powerful one!”.

This metaphor with “power” was very common. Lisbet, the fetish-priestess had mentioned it as well. She had told me that, when lesser gods are asked by someone to kill (through libations, curses and sacrifices), they cannot deny because, if they deny, they will show weakness (the opposite of power). Even when a lesser god accepts the counter-libations and sacrifices and releases the victim of a curse, this is a sign of his/her power. Thus, power is a basic feature of local culture. This may explain the submission to the Europeans’ military and economic power during colonialism. However, what sort of power did local people ascribe to Christianity?

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What exactly was the power that made “good Christians” invulnerable against black magic and sorcery? And which was the “most powerful” among the lots of Christianities that circulated in the country? I will examine these questions in the chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER 17

### I AND RELIGION, MY CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY, RELIGION AND CLASS

It was just few days before Christmas of 2004-2005, when I had started interviewing spiritually afflicted persons that I fell ill myself. I had for a long time been using a prayer that my aunts and uncles used to say back in Greece in order to cast away the evil eye from other persons, but this time the sickness seemed to be much more serious than the headache or the dizziness that the evil eye usually causes. I had constant diarrhoea and severe pains in my stomach. I thought I was going to die. I said to myself: “This is witchcraft! It is not an ordinary disease!” I ran straight to my friend and informant Lisbet the fetish priestess. She was laughing at me! The white man could not be afflicted. She said: “I would know it, if it was witchcraft!” and she suggested western medicine instead of spiritual treatment! I said: “I am sure it is witchcraft! Perhaps your god cannot trace the witch!” While we were talking a snake appeared in front of us and I told her: “Do you see! Do you see! The snake is the witch and came here to finish me off!”

Despite my insistence on witchcraft causality and after I tried Mr. Nyame, the Christian prophet who was not at home, I took seriously the fetish priestess' suggestion and I visited the doctor's surgery in Essiama. Each time I made an effort to do something about it, the pain went down, but after a while it would come back stronger. When I entered the surgery's courtyard, I found at least 50 people waiting in the line before me, 90% of whom were women with children. I could see the despair in their faces, the agony and the stress. No one could know what exactly each one of them was there for — malaria, HIV, cancer, common flu; this was the only surgery within 40 kilometres. I could not know from what distance all these people had travelled to reach this surgery. A nurse came to me almost immediately. She said: "If you want to come first, come now please. The doctor will see you immediately." I was supposed to jump the queue because I was a white man! I felt ashamed just with the thought! I said: "No! I will wait." After two hours the queue was the same as when I arrived. Despite the pain I went back to my room.

There the most severe crisis of diarrhoea hit me and I was certain that I would die. While in the bathroom, I tried to spell the prayer, the same one that I had used till then for other people and the evil eye. I made only two changes. Instead of other people's names I put my name alone, and in the place where I asked Jesus to release the person from the evil eye, I asked to be released from the bonds of witchcraft. The prayer was the following:

*My Lord Jesus Christ, You, Who descended from Heaven to Earth and You were crucified and with Your Holy Blood You redeemed the humans from the shackles of Sin, please release dear Christ your servant, me, Ioannis from the shackles of*

*witchcraft. Jesus Christs defeats and Lady Holy Mary repels all evil (three times).*

As soon as I finished the prayer, the pain disappeared and the diarrhoea stopped. The next day I travelled to the city to buy carton milk in order to treat my stomach which had been empty for three days. The pain and the diarrhoea did not return again.

I neither discussed the incident with anybody, nor I included it in my thesis, however, it was undoubtedly the most important incident during my 13 months fieldwork in Teleku Bokazo, and one of the more important ones in my entire life. Up to that moment my relationship to religion was a relationship of a western intellectual, who was sympathetic to people's beliefs but ascribed it to social and psychological grounds. This was my initial point of departure, but my fieldwork led me way far beyond this point of departure. One could say that the entire fieldwork was a rite of passage for me, a passage from the status of a sympathetic intellectual to a true believer. Of course, my conversion did not occur suddenly. It was a course of events and interactions, one of which was my self-healing through prayer. It was needless to say that this course ran counter to the requirements of the PhD and it was something completely indifferent to the academia. To me personally, however, it was the most important.

Even among my social milieu back in Greece, however, to be a Christian was uncommon and weird. For more than 30 years I belonged to this group of intellectuals that we can call "progressive atheists with tolerance to believers", a sort of open-minded atheist Marxists. In my cultural background "progressive" meant either atheist or agnostic. I grew up in a country where the Church (and religion in general in that matter) was identical with conservatism,

obscurantism, backwardness, the authorities and oppression. Thus, “believing in God” had been historically related to the official Church, which worked with authorities and the State in favour of the rich, keeping the poor and the weak through “the fear of God” in thrall to the powerful of the society. To an extent this was true. However, the “truth” of the Church’s conservatism was rather a cultural truth, based on the Greek historical experience. Experience is very strong, and sometimes stronger than knowledge, as it is embodied and unconsciously infused into one’s system of values and beliefs.

My own lived experience, as well as, the experiences of the majority of my generation with the Greek Orthodox Church was quite negative. When I was at the elementary school, we had a military dictatorship in Greece and the Church played a very active role in supporting the regime. Teachers took us to the services of the Church directly from school and confessing was also compulsory (for 6–7-year-olds, what might the sins be?). Religion was a pillar for the regime as effective as the military and the police, and that is why it was hated by many people. Apart from that, the priests, vested by the autocracy of authority were very rude and imperious. My parents grew up in rural Greece and they were both devoted Christians. They took us to Church every Christmas and Easter, but when I was 12, I had a bad experience with a priest that turned me off the Church for good. It was a few days before Easter at a village Church near my mother’s village, when we went to receive the holy Communion. Suddenly exactly at my turn, the priest stopped the process and asked me loudly in front of everybody, whether I had previously confessed. I replied “No” and then he became shouting and yelling at me: “I have told you many times! Never come to holy Communion unless you have confessed first!”. I was embarrassed and it was that moment that I

decided that I am an atheist and I will never take the holy Communion again in my life! At the age of 15 I joined the youth organization of the Communist Party.

From that period up to the day I stepped my foot in Ghana I was officially an atheist and the same were my friends and acquaintances. Being an atheist was a sort of identity for a Greek (or even more a European) leftist, since the Church in Greece (and Europe) was identified with conservatism and reactionism. The question is: How did someone like myself, identified with atheism for 30 years, decide to convert to Christianity, after 13 months in Ghana? By conversion to Christianity, I mean a conscious conversion and not a typical one such as this sort of belonging to a “Christian Nation” by birth. The answer to the above question is not simple. It has three or four legs. The first leg tells that the conversion was gradual and not sudden. The first rifts to atheism started when I began to question dogmatic Marxism and, later, western rationalism. The loss of my father enhanced metaphysical investigation, as well. A second leg was the history of my parents, who were devoted Christians. Despite the revolutionary years of my adolescence, after the loss of my father, I started a long course of reconciliation with my parents’ past as a counter-depression reaction for the loss. Religiosity was an important part of that past.

A third leg that contributed to my conversion was the experiential, which was also gradual. To a great extent, I owe this part to my friend Ronald, and it started to unfold during the period we both studied our Master’s degree in London. Ronald had by then suggested that I followed him to various African Churches in London, “just to get to know the culture” as he said, and this was before I decide to follow a PhD research in Africa. In the beginning I went just out of curiosity. We went to two Churches. The first was the



“Cherubim and Sheraphim Church”, an old prophetic Church from Nigeria, founded by a young Nigerian woman in 1925, the first Church of Ronald’s childhood back in Ghana. The second Church was the “Church of the Lord”, with Nigerian origin as well, an old prophetic Church too (that is, founded before the 1940s, when the Pentecostal wave came from abroad). The Church of the Lord was quite sympathetic, I had met the pastor, a retired teacher, father David; however, it was in decline both in England and Nigeria. In every service we were 4 to 5 persons altogether, therefore, it was difficult for father David to build a real “congregation ambience”. In the Church of Cherubim and Sheraphim, however, something quite different occurred. There were usually 30 to 40 persons attending the service, somewhere in a municipality-gym in East London. The Sunday service took place at 3 o’clock in the afternoon and there was a live band with electric guitar, bass, keyboard, drums and a small choir. Music and dancing were magnificent. The entire service was full of songs accompanied with dancing, and prayers inbetween. The ambience was extraordinary. At the end of the service the Church people distributed tubs with food, roasted chicken with rice and an orange, to all attendants! The most amazing thing with that Church was that each time I attended (I joined the Sunday service three times), I entered the service loaded with lots of anxieties and troubles in my mind, due to the Master’s requirements and everyday difficulties, but I came out of the service feeling free of troubles, totally calm, unburdened and relieved. It was as if I had plunged into a magical state that threw all troubles away. A unique feeling.

Since that period, my visits to the Church of Cherubim and She-raphim became a yardstick. I compared all the other visits I payed to various Churches from then on, to the “experience of catharsis in a service” as I called my experiences in the East London

Church of Cherubim and Sheraphim. To me it was something like a ritual of “*communitas*”, a term that Victor Turner introduced to anthropology and meant exactly what I had felt in that Church, the renewal and relieve of the self through the community. The criterion as to like or dislike a Church from then on became whether I had this feeling during the service or not. Following this criterion, it was the Church of the 12 Apostles that became my favourite in the village, because it was only within this Church’s service that I had that feeling of catharsis. Initially I thought that it was the specific doctrine and ritual practice of a denomination that generates this particular feeling. However, when I visited the Church of Cherubim and Sheraphim once in Accra, I did not have the same feeling. Gradually I concluded that doctrine and ritual practice play, certainly, a role, but the most important, at the end of the day, is the specific relationship of a specific individual to a specific congregation. After my experiences in the East London Cherubim and Sheraphim and the Teleku Bokazo 12 Apostles, I never had the same feeling of catharsis ever again, in no one of the “white” Churches, either RomanCatholic, or Protestant, or GreekOrthodox.

The final and perhaps most important leg of my Christian conversion was the study of the New Testament, a study that I conducted for more than eight months during my long lonely evenings in Teleku Bokazo and Esiam. As I have already mentioned, the study of the Bible became necessary from the time I settled in Teleku Bokazo, since people came and visited me at Mr. Nyame’s center to discuss theological issues with me, the white man! A Bible in English was the first book I bought in the University-bookshop in Legon in my first travel back to Accra for renewing my visa. I started my study with the New Testament, as I considered it more relevant to my discussions in the village. It was

the first time in my life I was reading the Bible. This reading was a revelation to me. Within the entire New Testament, with the exception of some letters by St. Paul and certainly the “revelation” by John the Apostle, there was a revolutionary, anarchist spirit, full of referances to social justice, equality and communal property, that is communism, as basic principles of Jesus Christ’s doctrine. This revelation was very important to me. I realized that everything I knew about Christianity from my childhood was a tremendous distortion. I also realized the reason why the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Churches used the Latin and Ancient Greek languages respectively in their services. That way they secured that the uneducated and the oppressed would not understand the revolutionary message of the New Testament. I also realized why the first “Ecumenical Synods” of the official Christian Church from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards included the Old Testament in the Christian doctrine. The Old Testament in my judgment was written in a completely different spirit than the New one. In fact, the spirit was exactly the opposite of the universal “love each-other”-message of Jesus, as it mainly concerned a mythical history of the Jewish nation, surrounded by enemies, infidels, pagans and the like.

The most impressive feature of the New Testament, however, was that, although it clearly favoured “working class” (that is, the poor, the oppressed, the outcasts) people over the rich and the powerful, contrary to Marxism, it based “class solidarity” not on the hatred against the opponent but on the love towards the comrade, or even towards the stranger, even the enemy. This was a new kind of solidarity beyond the usual human egotisms and weaknesses, but also beyond the phallogocentric conception of political struggles as “wars” of an imaginary “army” against another. This was very important to me, because all military organizations, all political

beauraucracies, all ethnic-religious-political-(and so on) cleansings and genocides in history were based on suspicion and hatred against a real or imaginary “enemy”, “opponent”, “heretic”, “traitor” and so on. In this sense, the message of the New Testament “Love each-other”, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged”, “No one is sinless” and the like, was genuinely anarchist, in my view.

The revelation of the true meaning (in my own reading) of the New Testament was, in fact, class-related and political to me. I realized that my resort to atheism during my adolescence occurred for social class-related and political reasons, since the Church stood on the opposite side, the side of Power and authority. I believed in science and rationality not because it was “the truth”, but because I considered that science and rationality lead to social justice and equality. My motives lay beyond the contrast between the myth and the “truth”. There was a more fundamental contrast to me, the contrast between the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the “civilized” and the “savages”, the powerful and the oppressed, or, as mentioned in the Bible, between the “righteous” and the “unrighteous”. My conversion to Christianity occurred for the same reasons. For reasons related to social class. Dozens of millions of people in the global South found in Christianity consolation and hope for a better life in circumstances unimaginable in the West. However, it was not only that. It was colonialism that had stolen all vital resources from Africa, it had built the Western World’s superiority in wealth, infrastructures, technology, education and science. Colonialism and international capitalism achieved this superiority by force and brutal racism. Modern science supports this historical course. For science there was no morality, no “righteous” or “unrighteous” behaviour, there was only scientific “truth” and fallacy. Science was indifferent to

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the problems of Teleku Bokazo-people. In this sense my choice to follow Christianity was consistent with my social class position, not according to my narrow cultural perspective, but according to a global one.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE END OF FIELDWORK. THOUGHTS ON THE GLOBAL DISTINCTION

Along with the interviews with the spiritually afflicted persons, plus my own illness, some other interesting incidents occurred during my second period of fieldwork. The discussion with the herbs-man was important, as well as my participation in the healing rituals. My involvement with the Christian Churches, especially the one I favoured, the 12 Apostles Church, went on deeper and deeper, and I ended up delivering a sermon myself! Not exactly a sermon, rather a short speech, a recitation of a story that occurred to me spontaneously, while listening to the Prophet James's sermon during a service at the 12Apostles Church. It was 5 o'clock in the morning, the Church conducted an early morning service twice a week (Wednesday and Friday) for the blessing of the day-labour and the fertility of the farms. The service started at 4 in the morning and ended at 6. After the service people went to work. We attended with Laurence. It was near the end of December 2004. After the prayers and the singing of the hymns, which Lawrence told me that were very old and very moving, Prophet James started the

sermon in Nzema, and Lawrence translated to me. He said that many members expect the help of God but they forget to attend the services of the Church. In the end they asked me whether I wanted to say something. In every Church, in every service I went, they asked me the same thing, whether I wished to say something. I never spoke because I did not want to show off, I, the “clever” white-man, nor to interfere with the sermons, taking perhaps a position that would cause “discussions” in the village. Only once at the Christ Apostolic Church when the pastor accused young people of sin because they partied, dressed immodestly and flirted, I said that we have to be tolerant to the young people. In general, however, I kept the policy not to speak. Nevertheless, while father James preached, an inspiration came and a story occurred to my mind from the beginning to the end, like a flash of light! When they asked me if I wanted to speak, I said yes! I said: “I will tell you a story”. I was speaking in English and Lawrence translated in Nzema:

“Once upon a time in a village there were two brothers, who were very close to each-other, but very poor because their parents had passed away and the relatives with tricks had grabbed their farms. They grew up with a grand-father, who was also very poor. They worked here and there but they could not prosper. One day they decided to leave the village and travel afar in order to dig for gold. They went to the grand-father to receive his blessing. The old man told them: ‘When you return, I will have died. Watch out! You must never separate because the only thing you really own is your love to each-other and this is the only thing that can protect you!’ They left for a place they knew it had gold. In the course of the journey one brother got sick. He lay down on the ground and said to his brother: ‘Go! Go and dig for gold and I will wait for you here. If we delay, other people will find the gold and all our

efforts will be in vain'. The brother obeyed and left. He went and dug and found gold, but when he returned his brother had passed away. He wailed for three days and then he recalled the blessing of the grand-father. From then on, for his entire life he spent all his gold in preaching the grand-father's blessing to the world. But nothing could bring back his brother. You too, must consider the Church, as Prophet James told you, as your beloved brother that you must not leave behind! You must never separate."

The truth is that I was impressed myself with this story. It dropped to my mind suddenly by inspiration. I used to make up makeshift stories for children in the past but I had never done it in public and certainly never in a Church-service. Stories usually came in my mind like a bolt of lightning from the beginning to the end, but there must have been a source of inspiration in each case. The Church of the 12 Apostles and its people seemed to be the source of inspiration in this case. It was the oldest Church in the village along with the Roman Catholic, and its members were the poorest in the village. They were illiterate in the vast majority, as well. An underground class-link, due to the poor-peasant origin of my parents, connected me to this Church. The members of the 12 Apostles Church were the only people in the village, who did not want to become something else than what they already had been. They did not want to become "civilized" and "modern" like the white men. At the same time the rest of the villagers accused them that they were too close to traditional religion, but why was that too bad? In that Church there were elements of traditional religion indeed, but they struggled to maintain the positive elements from both traditions. Of course, the most important think was who evaluated these elements as positive. The judgement would be inevitably subjective, and the criteria would be social class-prejudiced instead of dogmatic, theological, let alone scientific! No one could



tell why “miracles” performed by charismatic leaders wearing expensive western suits were modern, whereas healing rituals in 12 Apostles yards were traditional. For the followers the most important criterion was whether the Church built a sense of community, solidarity and spiritual safety and protection, or not.

I had taken many books to Ghana, most of them photocopied, among which many anthropological classics (such as the *Ritual Process* by Victor Turner, for example) that I had not time to read during my Master. Another one was the *Sociology of Religion* by Max Weber, an independent edition of a work, which in fact was a chapter of the broader work (essentially a bulk of lectures) of Weber under the title *Economy and Society*. I had read this book once before, during the writing of my ugrading proposal, but I reread it in Ghana because I thought it would be extremely useful for the theoretical part of my thesis. In this book I found a passage, which I would use in all my thesis-drafts from then on. Weber writes in this passage:

Only ascetic Protestantism completely eliminated magic and the supernatural quest for salvation, of which the highest form was intellectualist, contemplative illumination.... [Jesus Christ] was primarily a magician whose magical charisma was an ineluctable source of his unique feeling of individuality... The Christian evangel arose in opposition to [the Jewish] legalistic erudition, as a non-intellectual's proclamation directed to non-intellectuals, to the “poor in spirit”... Jesus' distinctive feeling of self-esteem did not come from anything like a “proletarian instinct” and did not come from knowledge that the way to God necessarily led through him, because of his identity with the divine patriarch. The basis of Jesus' distinctive self-esteem was his knowledge that he, a non-scholar, possessed both the charisma requisite for the control of demons and a tremendous preaching

ability, far surpassing that of any scholar or Pharisee. Another basis of his self esteem was his power to exorcise demons, but this power was only operative with respect to the people who believed in him. His power to exorcise demons was inoperative with respect to heathens, his own family, the natives of his own town, the wealthy and high-born of the land, the scholars, and the legalistic virtuosi - among none of these did he find the faith that gave him the magical power to work miracles. He did find such a faith among the poor, the oppressed, publicans and sinners, and even Roman soldiers... Jesus recognized two absolutely mortal sins. One was the "sin against the spirit" committed by the scriptural scholar who disesteemed charisma and its bearers. The other was un-brotherly arrogance, such as the arrogance of the intellectual toward the poor in spirit, when the intellectual hurls at his brother the exclamation "Thou fool!" This **anti-intellectualist rejection of scholarly arrogance** and of Hellenic and rabbinic wisdom **is the only "class element" of Jesus' message**, though it is very distinctive. (Weber 1963[1922]: 269-270, 271-272, my emphasis.)

In this passage written by Weber one can find the very essence of Christianity, as I view it. I believe that millions of poor and oppressed, the "poor in spirit" around the globe, share in one way or another this view. I think that this unique feature of Christianity, the clear message against the intellectual aristocracy, which is evident in the New Testament, helped Christianity to spread in the colonies as the people identified themselves with the Christ's disciples and followers and their local and overseas masters with the Pharisees and the Roman imperialists respectively. It was also this unique feeling against intellectual elitism and bureaucracy that, in my interpretation, inspired all those renewals, insurrections, regenerations and reformation-movements within Christianity throughout the centuries. Although I have not studied Islam, it is

well known that there are a lot of similarities with Christianity with regard to internal movements, sects and reformations. Therefore, I guess, in every religion, apart from the conservative hierarchies, who support the authorities (or in cases *are* the authorities), there are elements *from within the tradition of the religion itself* that challenge the earthly elites in favour of a moral order of divine origin, yet kept by the commoners against the rich and the powerful. In Christianity the emergence of “the common people” as the God’s favourite people was not only evident but central and striking. As such, it worked as a major source of consolation in areas with extreme poverty and inequality.

Someone who had not lived under the conditions people in Sub-Saharan Africa live, may find the religious consolation “backward” or “an obstacle to progress”. But this would be the stance of an arrogant, the “You fool!”-stance, as Weber called it. For people, who live day by day in destitute, sickness and poverty, believing in a system of moral justice, it is not simply a matter of consolation, it is a matter of life and death, since all mechanisms that control life and death (health system, insurance system, judicial system, public security and the like) in the industrial West are absent in the South. And they are absent exactly because the industrial West based its economic and technological progress on the exploitation and pillaging of Africa and the other colonies. From the perspective of class-solidarity, it is quite weird for a worker in the West to criticize the African, Arab, Asian or Latin American worker for his/her religiosity. Religiosity developed there, where “western type democracy” could never develop due to the lack of resources and infrastructures (that is, money for public investments), which were looted by the Westerners. In fact, the global distinction was exactly this: The technological “progress” achieved in the West through the exploitation of the colonies supports the “secular”

culture of western societies (science, civil rights, civil democracy, consumerism and the like). On the other hand, religion supports hopes for justice, survival and a better life based on moral values against the corruption of the predatory elites, local and overseas, in the global South. This image of the global antithesis depicts the “morally corrective” character of religion, with corrective measures coming from the supernatural order against the human injustices, a character that has been forgotten in Europe, since there, religion has been so tightly connected with secular power, political authority, and conservatism in the past. Nevertheless, it was exactly this connection that made religion unpopular. Divested by its public, corrective character, religion in the West gradually became “a private affair” as Talad Asad notes in his famous book on secularism (Asad, 1993).

No one can say that western cultural belief in science and democracy is “good” or “right”, and southern cultural belief in religion is “bad” or “wrong”, or the vice versa. In fact, they are both the poles of a global system, and no pole can exist without the other. This condition makes the antithesis between the West and the South a class-antithesis. The West produces technology and inequality, the South responds with religiosity, in times fundamentalist, in times revolutionary (like the theology of liberation in Latin America). Both are parts of a global system and no part can change without changing the other. This was the implicit conclusion of my fieldwork research, as well as of my broader research, which had started with my PhD proposal on dreams, almost a decade earlier. A subversion of my initial hypothesis occurred, but this always happens in fieldwork! I went to Africa having in mind an alleged contrast between “progressive” popular religious beliefs and “conservative” western ones. I abandoned this idea in the field soon enough. I realized that there is nothing inherently

“progressive” in local religion and nothing inherently “conservative” in Christianity. My advocacy of traditional religion against Christianity did not withstand the experiences in the field. I could not defend the choice of lesser gods to kill so that they would not appear weak to their followers, nor could I dismiss the message of class solidarity among the illiterates contained in the New Testament. I realized that, either I had to accept all metaphysical beliefs as valid and then evaluate each one of them in its context, or I had to dismiss them all and return to the safe armful of scientific rationality. I chose the former. I realize that throughout my entire life I tried to find the balance between the peasant background of my family and the status of an educated intellectual. Finally, I made a choice consistent with my class origin.

Before my departure to Europe, three more incidents worth noting occurred. The first was a failure with some positive repercussions. Nearly a month before I depart traditional healer Agnes told Lawrence that in the town of Enea some 25 kilometres to the west an inauguration of a new fetish priestess was about to take place. We went with Lawrence. We met the president of the “fetish priests’ association” of the area (the government had set forward these associations, in an attempt to control the relevant activities, in vain), who was sitting on a dark living room of a dark house with three of his wives (or concubines) around him. As soon as he saw my camera, he asked one and a half million cedis to let us attend the inauguration. He started preaching to Lawrence, telling him in Nzema that white people come and take photos and then they go to Europe and become rich. I denied to give him the money and we left, but the good thing was that I understood almost everything he had said before Lawrence translate it to me. I was impressed with my progress with the language. Up to then I only spoke the basics, “how are you”, “good morning” and the like. I had made

many attempts with lessons, all in vain. I followed an extremely wrong method trying to learn the language through lessons, as if it were a European language, but the structure of African languages is different. I should have dropped lessons and learn just few words day by day, by experience quite as young toddlers learn how to speak. It was too late. I needed 5-6 more months in order to learn the language I had just started to understand. The other positive thing from that incident was that apart from understanding the language I had also started to discern crooks and tricksters, no matter which religion they stood for.

The capability of discerning the crooks was a matter of life and death in Ghana. A friend and informant on agricultural issues in Teleku Bokazo, Mr. Gregory had told me that he gave ₵50 million (approximately €4,000) to somebody, who promised to provide him with a visa to Europe. He even travelled to South Africa in order to get the purported visa. The address in South Africa was fake and Mr. Gregory lost all his money. The second incident that happened before my departure was the visit of Prophet James, the pastor of the 12 Apostles Church in my room in Esiama. He brought me a farewell gift, a wooden leopard, and came to say goodbye but he also confessed to me that he disagreed with some of his Church's practices that other Prophets used in other parishes, such as stepping on the sick people, who lay down on the ground, in order to cast out demons. Prophet James was a very good man. He was very tall but with a heart of a child and a very wise mind. He had told me that he was just a farmer before, but one morning he woke up and he suddenly knew the entire Bible by heart without having read it, and this was a God's calling to him to become a Prophet. During our interviews I had once asked him how we can discern the false from the true prophets and he replied: "From the fruits we can see the tree, as Christ has told! From people's actions

we can see their true hearts”. In 2014 when I started writing the Greek version of this book, Lawrence wrote to me that Prophet James disappeared and never came back to the village again (in 2012 fetish-priestess Lisbet, had passed away and thus my two main informants were gone). Prophet James’s Church made me wonder whether one converts in the end of the day not in a religion or in a dogma but in a concrete parish, a concrete congregation, with which one identifies oneself. I never again had the feeling I had in the 12 Apostles Church in Teleku Bokazo, in any other Church.



Image 14: With Mr. Antony Nyame.

The third incident was the farewell visit to my hostel of Mr. Antony Nyame the founder and leader of the prayer and healing center I had lived in during the first 5 months of my fieldwork. This visit was also full of content alike Mr. James's one. Mr. Nyame told me about the gold-mines. He told me that some village-residents had dug an illegal goldmine just outside the village, and numerous young people worked there and gained a decent income through gold. However, the area was bound by an Australian gold-extracting multinational company, which was expected to come soon to the village and dig vast surface pits in order to extract gold. Mr. Nyame told me that he intended to organize the youth against the company, "we will shed our blood" he told me, and he asked me to help. He told me that foreign multinational companies come and dig surface mines because it is cheaper (in comparison to underground ones), and destroy the farms, while compensations is peanuts. Additionally, they compensate only rice, maize, beans and vegetables-farms, and not coconut and palm-farms which classify as "forest". He also told me that the local council took nothing from the land-leasing money and all the money went to the district authorities and the government. I listened to him carefully. I had taken already two other interviews on gold-mining and I intended to pursue post-doctoral research on that issue (I applied but I never convinced the reviewers). Mr. Antony was my friend but he was a controversial personality in the village. Some people gossiped that he used magic, and he was not a real Christian, but people were jealous. Perhaps he was influenced by the charismatic movement and the prosperity gospel but I did not believe he was not a real Christian. He passed away by a heart attack in October 2018, and his death was in the news in Ghana, because five days before he passed, he had a public quarrel with some guy in the radio over a land dispute, and the guy cursed Mr. Antony to die on the air! I am not sure that the curse killed Mr. Antony but I



cannot rule it out either. He was a good man, and he cared about people.

With regard to the goldmine, people's resistance was not that effective in the end. In 2014 I entered google maps and I saw a vast surface goldmine in the north of the village. And it was not only that. The gold was under a neighbourhood with houses and small gardens, and the company removed the entire neighbourhood to the south of the village, by building new houses there, as Lawrence told me. The company also employed some young men from the village (Lawrence was among them) and the resistance was beaten easily, despite some skirmishes with the police. This was a very common story in Africa, and it happened again and again in every part of it. In the end of April 2005, I made the same journey, Accra-London-Athens, once again. I said good-bye to my friends and I wished to return soon to continue my research. As I left, I felt that I was a different person than the one I was one and a half year ago; a person who would include in his worldview the margins of this world; a person who would respect the lives that the Western world do not regard as worth respecting. I expected I could express this worldview in my thesis too. I could not suspect by then, how far from reality my expectations had been.



PART 3  
ACADEMIA AS A CLASS-SYSTEM



## CHAPTER 19

### WRITING UP AND THE SCIENTIFIC FIEFS

In October 2005 my class, that is the PhD students, who had first registered in October 2002, gathered again in London for the “writing up” course, a course supposed to help us with writing up our theses. All fieldworks usually lasted from 12 (minimum) to 20 months (maximum) and took place within two academic years. My fieldwork lasted 14 months (8+6). It could be 3-4 months longer, had I not lost the first year with the useless “upgrading proposal”, plus a couple of months each year with the bureaucratic delays with regard to the disbursement of my scholarship. As far as the data collection is concerned, 14 months were good enough, but I could use the additional 3-4 months to learning the language. In order to obtain the PhD, we had to write up, submit and be examined on a thesis of about 100,000 words (about 250 pages excluding bibliography). Within the thesis we should include the data we collected during the research, a review of all academic debates on our topic, as well as the conclusions of our research. It was a hard task, full of difficulties and pitfalls. A text as long as a book was something we had not written before. By this text we had to prove our capa-

bility for effective fieldwork, collecting suffice data, being aware of all the relevant literature and finally, contributing to our discipline with new knowledge. We had to prove all these things by a coherent and readable text of that length. The entire process was horrifying to us not merely because of its difficulty but also because our academic and professional future depended on its success or failure. Success was by no means certain, and the oral examination, the “viva”, was by no means a formality. We had heard of many cases where people failed in the viva and did not manage to get their PhD. If one failed, one could raise an official objection, but if the objection was overruled, there was nothing else one could do. This meant the complete waste of 5, 7 or 8 years of hard work, while some funding-institutions demanded the return of the funds they had given to the candidate in case of failure! The viva was an oral examination conducted by just two examiners, two professors, one internal from the University of London, and one external, from another university in England or overseas. The options the examiners had were four: First, they could approve the thesis without any corrections (this was very rare though). Second, they could give minor corrections, the candidate should complete within 3 months. Third, they could suggest major corrections, and this meant that entire chapters should be changed. In this case the candidate had 18 months to do the changes and the viva would be repeated after that. The fourth choice was to dismiss the thesis altogether, to consider the candidate as non capable of a PhD, and award him/her with an MPhil instead. It was evident that we all wished to avoid options 3 and 4 (especially option 4 would be a disaster).

The critical character of the exam loaded the writing up process with anxiety. I travelled to London in September 2005 with the plan to stay only for three months, until Christmas. I was thinking to attend the seminars, gather bibliography and return home to

Athens to write up the thesis there, in order to save money. The scholarship was about to end in a few months, the expenses of the PhD were huge and renting a flat or a room in London was too expensive. I rented a small room in a hostel near campus for 2 months but I soon realized that my plan was not viable. Writing up a thesis proved to be a very complex situation. One needed to have a constant contact with libraries, since the writing dictated the necessary readings which directed the writing in a constant back and forth feeding. An additional factor of complexity for me was that I was totally lost as far as the direction of the thesis was concerned. While on the field, I had postponed the problems I had with the academic requirements but now they emerged even bigger than before. The distance between what I wanted to write and what I should write seemed vast.

I had started the entire PhD plan many years ago with the intention of advocacy of popular metaphysical beliefs such as dream-forecasting and the like. This intention brought me to Africa. In fact, my intention was radical in the sense that it challenged western rationality, which had been the philosophical womb of all sciences. My hypothesis was out there already from my essay on dreams during the Master's course period: *What would happen if all these "superstitions" of "common people" were true?* To me this question was completely hypothetical; however, I was surprised by the fact that very few people (if any) within the academia understood its rhetorical essence. Most people took my question as an affirmative. I said *what if* they are true, and people understood that I believed they *are* true. Thus, many colleagues classified me as an *essentialist*, i.e. someone who takes people's beliefs for granted. I was also very active in seminars, I always posed questions, I never remained quiet in my corner, someone had characterized me as an "unreconstructed Mediterranean". Indeed, only

Southerners shared my views, Italians, Greeks, South Americans (all either Catholics or Greek orthodox, surely not accidentally). Nevertheless, there were also English, like my friend Phil Swift, who did his PhD on a new age religion in Japan, with similar views. Therefore, I considered the controversy rather social and class-related than geographical.

Despite the misunderstanding and the confusion, I knew well that I did not really care whether witches, spirits, ghosts and lesser gods “exist” or “not exist”; nor whether curses and bewitchments really “kill” or “do not kill”. Of course, everybody can have their own opinion, but this was not my real concern. What really concerned me were the consequences of the answers to the questions, and not the questions as such. What I really cared about was what sort of cosmos was built with positive answers to the above questions and what sort of cosmos was built with negative answers. The issue was very sensitive and there was already prejudice before the answers. I was inclined to see a positive cosmos in the positive answers and my “opponents” were inclined to see a negative one. Nevertheless, I considered my hypothesis scientifically and methodologically valid, and I felt that the accusations against me, that I was an advocate of superstitions, an essentialist and a defender of religion, were unjustified. I felt this kind of opposition and scepticism from the beginning, from the time I wanted to conduct research on dreams. I saw behind it a class, an elitist, element. People within the academia do not accept the validity of knowledge, which is produced outside the academia, so as not to lose their privileged position in the hierarchy of knowledge and their respective social prestige.

I didn’t really know how the academic system worked in England. In Greece the system was clearly feudalistic; professors had their



“circles” and the most important thing was who knew whom, regardless of qualifications. Around the professors were the fiefs with their small hierarchies within them, assistant professors, PhD students and prospective PhD students. All they had to do was to protect the authority of the professor. As I did not know any big professor, I was outside the system. I cannot say that the system in England worked in the same way. Perhaps I was so frustrated by the Greek system, that I was convinced that in England different criteria applied. I thought that, as a capitalist-proper country, England’s institutions promoted the criteria of effectiveness and thus respecting the rules and regulations came first. I thought that professional qualifications came first and ideological criteria came second. I considered that in England, an advanced capitalist economy, the culture would be open to innovation and not threatened by it, as it was the case in Greece, where favouritism prevailed. The only presupposition would be to respect the rules.

I thought I could get away with my radical thesis of supporting indigenous religiosity as it had been shaped with the combination between traditional and Christian elements, provided that I would follow the rules of conducting a proper thesis. Within this framework I counted on the help of my supervisor. Despite the frustration I had felt by his stance on the upgrading proposal and the questionnaire, I still believed that my supervisor’s meticulous compliance with academic habitus would be very useful for me at this stage.

The title and the topic of the thesis were very important issues. Roughly, all academic texts, theses, articles, essays, papers and books have similar structure comprising three main parts: In the first part the topic and the relevant literature review are presented; in the second part, the research data and the relevant analysis fol-

low, and finally, in the third part, you present the conclusions. In the conclusions the author usually justifies why his/her research is important, and how exactly it contributes to the already existent literature on the topic. Defining the topic and the area of knowledge is thus very important. My initial intention, which became even more urgent after fieldwork, was to stress the validity and the social importance of popular beliefs in spiritual agency. The connection of those beliefs with social differentiation made my topic more complex. This connection had arisen as a compromise during the “upgrading proposal” period. My supervisors believed that this connection would make my topic more easily compatible with fieldwork research. However, by setting the issue of social differentiation as my central topic, I had to connect Christian and religious pluralism in Ghana with social stratification with regard to income, profession, education, property, status and the like. Strangely enough, this connection had not been attempted in the past, and I could not find relevant literature. On this field the most important source I had at my disposal was the questionnaire, the one that had been dismissed by my supervisor. Fortunately, I had kept all my elaborations on the questionnaire made on the field and I used them in the thesis.

With regard to bibliography and literature review, I felt that I was not well aware of the history of Ghana, the history of Christian missions and the colonial history. I also had to exhaust all the chances to find material on the various Churches I had encountered on the field. A huge number of readings was necessary before even starting the writing up. With regard to the theoretical field to which I was about to attach my research, after a short period of consideration I ended up with “African Christianity”, as I felt that this was what I had done, after all. This added more necessary readings in my agenda, since the Pentecostal and Charismatic

movements that prevailed in Africa, were essentially global, and there was a lot of bibliography on them. The volume of the work I had to do was unimaginable. I had planned to write up the first two chapters until Christmas 2005, but I did not manage to write even the half of the first chapter. I realized that it was impossible to write the thesis in Greece, since I had to visit the library almost every day. I decided to look for a proper room after Christmas and stay in London until I finish writing up the entire thesis.

Although the most important thing with the thesis was to follow the usual structure, the ideological factor was also very important. In fact, it played a major role in the viva, since the direction of the thesis should be in accordance with the ideas of the examiners. However, it is the supervisor who picks the examiners and this means that the supervisor usually tries to avoid examiners, who are very distant from the ideas expressed within a thesis by a candidate. Despite this, a viva is never a typical examination and surprises very often occur. This is due to the way the academic system is organized. In fact, university departments are divided in various groups of influence, according to ideological or geographical criteria, or both. That is, in one department there are gathered many Africanists, in another many Asianists, East Europeanists, Latin-Americanists and so forth. In some departments there are many post-modernists and relativists, in other departments more Marxists, in other more positivists, radicals or conservatives and so forth. Ideological divisions are more important than the geographical ones. The most common is the departments to be internally divided, as well. The division usually deflects in different sub-departments and directions. It is common a member of the discipline's elite to run such sub-departments. In UCL, Daniel Miller, who had introduced a theory on consumption, had founded along with others the sub-discipline of "material culture", a com-

bination of anthropology, archaeology and cultural studies, a sub-discipline, which put emphasis in material objects as carriers of cultural meanings.

Every group or sub-discipline promoted their affiliates for teaching jobs, created their favourite post-graduate courses, struggled to attract research funds, and PhD students. Thus, what in Greece revolved around a patron-client system, in England it revolved around ideological affiliation, theoretical direction, and sub-discipline preference. The entire history of academia comprised the struggles between different groups of influence. Although all different groups support the objectivity of science, they are eager to accuse an opponent as unscientific, prejudiced or irrelevant, in order to defend their own theory or argument. Within this climate of all against all, some written and unwritten rules and norms had been agreed by everybody as the “rules of the game”. One of these rules was that the two examiners of any PhD viva would not be selected with ideological criteria but by expertise. Since the viva examination was crucial as to who would enter the higher ranks of the discipline, it was important that no suspicion of favouritism would mark the process.

Therefore, my examiners should be experts on African Christianity. We could not be sure with my supervisor that the examiners would be sympathetic to my experiential and advocative to local religion approach. The supervisor thus suggested that I should moderate my views, at least within the thesis, so that I would not provoke the opposition of the examiners. The reason that this opposition might be fatal, was that many academics did not express overtly their views in conferences and publications. They, then, might be sensitive to views that no one could predict. It was likely that this sensitivity would emerge during a viva. Another reason would be

the revenge against a candidate whose supervisor had failed one of the examiner's PhD student at a previous time. A third reason, especially in my case, was that my supervisor, although Africanist, was not an expert on religion, and might not be able to notice hot ideological issues that might cause opposition by the examiners. All these reasons made the entire process quite uncertain. In any case, the process of writing up was not at all a creative process. It rather resembled a process of intellectual castration.

## CHAPTER 20

### CLASS SCIENCE- EPISODE 3: THE VIVA. COLONISING THE MIND AND ACADEMIC POWER

As I have already mentioned, the first step of conducting a long text is to divide it into chapters. This is what I did in autumn 2005. The supervisor agreed in 7 chapters. The first and the second chapters are fixed in all theses, the first is an introduction telling what the topic is and why we selected this topic, while the second is the literature review. The second chapter, along with the methodology section, which was included either in the first or in a third chapter, were the nightmares of the candidates. One should not omit to mention a relevant book or an article or a chapter written on his topic! With regard to methodology, there was always the danger to be regarded as inappropriate or insufficient. Both issues were subjective. Someone would regard a bibliographic reference as relevant and someone else as irrelevant, someone would accept a method as reliable and someone else would dismiss it as inappropriate. This condition made the success of writing up a matter of pure luck. The satisfaction for finishing fieldwork was quickly

replaced by the terror of writing up the thesis, a thesis that did not address itself neither to the public, nor to the people concerned, or even to our colleagues or a group of experts, but only to two persons, the two examiners. The aristocratic character of the academic system fully fledged!

I chose to write about the methodology in the first chapter along with the introduction. I put the theory in the second chapter. It was the “African Christianity” chapter where I tried to include all the relevant anthropological sources, plus the missionary history in Ghana, as well as sources from religious studies. References were very general and I tried to avoid clear ideological positions (which I really had and they were radically anti-colonial). In the third chapter I described the historical, social and geographical profile of Ghana, Western region, Nzema-area and finally Teleku Bokazo successively (in respective sub-chapters). In the fourth chapter, I started entering the research data by describing the 12 Churches, the five fetish-priestesses and the herbsman with the relevant beliefs and practices. The fifth chapter comprised the narrations of the spiritually afflicted persons and in the sixth I described the rituals, both Christian and traditional. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I put the conclusions. It was a logical division of chapters. A vital factor was the bibliographical sources; however, even more important was the building up of *an argument*, an argument, which would connect the bibliography with the research data and more or less justify the entire research endeavour.

The “argument” was another source of anxiety for all candidates, as it should be shown clearly within a text of 100,000 words. Most of us did not know what exactly we wanted to say after a year and a half of fieldwork, which had turned over all our certainties. Therefore, the argument as such did not really matter. What the

examiners wanted to see was our capability to set foreword and express explicitly an argument and not the argument as such. They did not really seek for originality. On the contrary we should avoid it, as they could take it as arrogance and insolence!

In 2005 and 2006 google-search engines were not sufficiently developed, and most of the bibliographical research took place in situ in the libraries. We had a pass to almost all London libraries, as well as the Senate House (the central library of all London colleges). For me, the most helpful libraries were the SOAS (the School of African and Oriental Studies) and the British Museum libraries. In the former one could find rare books on Ghana and the missions, and the latter had all the issues of the journal "Africa", published by the International African Institute since 1928. For two months I visited the British Museum every day, searching for articles on African Christianity.

In general terms, the process was very demanding. After Christmas, I rented a room at Sophia Diamantopoulou's flat at Kew Gardens near Richmond, Southwest London. She was a good friend of mine and she had helped me a lot from the Master's period. After three months, a third flatmate moved in and I moved out. After some occasional places I lived in, Lewisham, Old Street, Greenwich at friends' flats rooms, we decided with my friend Nico Tassi that we needed a quiet proper place to write up our theses. After some search, we found a small detached house near the Wormwood Scrubs Prison at East Acton, West London. The landlord originated from India. He rented it for 700 quid but, when he saw that we liked it, he raised the rent to 800 quid in the New year. The house was old and badly maintained but ideal for our purpose. I stayed there from June 2006 until December 2007. I submitted my thesis on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2007.



Meanwhile, the scholarship ended in March 2006. I continued living in London spending the money I had taken from a piece of land belonging to my father, which my mother, my sister and I had sold back in 2002. Finding a job while writing was out of the question. People who had done that, either postponed their PhD for years, or, some of them, never finished it. Nevertheless, I did some invigilation at UCL and I registered with some teaching assistant's agency in London. I worked some hours as a teaching assistant in high schools but it was not enough. The financial burden was another difficulty I had to take into account. At college, things were even worse than the period before fieldwork. We attended a course, we were supposed to discuss the writing up process, once a week, but in reality, we were all on one's own, isolated and totally individualized. There was no sense of solidarity, no sense of collectivity. Probably this was the purpose of the entire process. Since the PhD course was held to be the initiation test, the "rite of passage" to the academic profession, it probably should train the candidates in relentless individualism and antagonism. The writing up was a very lonely affair concerning only the candidate and the supervisor. This was pretty annoying to me because I was (and still am) used to sharing. There were only two things that broke the routine. The first was the "cosmology group", a reading group founded by teachers and students who were interested in issues of religion and cosmology ran by Martin Holbraad and Alan Abramson. We met in campus once every two weeks. There was either a presentation by a member of the group, or a discussion over a chapter or an article we had read. Some times we had also guests, who came and gave a talk to the group. We were lucky enough to attend meetings with Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro, as well as, the legend of anthropology Mary Douglas who visited our group a few months before she passed

away! Apart from the “official” cosmology group at UCL, along with my flatmate Nico and our friend Melania Callestani, who did her PhD at Goldsmiths, we had formed our own unofficial group. We called our group “Minor Anthropology”, it was Nico’s idea after a text written by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze on “Minor literature”. The meaning of “minor” did not refer to a “minority” but rather to the excluded by the academic knowledge, as well as by the media and information networks. Nico and Melania had done their fieldwork in Bolivia; Nico on a local festival and Melania on the concept of well-being among the ethnic group of Aymara. We all three shared the view of advocating local beliefs, and we all three had difficulties communicating our view to the Academia. Both Melania and Nico were of a working-class origin and were Marxists during their adolescence like me.

In the beginning, just the three of us met. After a while we composed a text (something like a declaration) and we posted it to various lists in the internet. This text is presented in the appendices in this book. We tried to invite other people to our group. After a year we invited professors, as well. Nevertheless, due to the developments with our vivas (I will talk about them below) the group dissolved and we followed individual courses. The effort, however, was extraordinary, honest and heartwarming, outside the academic standards. A professor told us that after she had read our declaration she wailed. It was true that our texts were moving as we expressed our motives to do anthropology combining our sense of class solidarity with our desire for knowledge. While writing this book I read again the “minor anthropology” declaration and as it happened with many other texts I had written during that period, I would not change even a comma had I written it today. Apart from the “minor anthropology” manifesto, which was read by very few people, a collective article written by Melania, Nico

and me was published in *Anthropology Matters*, a journal directed by the Royal Anthropological Institute for PhD candidates and young scholars. The title was “three narratives of anthropological engagement”. Nico wrote about the pre-fieldwork expectations; I wrote about fieldwork and Melania woter about the writing up period. The reviewers put us through the mill, but in the end, they accepted the article. One can find this article too in my page at academia.edu (<https://eap.academia.edu/IoannisKyriakakis>). A couple of months after the publication of the article I received an email from an unknown to me lecturer in Cognitive Science, British, who expressed his admiration for my piece of the article and told me that the situation in British Academia is exactly as I described it.

Enthusiasm, hope and above all, ideological motivation for defending the oppressed of this world, were the only antidotes for the unsurmountable boredom and intellectual oppression of writing up the thesis. I finished the first draft in September 2006; however, it took me another year to discuss every single chapter with the supervisor, make the corrections and reach the final draft. I finally submitted the thesis in November 2007. After marathon negotiations with the supervisor, I had managed to write what I really wanted. This occurred mainly in chapters 1 and 2. In chapter 1 I wrote about my personal involvement with the topic as a Greek atheist and my conversion to Christianity through the 12 Apostles Church in Teleku Bokazo. In Chapter 2 I wrote about the accumulation of almost all historical currents of Christianity in Ghana side by side to each other, instead of the replacement of one by the other as it was implied in the bibliography. In the second chapter I also criticized the tendency of other scholars to interpret the Christian pluralism in SubSaharan Africa as relevant to the pre-existent African culture of polytheism. This interpretation did not explain why in

Africa the pre-existent polytheism did not lead to the introduction of the saints and prophets as it happened with Orthodoxy and Catholicism in Europe, but it led to the introduction of various independent Churches. My claim was that in the end of the day pluralism was imported in Africa from Europe and the USA. I endorsed the view of the herbsman in Teleku Bokazo, who, when I asked him “why are there so many Churches in Ghana?”, he replied: “Why do you ask that? You, the white men, brought all those Churches to us!”. My historical investigation seemed to confirm the herbsman’s view. Even many of the local Churches, in fact all Churches except for the “prophetic” ones founded between 1915 and 1930, imitated the Western ones and endorsed all the missionary messages coming from overseas. From cultural traits like dressing and social habits to the relentless aggression against traditional religion, all these directives, came from overseas. Africa, and to a lesser extent Asia and Latin America, were the playgrounds of Western missions. Missionaries from all Western nations and all sects, denominations and dogmas, wandered around Africa for more than two centuries taking advantage of people’s despair, as well as, of the flexibility of the local systems of belief that were relatively open to innovation. My conclusion, not explicitly told, but clearly derived from the context of the thesis, was that this condition of “over-missionized” had seriously damaged the feeling of self-respect of people, both individually and collectively. The various missions, in order to justify their presence in Africa, had to attack and demonize traditional religion and local culture (since those two were so closely related). It was only the local prophetic movements like the the Prophet Harris’s movement (which led to the formation of the 12 Apostles Church) that combined Christianity with the popular, participatory spirit that was present in local religions. When I submitted the thesis, I had a feeling of satisfaction and completion. It was not only that I finally completed the writing;

I had written what I wanted to write. I had expressed myself and I had done justice to my experiences in the field. I also thought I had met the academic requirements. The same day I submitted my thesis I quit smoking.

A few days after submitting the thesis, I flew to Athens. In the beginning of the summer, my partner Voula and I had decided to get married; and we arranged the wedding for the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2008. In Athens we made the preparations for the wedding and I was expecting my supervisors and the examiners to set the date for the viva. The examiners were John Peel from SOAS and Birgit Meyer from the University of Amsterdam. Peel's first degree was on History but he was very well known among the Africanists, a specialist in religion, missionary and African Christianity. He was near retirement; I had met him in the seminars; he had done research in one of the oldest Aladura (similar to prophetic) Churches in Nigeria since the 1960's. Later he turned to the history of Anglican missions and he wrote a book about how the missions helped the formation of ethnic identity of the Yorubas in Nigeria. Meyer was also a "celebrity" among the scholars of African religion. She had conducted research among the Ewe of Eastern Ghana and she investigated the Bremen mission, a Presbyterian mission that connected its existence with the Ewe ethnic group since 1847. Both examiners were big names in the field of religion in Africa. The viva was set for May 17, 2008.

Near Christmas before my viva, two very unpleasant events occurred. Within a month, one after another, two of my best friends in London, Phil Swift and Melania Callestani, failed their vivas! They were not even given the 18 months major corrections. They failed altogether! This was a tremendous shock! With Phil and Melania, we shared common views. We defended popular beliefs

in the supernatural as equally valid to other systems of knowledge, like science, and not merely cultural constructions. The examiners of Phil and Melania had quite different opinions. Phil, especially has been a brilliant anthropologist. He conducted research in Japan at a new age religious sect that used traditional elements, he lived for several months with the leader of the sect, his work was at a very high ethnographic standard! The only thing that he maintained in his thesis was that some of the sect's therapeutic rituals had real effects on people's lives. He bumped into two examiners, who were not anthropologists but simply "Japanists" (a historian and a sociologist). They slaughtered him! The same happened with Melania. Her examiners were an ethnomusicologist and a sociologist, "specialists" on Bolivia. They hacked her up! They had the right to raise an objection and so they did. Melania won the objection and she was given 18 months corrections instead. However, Phil's objection was rejected! It was a disaster! Typically, he even had to return the money of his scholarship. The irony was that a few months later an article Phil had published at the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* was awarded as the best article of the year! The total absurdity of the "objective", British academic system! From the feudal favouritism in Greece to the relentless ideological authoritarianism in Britain. The examiners had the total power to impose their ideological preferences. Both Melania and Phil were of working-class origin (class science!). Melania is now a lecturer at the University of East London. Phil obtained his PhD from the University of Ozaka, Japan in 2018. The academic authorities, the colonizers of the mind, punished him with 10 years postponement for his original ideas! He has still not found an academic job in Britain.

The truth is that, despite these developments with Phil and Melania, I did not worry. The reason was that I trusted (immoderately, as it

was proved later) my supervisor Phil Burnham. Phil had the reputation of a very meticulous supervisor. He had tormented me for two years, paying attention to each single detail of the thesis. I expected that he would never allow me to go to the viva unless he was certain that I will pass. It was Saturday noon when I passed by and got in the Catholic Church, at Leicester square. We used to go there with Nico for prayer and contemplation some times. After that I passed by my favourite stationary store at Tottenham Court Road and I bought a notebook. Then I walked towards campus and the Anthropology department. Phil waited for me. He introduced me to the examiners and left. The supervisor was not supposed to be present in the viva. As soon as we started, the first words by John Peel came as a shock: “You know, we have already decided that you have to rewrite and resubmit Chapters 1, 2 and 7, within a period of 18 months!”

It seems that I was previously overloaded with optimism and I received this announcement with a smile. A two hours long discussion followed on specific parts of the thesis. John Peel talked and asked questions, while Birgit Meyer remained silent. Peel accused me that I had no good knowledge of history and my conclusions were arbitrary. I could still not understand, however, which parts of history he meant that I had misinterpreted. They finally told me that they would post me their written analytical remarks. They also added that they were impressed with the calmness and kindness I had received their decision, they wished me luck with the corrections and left. From that moment onwards for months and years I felt confused. A mixture of frustration, bitterness, feeling of injustice, rage, indignation and entrapment overwhelmed me. This mixture grew stronger and stronger with time. The first weeks, it was the wedding that absorbed the shock. After the wedding, however, this explosive emotional mixture came back even stronger. When,

in the end of summer, the time came to start writing again, I could identify this mixture of feelings with one word only: Defeat. I had experienced a crushing defeat by the system. After Melania and Phil, it was my turn. “I fought the law and the law won” as the song of the Clash goes. In all my problems up to now, there was always the hope that I will win in the end. But I had lost; this feeling of final defeat was devastating.



## CHAPTER 21

### AFTER PHD: WAR OF IDEOLOGIES – CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Although the examiners' written remarks did not include any relevant reference, I had the feeling that the main reason for rejecting my thesis was the fact that I defended the local, prophetic version of Christianity. Nevertheless, the issue was a little more complex in my case. It was not a similar case to the ones of Phil's and Melania's, who investigated a relatively homogenous social group. My research group, although ethnically homogenous, was religiously divided in twelve-thirteen different subgroups, the twelve Christian Churches and the traditional healers. In my thesis though, I did not keep equal distance towards all these institutions. In the first chapter I described my personal course from a Southern-European atheist Marxist to a converted Christian through the attraction I felt specifically to the 12 Apostles Church. In a sense, I wrote frankly about my conception of Christianity as inherently plural, divided in official, upper class Christianities and popular, underclass Christianities. I also clearly implied my advocacy for the latter. Birgit Meyer probably liked this chapter, because she

had told me during the viva that it reminded her of a talk given by Pierre Bourdieu under the title “participant objectivation” (Bourdieu 2003). In this talk, which was later published as an article, Bourdieu criticized the personal self-reflexivity, which was fashionable those days and he proposed a social class reflexivity instead. However, Peel in his written comments blasted this chapter particularly, and characterized it as irrelevant, rambling and disconnected. Many traditional positivists did not discern between personal and social class reflexivity and considered all this stuff as postmodernist rubbish! My problem was that I did not know what exactly I had to change in Chapters 1 and 2. Ok! I could remove all the personal and self-reflective references. Although I considered them methodologically and ethnographically important, their removal would not change the general direction of my argument. Besides, these references were included only in Chapter 1. What about Chapter 2? This was the major problem!

The second chapter was supposed to include the literature review, the theoretical connections and the main argument of the thesis. I had written in this chapter that my approach was neither “sociological”, that is not ascribing religious beliefs to exclusively social factors, nor “theological”, that is defending a sort of religious “orthodoxy” against various heterodoxies. I had supported the idea that what was really needed in such a complex and plural context in Teleku Bokazo, in Ghana, and in subSaharan Africa as a whole, was a theory of Christianity, an inclusive theory, which would equally respect all different Christian traditions. Following this general statement, I had moved to an analysis of the historical course of Christianity in Ghana from the missions’ era up to the contemporary charismatics and the USA-alike mega-Churches and tele-evangelists of the “prosperity” gospel. My description was not neutral. From the beginning I maintained that the overflow

of the contemporary Christian institutions in Ghana had its historical origin in the initial overseas missions, their majorly Protestant character, with “the priesthood of all believers” and their connection with the, racist in nature, “civilizing” quest. I had also noted the, documented by many historical sources, relentless competition among various Protestant denominations for attracting local followers. My argument was completed through an assertion of equally historical nature: I contended that, whereas the sort of Christianity, which was planted to Africa, was Protestant in nature, the social, economic and political context that favoured Protestantism in Europe and America, the emergence and accumulation of private capital, was absent in Africa. This combination of presence-absence reinforced the magical and messianic elements inherent in both some Christian traditions and certainly the indigenous religions. It was a complex but also clear argument: Christianity, as it was transplanted in Africa by the missions, not only did not help African peoples to develop and “progress”, but it contributed to their underdevelopment and cut them off their traditions, deprived them from the feelings of self-respect and collective identity, feelings which were historically crucial for the formation of the nation-states in Europe and America.

Before the viva, I was very proud of Chapter 2, and after the viva examiners had not convinced me in their written reviews that I should change anything within it. The worst thing was that I did not even realize what exactly they wanted me to change! When in September 2008 I resumed writing, I spent hours and days in front of Chapter 2 wondering about what I should write. John Peel’s official review (Meyer seemed rather indifferent during the entire exam. She probably followed Peels’ views out of the respect for the hierarchy) stressed that my historical account was inaccurate and not well informed and thus my conclusions were arbitrary

and undocumented. I stayed in Athens but my friends in London had borrowed for me all the books that John Peel suggested in his viva-review. We had found very rare books, missionary accounts and monographies so old as from the 1960's! I spent some four to five months with intensive reading. Nevertheless, when I finished reading the books, I was not wiser than before. Everything I read confirmed instead of subverted what I had written in the second chapter! All references stressed the antagonism among the missions, the civilizing project, the contempt towards tradition and the downplaying of local movements. There was nothing new to me in the books suggested by Peel! My feeling that the reason for rejecting my thesis by the examiners was ideological and it had nothing to do with inadequacies of the thesis was confirmed. There was something in this chapter that irritated John Peel so much that he did not pay attention to anything else within the rest of the thesis. I had to find this "something" and change it. Otherwise, I could not obtain the PhD. As simple as that! Everything depended on the subjective judgement of one person, on what he, the "authority", regarded as the only valid version of the history of Christianity in West Africa! But what was it? I had to guess!

In the beginning I thought that what irritated John Peel was my sympathetic stance towards the local prophetic Churches. I thought that I had broken the rule of "objectivity" and "neutrality". So I decided to remove all the parts that presented or even implied my personal involvement with Christianity. I also removed all the parts, which suggested a "theory of Christianity" as a route of anthropological theorizing in this area of knowledge. I discarded Chapter 2 from scratch and I wrote a totally new Chapter 2. I kept, of course, the part wherein I described the social differentiation but instead of connecting it with different strands of Christianity, I linked it with developments in economy, labour, export trade

and the like. The result was a proper political economy chapter! I cannot say that I did not like this line of argument too. On the contrary I believed every single word I wrote. I had used some articles and books from the 1980's, which supported the view that underdevelopment and low productivity were deliberate policies of the colonial rulers in Ghana, in order to keep the cost of labour very low (and thus to increase the margins of profit for the commercial class). In reality, this was an "economic variant" of my religious argument. It accused the colonial/political branch of the Europeans instead of the religious branch. But it was, in fact, the same "civilizing" project. As soon as I posted the chapter to my supervisor, he immediately replied and he was quite clear: "Do not even dare to send a political economic analysis to John Peel! He will reject it at once! He despises economy!". Ten months had passed already from the viva and I should start from scratch again. It was evident that I had still not grasped what I should change in Chapter 2. However, the reaction of my supervisor helped me realize that it was not the religious nature of my argument that bothered John Peel but something else. It did not matter whether I talked about religion, politics, or economy. There was something deeper that irritated the examiner. One day near the end of Spring 2009, while I was re-reading the rejected Chapter 2 for the hundredth time (!) the inspiration occurred to me like a shaft of light: What John Peel hated in my chapter was that I accused the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries European and American Christian missions for the present social and cultural mess in Ghana. That was it! This was what I had to change! To change my view altogether, to abandon something about which I was absolutely certain.

From that point onwards I could write a totally new version of Chapter 2 subverting its entire ideological direction. Instead of accusing Western Christian missions I wrote that they played a

positive role by educating the locals and helping them accommodate the western cultural traits, while they functioned as a resort and an opposition against the political and military branch of colonialism. Of course, I did not believe in all that. I just wrote it because I thought that *this was what John Peel really wanted to read!* I posted the chapter to Phil Burnham in August. He approved it and he posted it to John Peel. In the beginning of October, I received the response: Peel was enthralled with my “fantastic progress” and the “incredible improvement “of the thesis! He did not even notice that I had not changed even a comma from Chapter 7, which included the conclusions! I was right, it was only Chapter 2, it was only the theory, the view on missions that mattered! Peel did not give a damn for social differentiation which I mentioned in the conclusion, he only cared about my critique against western missions. As far as I changed that, everything else was ok. From then on things ran fast. Peel<sup>1</sup> informed Phil that I do not need to proceed for a second viva, since the two examiners approved all the corrections. It sufficed to submit my changed thesis and I would be awarded the PhD. My inspiration was right!

I submitted the rewritten thesis by post in October 2009. In November we travelled again back to London, as my partner Voula, who is a visual artist, started a Master’s course at Central St. Martin’s College of Arts. We lived together in London until 2011. I was supposed to look for an academic job. I was looking for jobs indeed but I found none! The ambience was quite different. There was no satisfaction in me by a Phd that came after such a humiliating compromise. Rage and frustration had colonized my feelings for years after John Peel’s enthusiastic reception of my final sur-

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<sup>1</sup> Poor John Peel died relatively young, at the age of 73, in 2015. I never had bad feelings personally against him, nor against my supervisor Phil. I always knew that the issue was structural and not personal.

render. It was certain that those feelings affected my research proposals, my job applications, as well as, the articles I posted for publications to various journals. My language was sharp and aggressive, my arguments were provoking, it was as if I wanted to counter-balance the concession I had made in the thesis. All my applications failed; all my articles were rejected. What the supervisor always told me “Make concessions now, and write whatever you want after you receive the PhD” was not true! The same people, who were examiners at the vivas, were also reviewers at the journals, members of the boards that approved or rejected research proposals, members of the committees that hired new staff at the departments. Academic “correctness” prevailed everywhere and no one appreciated my approach, let alone that my writings were not written in the usual neutral, diplomatic and spineless academic language. It is difficult to survive within this environment without support. I did not have any. My supervisor Phil retired in 2009 and he abandoned the academic concerns (I do not blame him) sharing his time between salmon-fishing expeditions in Scotland and trips to the USA to look after his overaged father. Although I was in London, I gradually stopped going to the seminars and I isolated myself. I had lost my interest. The group of my close friends who were also anthropologists had fallen apart. My friend Con from Cyprus obtained his PhD but he decided to quit academic career, “they are all too dry... too conservative” he told me. He followed a career in the fashion industry. My friend Phil made a living by selling antiques at flea markets. Nico found a job in Bolivia and he settled there for good. The only chance to regroup and restart the “minor anthropology” group would be if all of us found a job at British universities. However, it was only Melania, who was patient and lucky enough to find some research jobs and after some years to get an academic post.

I was awarded the PhD in March 2010. The same year the severe financial crisis began in Greece. The delay from 2008 to 2010 due to the major corrections was crucial to me. After 2010 all new academic posts in Greece were put on hold. There were no research or teaching jobs-announcements for the next 8 years. Thus, I applied for jobs only to European, English-speaking institutions. Within 6 years I applied for approximately 150 posts! Not a single application was successful! I was shortlisted only once at the university of Aberdeen but I did not get the job. The failure was due to a combination of reasons. I did not belong to any academic lobby, I knew no big name who could support me, I was not good with public relations, I struggled for publications but they were not enough, Africa and religion were out of fashion. I was also not good with composing research proposals and I did not know well how to promote myself. The latter has probably to do with class origin. People with working and peasant class origins are usually humbler than those of the upper classes and do not know how to promote themselves. The frustration from the viva also played a role. From all those factors I think that public relations and publications were the most important. In September 2011 Voula finished her Master and we returned to Greece for good. It was impossible to stay in England without a proper job. Things then became more difficult.

When I returned to Greece for good, I re-joined the group we had founded back in 1998 with Sotiris Demetriou. The group was now called “critical interdisciplinarity group” with many new members. Sotiris passed away in 2016 at the age of 91, but the group is still active up to date. Ten years after my first departure for the Master, I was back in the same or even worse (since I had spent all the resources coming from my family) financial position as when I departed. A couple of months later I started working at a crepe



making shop. I did not find it derogatory because I held a PhD but the money was too little. In June 2012 our son Spyros was born. Financial insecurity kept on and, in a way, it keeps on but some interesting developments occurred in between. In 2013 I worked for five months as a post-doctoral researcher at a survey ran by the National Centre for Social Research on cultural consumption in Athens during the crisis. In 2014 I applied for a job at the Open University of Cyprus and I was finally accepted for teaching cultural economy at a postgraduate course called “Cultural Policy and Development”. The salary was half the money paid by a proper academic post at the conventional university, but it was better than nothing; definitely better than the job at the crepe-shop. My interest had shifted from religion to economy since 2009 due to the financial crisis in Greece, and after the political economy chapter I was discouraged to put into my thesis by the supervisor. I transformed this chapter into an article, which was published in 2012. From then on economy absorbed my interest. In 2015 with the critical interdisciplinarity group we attempted to establish a social university in a voluntary basis at an autonomous social initiative place in Athens. The endeavour lasted one year. I taught economic anthropology there. In 2017 some posts opened up in the Hellenic Open University. They hired me at an undergraduate program called “Studies in European culture” and I taught in a course called “social theory and modernity”. In 2019 a professor that did not like me kicked me out of the Open University of Cyprus. In the meantime, from 2019 onwards, the economic crisis in Greece started to retreat and academic posts were available again. In 2020 my book *The witchcraft of capitalism*, a version of the present book, was published in Greek. I applied for many tenure track posts since 2019 but, despite the fact that I had the qualifications, there was always somebody else, most of the times less or quite differently qualified, who took the post. I was facing the

Greek system of favouritism once again! I only taught economic anthropology at the University of Thessaly with a one-year contract in 2020-2021. In 2023 my second book was published under the title “Economic Anthropology and Capitalism” based on my lectures at the University of Thessaly.

Since 2016 I stopped applying for jobs abroad. Our son was diagnosed with developmental disorder that needed therapies. Changing environment would not benefit him. I also could not leave him back by travelling abroad. Therefore, my employment chances were narrowed down. During my postgraduate studies from 2001 to 2010, I spent approximately €80,000, 40,000 from my own pocket and 40,000 from the scholarship. Ten years after I obtained the PhD, I had not recouped not even the half of that money.

PART 4  
CONCLUSIONS



## CHAPTER 22

### CONCLUSION 1: THE GLOBAL CLASS SYSTEM

It was a morning of August 2014. I had already started writing my book in Greek, when a question came to mind: “Why all the religious expressions I had met in Ghana, with the exorcisms, with the fervent preaching, and the casting out of evil spirits-rituals were so aggressive and so tense?” What I had majorly in mind was the Neo-Pentecostal and the Charismatics, as they prevailed in the Christian scene and they made the biggest fuss no matter whether they had been the majority or not. According to the recent bibliography, they also spread to Asia and Latin America as well, and not only in Africa. The answer came to my mind spontaneously: All this tension and hidden violence during exorcisms, “healing” rituals, speaking in tongues and aggressive sermons, was experienced by Christian agents themselves during their socialization. This means that all this social tension had been spread in Ghana one generation earlier, exactly at the period (near the 1970’s and onwards) when all hopes and expectations of the independence had been wrong-footed. It was a period of successive military regimes in Ghana, a period of political and economic collapse a

period that brought in Ghana the IMF and the World Bank as the neo-colonial rulers. A two words phrase could express all this in a nutshell: “Violent socialization”. This lay behind the hyperbolic religiosity of the people in a deeper level, a level not as obvious as the wider economic and political developments.

Social disintegration and misery, although evident in the streets and the markets with the hundreds of peddlers and beggars, in the shantytowns where children played by the rubbish and the open gutters, in the queues outside medical centres and hospitals but also prayer and healing “yards” for malaria, dysentery, aids etc. etc., could not really be documented unless one lived together with the people. Watching from afar, from the TV or behind the high walls of local five-star hotels, was definitely not enough. Even I, who lived for so many months in Teleku Bokazo and Esiamia, might have an incomplete impression had I not conducted the survey with the questionnaire, when my assistants tried to cover the entire population of the village and thus revealed the hidden stories of single mothers of destitute old people etc. etc. One could claim that perhaps Teleku Bokazo was a special case, one could also challenge percentages of an isolated case study, however nobody could question the condition of infrastructures all over Ghana. I never saw a town or city without open gutters, a market or a river without an open rubbish dump nearby in despicable sanitary condition. Big cities are surrounded by shantytowns without any sense of public utility networks. “Good neighbourhoods” are completely separated and isolated from the shantytowns. Thus, it is likely that a “rich” Ghanaian never enters the “poor” neighbourhoods, s/he never discovers how do people live there. Even my friend Johnnie, who was not “rich” by any means, and he himself carried out more than 200 questionnaires, was surprised by some of the findings of the survey we did together in Teleku Bokazo:

Almost half of the girls between 16 and 20 years old were single mothers! Extended families had fallen apart, most young men built their own mud-houses somewhere else and many girls went to the city looking for jobs. Most of the couples were either divorced or separated, most men worked at another town or city, in the mines or abroad. Douzins of children and adolescents lived with uncles/aunts or grandparents with their parents living separated in other towns or deceased. Some 150 persons, most of them under the age of 25, stated they were unemployed. 60% of the villagers did not speak English, the official language of the State! From the rest only half had finished elementary school and only a quarter could read and write fluently English or Twi. Discriminations due to education were vast, but the most decisive criterion for social ascendance was whether one knew somebody in a position of power or not. Nevertheless, despite the dominant patron-client system, kinship networks seemed to become more and more disintegrated. The huge campaign, active for three decades and orchestrated by both politicians and the Christian Churches, against the allegedly “backward and outdated, traditional African culture”, played undoubtedly a major role. Not only traditional religion, but also kinship ties, were crucial for this “traditional culture”.

From the old kinship system, the governing elites of the country, along with their overseas patrons, kept only the top of hierarchy, the chiefs for every village, since at this level they could do business by buying off the chiefs and the councils and leasing the common land for peanuts for the mining and logging multinationals. At the lower ranks of the traditional hierarchy, however, the lineage and the extended families, there were ruins and disintegration. And not only that. Traditional structures were accused for all evils. The worship of ancestors and lesser gods was demonized and all the plagues torturing Africa were ascribed to tra-

ditional structure and the relevant beliefs. This line of thinking, however, acquits colonialism and neocolonialism of their huge crimes in Africa. From the slave trade to the arbitrary division with artificial boundaries and from the policies of underdevelopment to the contemporary indebtedness to the IMF and the World Bank. It offers a reverse image of reality and creates a general feeling of self-guilt: "Africa's misery is our own fault"! "It is us; it is our culture we have to blame!" Therefore, it is not accidental that people turn to Christianity. It is "modern", not "African" and at the same time, it does not identify itself with the corrupted political elites. The ideology of the "bad tradition" by any means is a tool for reproducing power relationships in Ghana as they are. I recall an incident, which occurred in Esiama during my second visit in the field. Two girls, 18-19 years old, were apprentices at the kitchen of the hostel I lived in and one day they asked me what I was doing in Ghana. When I told them that I carried out research in Teleku Bokazo they were surprised. One told me: "Oh! Teleku Bokazo? But there, they are all savages!". Esiama, a town with 2,500-3,000 residents, was just 5 kilometres away from Teleku Bokazo. The fact that it lay in the interior and not along the coast made the girls believe that it was inhabited by savages, whereas in Esiama people were civilized! So strong was the myth of the backward villagers, who believed in fetishes! Everyone wished to keep distance from these mythical creatures. Everyone wish to be regarded as "civilized".

One would claim that the conditions in Africa are well known, colonialism has undoubtedly contributed to their formation, but this is history and there is nothing we can do now, apart from organizing plans for aid and development in the long run. The study of history, however, reveals something else. It is not over. Colonialism continues as ever, covered with the mantle of sovereignty. And the



case is not merely that Africa is poor and miserable because the Europeans plundered all its vital raw materials in the past. It happens nowadays. In this sense Africa is poor and miserable exactly *because* the West is rich and prosperous. No part of the equation can change with the other part remaining the same. A very telling example from my own fieldwork were the goldmines in the area. A big multinational company based in Australia owned a goldmine 10 kilometres north east of Teleku Bokazo at the time of my fieldwork. They had dug a huge pit on the ground 500 or 600 metres in diameter, with various levels at the sides. Locals worked there for 1.5 euros per day and the company leased the land for peanuts. At the same time, the youth of Teleku Bokazo had dug illegally deep holes on the ground in their own illegal goldmine. More than 200 people worked occasionally there. Illegal goldmines had been a “big problem” in Ghana. The government persecutes the illegal goldminers as they disturb businesses of the big multinationals. Five years after my departure, the Australian company with the help of the police forces kicked out the illegal miners and leased the land from the government. They dug a huge mine in the same place. They even removed an entire village neighbourhood, which was built above the gold-veins. Some 50 young people became wage-labourers for the Australians. The rest were violently excluded from mining.

Mining and logging multinationals usually buy off the local and the national authorities and lease the land for peanuts. They hire locals for very low wages. The land, which is used for mining, takes decades to become usable for agriculture again, it may never recover in some cases. Chemicals used in gold-extraction pollute the underground waters and the rivers. Natural and social disaster follows each goldmine when it exhausts its reserves. Meanwhile, back in the countries of their origin the multinationals give highly

paid jobs to their managerial personell, they pay their taxes and they generally contribute to the “development” of their country’s economy. They may even sponsor aid programs and donate for the poverty in Africa! This is the hypocrisy of the global system! When I was writing my upgrading proposal in 2003, I came across an article in the front page of *the Independent* (paper of the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2003), which included statistical data concerning the inequality between Africa and the “developed” world. I had passed the data into my proposal, the proposal, which was rejected. The data were frightening: Life expectancy G8-77, Africa-48. Access to drinking water: UK-100%, DR Congo-45%. Annual expenditure for Health per capita, Canada-\$2,534, Mali-\$1(!!!). Number of citizens per medical doctor: Italy-169, Malawi-50,000 (!!!). HIV positive people: “Developed” world-1,5 million, Africa-28 millions. Number of people living with less than \$1 per day: G8-0, Africa-291 millions. Deaths under the age of 5 (per 1,000 people): G8-6, Africa-174. Automobiles (per 1,000 people): USA-561, Africa-14. Average annual income: “Developed” world-\$27.854, Africa-\$1.690. Number of children dying in Africa under the age of 5 each year: 4,500,000. Possibility of newborn-deaths at birth: G8-1 death in every 4,085 births, Africa-1 death in every 13 births (!!!). More than 50% of the residents around the globe have never received a telephone call. The 2/3 of the global population will face drinking water shortages in the next 25 years. Amount of money given by G8 to subsidies for their own farmers per year: \$311 billion. Amount of money given for aid (all “development” projects included) to Africa: \$13 billion. Amount of money needed for universal education, reduction of poverty to half and reduction of child-deaths by 3/4 just \$25 billion. 20 years later these numbers have been even worse in most of the African countries.

What seems to be the case with Africa is that, in contrast with all

other continents, the living conditions become worse and worse. As the West “develops”, Africa lags behind and the gap widens. Paul Gifford in his book on Christianity in Ghana, written in 1998 writes: “The inhabitants of Africa were in 1991, by 40% in average *poorer* than in 1980! Per capita consumption fell by 25% in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s. Expenditure for public health fell by 50%, for education by 25%. In the mid 1990s 10.000 children died per day due to malnutrition and lack of medical care. It was calculated that Africa’s share in global child-mortality would raise to 40% by the year 2000. Between 1961 and 1995 food production per capita fell in Africa by 11,6% (in Latin America the same period it increased by 31,4%, in Asia 70,6%). The World Bank estimated that by year 2000 the African countries should import the 1/3 of their nutritional needs. The share of Africa in global trade almost disappeared. In 1950 it was 5,2%, in 1980 it was 4,7% and in 1990 barely 1,9%. Investment returns in Africa fell from 30,7 % during the 1960s to 2,5% in the 1980s. GDP of the entire sub-Saharan Africa (by then 800 million) was \$270 billion, less than that of the Netherlands (10 million). During the 1990s a general collapse of infrastructures occurred. According to all statistics on life expectancy, child mortality, health education and GDP, Africa slips out of the “third world” and it tumbles to its own unique nth world.” (Gifford 1998:15).

Since all these data are more than 20 years old, when I was writing my book in Greek, I looked for more recent data. I found the “African Statistical Yearbook” for 2017, a report of 360 pages full of data for all African countries between 2003 and 2016, exactly the period I was interested in. This volume is published periodically by a mixed scientific committee of the African Union, the African Development Bank, the UN commission for Africa and the African Statistical Centre based on Antis Abeba and Abidjan. When I read

the report, I saw that there was a relative increase of the GDP in most countries between 2005 and 2011. After 2011, however, the most GDPs plummeted and in the poorest countries decreased by almost 50%!!! 50% decrease of GDP means disaster and total destitute. Nevertheless, it is Africa! Who cares? This downwards course of Africa's economy and society can be explained by its totally dependent on the rich countries position in the global economy and the global class system. Africa is used mainly for the plundering of its raw materials, while the absence of infrastructures and concentrated plus disciplined labour force (as it is in Asia for example) discourages industrial investments from overseas despite the very cheap value of labour. Especially after the crisis of 2008 in the capitalist centre, the global periphery undergoes a lot of more pressures in order to counterbalance the losses of the centre. Besides, IMF has invaded Africa since the early 1980's and since then no Africa country has recovered except for Botswana and South Africa, which exert national control on their natural resources. Africa, almost as a whole is indebted for decades to IMF and the World Bank.

The fact that overexploitation of Africa occurs within the framework of a global class system is rather undoubted. However, what we do not realize in the West is that our high living level, the technology and the "progress" we live by is exactly the outcome of this overexploitation. Once again: We are rich *because* they are poor. Light metals used in mobil phones come from child-labour in the mines of Central African Republic and Congo. Dozens of other metals, gold, oil, diamonds and selected agricultural products are produced using the cheapest of labour in Africa, creating the huge surpluses for the multinationals. The same multinationals back in their base-country may give high wages to their workers creating thus the working-class aristocracy of the global class system. This fact

along with the racist ideologies raise an insurmountable barrier for the solidarity of the global working classes. At the same time the global capitalists, allegedly in antagonism to each-other, co-operate very well when the issue comes to class-interests.

An outcome of the lack of understanding and solidarity between the southern and the western global working classes is the quite different stance towards religion. For the majority of the intellectuals and the working-class leaders in the West religion is a matrix of conservatism based on illusions and fairytales for the uneducated. This stance is based on the European historical experience where religion was identified with the power-holders for centuries. However, anyone who had not experienced precariousness with regard to food, accommodation, drinking water, health, security, social care, and all the basics for a decent living, that millions of people in the global south experience in their *everyday* life, cannot understand how important is the comforting effect of religion in people's lives. Anyone, who has not encountered the consequences of the total absence of any democratic control against power structures and persons with authority, cannot understand the feelings of protection and solidarity religious institutions provide to powerless people. Police and administration are totally free to abuse their power without control and the concepts of law and justice are absent. In case of any trouble, everybody wishes not to be forced to come across a policeman or a judge, since they are all corrupted. In disputes, conflicts and disagreements people prefer to go to the priest for resolution, not to the police. If they belong to different churches they go to the lineage or the clan head, or the priests of the two Churches intervene. Priests are preferred, since the chiefs and clan-heads are no more trusted due to the dark role they play in doing business with the government and leasing the common land to the foreigners.

The outcome is the total scorn for politics, for the State and “the rule of law” (which does not exist anyway) and the emergence of religious institutions as the agents of moral justice. Under this perspective one can understand the popular support to movements such as the radical Islam, or the Theology of Liberation in other parts of the world. In my view, a unified religious-political movement in Africa was never formed because of the splintering character of the Protestant missions that prevailed for long, and of course due to the vast pluralism of ethnic groups and the relevant conflicts. The fact is that religion, as we know it in the industrial North, has nothing to do with the religion in the global South. So, we do not have only two economies, two technological conditions, two political and social organizations in the world, but also two “cosmologies”, the one, which is based on rationality and science in the North and the other, which is based on religion and its moral order in the South. At this point I do not say which is “right” and which is “wrong”. I only say they are different and this difference feeds the two poles with content. And I also say that no one can understand the global class system without taking into account the cosmological conflict between the North and the South.

## CHAPTER 23

### CONCLUSION 2: SCIENCE. FREEDOM THAT IT WAS NOT. POWER AND MORALITY

In what we call “the western world”, that is Europe, North America, Australia and parts of North Asia, the majority of people regard science as something that lies above culture. This means that most people place scientific knowledge above ideologies, religions, political systems and social relations. Ideologies, religions, political and social systems are held as “historical”, that is products of human culture and as such can live for certain historical periods, in certain places. Science, although it can change from time to time, is regarded as independent of culture. What is true for science, is true in any cultural setting. By having faith in science western people invent an institution they can trust in instances of crisis. They trust bio-medicine in instances of illness, they trust economists and political scientists in periods of financial crises, they trust scientists in the midst of natural disasters, they trust psychologists in moments of psychological breakdowns and so forth. In the West one may be suspicious against politics, ideology and religion but rarely if ever challenges science.

Science is supposed to serve objectivity and deflect “reality” as it is. However, this is also a “belief” and as such, it is not that different than religion. Standing above society, science is supposed to serve the truth. However, what is important is not the truth itself but who decides what the truth is. In my case with the PhD, it became evident that my examiner decided about the truth, not me. But besides of that, the claim of science that it stands beyond moral values is quite problematic. My mentor Sotiris Demetriou in his last book before he died writes:

There is no knowledge without social values, nor any knowledge which is indifferent to morality and emotions. In the same way, there are no social relationships, which are free of power. Anthropology studies social relationships, thus it studies morality as well. If we exclude social values through value-free theories and methods, we exclude also critical views on society, we exclude social relationships, we exclude society... There are many scholars who believe that “neutrality” towards social values is itself an ideology, which places science in an abstract level very far away from real social problems, and by doing that connects science with power relationships. (Demetriou 2017: 152-153)

I do not mention external conditions, such as who funds science. One could claim that a fair State would fund the sciences fairly, although I believe that a “fair State” is a contradiction in terms. The problem in my view is the claim that science stands above morality. This is a big lie. No human being can stand above morality and the question about “what is right and wrong” will always interfere with the question “what is true and false”.



Another problem apart from the bypassing of morality is the problem of validity. Who decides, and with what criteria, what is scientific and what it is not? This perennial discussion concerns mainly the philosophy of science but it is worth to contemplate a little upon the issue. Why is a carpenter not a scientist but a chemist is? In premodern times there was not such a distinction. The emergence of science as the only valid and universally accepted knowledge, but also a highly respected knowledge by society coincided with the emergence of capitalism in Central and Northern Europe. A number of technical innovations was boosted by capitalism and various applications created new professions and accumulated a lot of new knowledge. So, capitalism favoured science and science supported capitalism. Capitalism would never survive without constant technological progress. Therefore, a group of professionals were needed to be concerned exclusively with technology. The massive participation in production that capitalism brought as well, needed organized medical staff and infrastructures to take care of the workers, while even later, social scientists were needed to make sure that the workers never revolted. The vital role scientists play for the reproduction of capitalism (technological innovation plus keeping the workers healthy and subservient) makes the chemist “a scientist” and the carpenter “an artisan”. In reality they do the same thing! Based on previous knowledge, they exert some skills they have developed by apprenticeship for creating stuff useful for the society. The role scientists play for the system elevates them to a highly respected and well-paid status, especially some of them (doctors, lawyers, nuclear scientists etc.)

Of course, science and knowledge are not identical. Anyone who can dance or anyone who can go fishing, who can cook, take care of the garden, ride a bicycle etc. etc. has knowledge but is not a scientist. What is then the crucial criterion between knowledge

and science? The criterion has again to do with capitalism. The criterion is commoditification. I will give an example: The oldest of the “fetish-priestesses” in Teleku Bokazo, Lisbet Kufiaka Eboaso had told me that she knew how and where to find 150 different kinds of herbs in the bush, herbs that could cure specific illnesses and ailments. This, undoubtedly was knowledge. However, even if Lisbet took some money for her services by patients, her knowledge was useless to capitalism. It was not a commodity. It was personal knowledge of the priestess. Probably she had inherited it by her parents and she could pass it to the next generation but **she could not package it and sell it in the market.** We have to note here that to be a priestess was not a profession but a service to the community (and the lesser god), her proper profession was farmer as everybody else’s. However, if a pharmaceutical company came and found in those herbs some substances with healing properties and manufactured a medicine out of them for massive production, this knowledge would be “valid” “objective” and at the end of the day “scientific”. Both modes of knowledge are based on experience and previous knowledge but one is “superstition” and the other “science”. The only difference is who decides what is what.

Most of scientists will never admit that there is a strong link between science and capitalism. They like to think that science is beyond or above social organization. Immediately after I was granted the PhD I wrote two articles, one about Christianity and one about “western cosmology” (Kyriakakis 2012, 2014). I started submitting my articles to journals but from 2010 to 2012 no journal accepted to publish my articles. Finally in 2012 a Romanian international journal published my article on Christianity. The article on western cosmology, however, was rejected by all reviewers, one after the other. In 2014 I decided to found my own journal (!) in order to publish the article. I created an electronic journal in the

form of a blog in the internet and I published my article there. The journal was called *SOFA, Social Open and Free Anthropology*. I invited many anthropologists through various international links to participate in the journal. The journal's innovation was that it did not follow the peer-review system. This means that reviewers could not reject an article, they could only make suggestions for its improvement, which the writer had the freedom to follow or not. The only reason that an article could be rejected would be to include sexist, racist or chauvinist content. Many colleagues supported the idea and joined the editorial committee. None, however, sent an article. So, *Sofa* remains the only journal in the world that contains only one article! In one of its earlier versions, a part of this article was as following:

The gap between western and non-western cosmologies can never be bridged with the tools which were used to establish the gap in the first place. It is as if private capital was used for building a non-capitalist society. We should be ready to see social theories from another angle: as constitutive of the western intellectual capital. Concepts, theories and scientific methods can never be less authoritarian towards gods, ancestors and spirits however reformed, progressive or philanthropic are the intentions of anthropologists. Because concepts, theories and methods were born in order to establish this very authority. That is why hopes for a less ethnocentric anthropology do not lie with a new theory but a new way of academic conduct. The solution to the problem of representation of non-western knowledge in scientific institutions is not a democracy of concepts since it is always the same people, trained for decades in science, methods, theories, discipline and discourse, who produce these concepts. The solution is not to change ideas, because changing ideas is the foundation stone of western cosmology. The solution may be to change the people. My suggestion therefore is the following:

Western anthropologists can continue their fieldwork in non-western contexts but to the extent that they insist in producing concepts and theories out of this activity, concerning other peoples, the validity of their products should be judged by those peoples and not their fellow westerners. Shamanism, sorcery, aboriginal dream-walking, pilgrimage, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Andean and Melanesian ancestries and spirits and so forth, should not be taught in anthropological departments by anthropologists. They should be taught by shamans, sorcerers, aboriginal elders, pilgrims, Christian pastors, Islamic experts, Hindu experts, Buddhist priests, Andean shamans, Melanesian priests and so forth. To the extent that those representatives are held as power holders, members of the less powerful groups of their communities should be invited to teach too. In the same logic boards of examiners, journal reviewers and other professional bodies to the extent that theses, articles, research proposals and intellectual production in general, fallen into their jurisdiction, refer to non-western cosmologies, should consist of non-western cosmologists, shamans, priests, sorcerers and subaltern representatives in general.

At the same time anthropological departments (already penetrated by non-westerners according to my model) should encourage with scholarships and various awards non-western students to conduct fieldwork in the west applying upon the western cosmology the modes of classification and evaluation of their own cosmology. In that case they would choose themselves who exactly is appropriate to teach western cosmology to them (or be their informant). To our big surprise they might pick bankers, capitalists, brokers, politicians, military leaders, artists and movie makers or chief executives of broadcasting corporations rather than anthropologists or philosophers to share with them the secrets of western cosmology. This kind of

people might teach them the secrets of the big abstract western gods, the 'market' and 'democracy' (or put together the 'market-democracy', a super-concept that contains science), to which (or to whom?) anthropologists seem to pay very little cosmological attention.

The language of this part, which was the conclusion by the way, was obviously rhetorical in order to enhance my argument. Of course, I did not mean to fire all white professors from anthropological departments and hire shamans and witch-doctors. What I meant was that we need to change our conception of the entire process of doing fieldwork and teaching non western cosmologies at the universities. Reviewers, of course, did not took it that way. Reviews were harsh, aggressive and in cases pretty insulting! But reviewers, just like examiners, had the power...

Scientists usually are bound by two unsurmountable limitations related to both their social status and the ideology of "objectivity". The first limitation is religion and the second is capitalism. Very few scientists in the West believe that religion can be a progressive force in society. They may ascribe to religion a cultural value but they do not think it can contribute to the struggle for a better world. On the contrary, many think that religion is harmful since it divides people and nations. Certainly, official Churches with their bureaucracies, the authoritarian structures and the numerous incidents of abuse, partially justify this view, however, the doctrines, which speak of peace, fraternity, penitence and love, do not. An exception from the religion-critics is Terry Eagleton, a Marxist literature theorist, who in his book *Reason, Faith and Revolution* defends Christianity like I do. However, Eagleton does not mention the second limitation that bounds scientists: they rarely if ever stress the role of science in the reproduction of capitalism. Nevertheless, the two limitations are interconnected. The

wider framework, within which religion operates, what I call “cosmological” is *the subjection of humans and societies to superior forces, forces that cannot be controlled by humans*. This is in reality the “religious framework”.

When the bourgeois scholars in a 150 years’ project from the French Enlightenment through the German materialists and the British political economists to Durkheim and the 20<sup>th</sup> century attempted to deconstruct the religious framework, they offered the most valuable service to capitalism! Because when humans are freed from their obligations to the superior forces, they are also freed from the obligations towards social and natural order, which these forces create, dictate and rule. Thus, humans are free and alone, without giving an account to anybody, free to exploit nature and other humans with no limits. This is the human type created by capitalism, this is the anthropology of capitalism. The freedom of the individual. However, this freedom is an illusion. And it is an illusion not merely in moral terms. There is a strong contradiction, which is inherent to this ideology of individual’s freedom. Although the “freedom of the individual” is the basic moral principle of capitalism, all knowledge, all skills, all memories, ideas, emotions, expectations an individual carries in his life come from collective processes, experiences and institutions: From the family to school and from the citizenship to a State to the participation in a job, a sports club etc. etc. etc. Therefore, the freedom of the individual fits rather in the world of entrepreneurship rather than in society in general. In society individual freedom means most of the times *domination* of an individual against others. Freedom cannot be individual in society. Freedom is either collective or non-existent. Freedom is either for all or for nobody. Individual freedom, thus, is just an ideology, and as such is imposed on people by institutions like trade, industry, stock-market, politics,

arts and entertainment and above all schools and universities, the contemporary temples of individualism.

The faith, cultivated by the Enlightenment, that science would liberate the world did not come true. On the contrary, science was used as an ideological weapon to divide the world into “civilized” and “backward”, “rational” and “superstitious” a division that covered brutal exploitation. At a personal level the story I recounted here from 1996 up to date, is a story of disillusionment. My wish is my story to help readers, who waver between the “rational” and the “moral” to decide in favour of the latter. Because knowledge which does no good to everybody is not good knowledge, and knowledge which is destined for the selected few is not knowledge but a power device.





## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1

ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION (ESSAY WRITTEN FOR THE  
MASTER'S COURSE AT UCL, DECEMBER 2000)

### **DREAMS AND THE WORLD OF SPIRITS FROM THE SCOPE OF CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

IOANNIS KYRIAKAKIS

The savage or barbarian has never learned to make the rigid distinction  
between imagination and reality, to enforce which is one of the main results  
of scientific education.

*EDWARD TYLOR (Tylor, 1871, 445)*

People think they are being civilised when they say spirits don't exist.

*KAPEMBWA SIKAZWE (Willis 1999:116)*

#### **What if they are right?**

At the present essay I will try to present briefly some dream theories and practices of specific non-industrial societies, as they appear in the anthropological bibliography and then I will put for-

ward a completely speculative, operational (“heuristic” it could be said) hypothesis that people who use these theories are right. They are right not only from their perspective, in other words within the socio-cultural and ecological environment wherein they exercise their theories but they are right about dreams in general. At this completely speculative level of analysis, I assume that the specific theories I examine tell us the truth about what dreams and dreaming experiences are all about. By this argument I will try to examine two very important consequences that the validity of such an assumption might have on our understanding of religion and science:

Since dream theories and practices within ecological societies are strictly tight with religious experience and they are mostly demonstrated as the evidence of the existence and reoccurrence of the spiritual world, a potential shift of our evaluation on dreams would affect the way we treat religious experience as well. On the other hand the scientific endeavour for explaining dreams and dreaming function which spreads through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century is based constantly on a “spirit” of disenchantment and rationalisation. This particular “spirit” does not encounter any resistance by high religions’ representatives and theologians since high religions’ doctrines have long before scientists and philosophers did so either restricted or neglected the consideration of dreaming experience as a religious one (O’Neill 1976:32-36).

Of course the assumption I present here is completely arbitrary in many senses. One of them is that none of the members of any “traditional” society would ever imagine imposing his people’s dream theory to the humanity as a whole. On the contrary the dream theory and practise seems to be a fundamental evidence for cultural and ecological diversity. People in ecological societies

are aware of their neighbours' different beliefs and practice; they do not claim that their neighbours are right or wrong, they are just different. This mode of thought and tolerance does not apply only in dream theories but in religious beliefs and "cosmologies" as well. As Jeyaraja Tambiah notes, although there was not such thing like a universal scope upon religious phenomena before the official adoption of Christianity by the Roman empire (Tambiah 1990:4), this scope is taken as granted and eternal for the human race in general from then on. Especially through the enlightenment this tendency becomes something like a common sense: "...the enlightenment tendency to produce an intellectualist and impersonal schematisation of religion was extended and universalised in terms of the concept of *natural religion* as a generic phenomenon. It was claimed that beliefs about God were common to all mankind and were attainable by man by virtue of his natural reason. At the same time, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the religious wars and conflicts that raged in Europe made the subject of religion a matter for polemical and apologetic labelling and disputation." (Ibid.5)

### **Can we call peoples' beliefs and practises "theories"?**

One could claim that it is a dangerous generalisation to reduce different cultural beliefs and practises into some simple theoretical principles and then to imply that these principles pervade societies and constitute a unified "cosmology". In fact that is what western social science does from its very foundation. The notion of "primitive culture" as opposed and completely different than our society follows anthropology and sociology from their very beginning within the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kuper 1989:1-44). By this radical distinction we have created a sort of widespread "false consciousness" which is based on two fundamental usually unquestionable preconditions: The first one is that we homogenize all non-western cultures as

“traditional” societies although there are striking differences among them (for example there are highly or loosely stratified societies as well as non-stratified ones, completely diverse ecological and technological situations, complex and non-complex beliefs and kinship relationships and so forth). The second one is that we establish a radical “otherness” between “us” and “them” (Keesing, 1994:301). In that sense, all the “grand theories” of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took for granted this radical otherness and then tried to examine and explain it. In my point of view this radical otherness is something that we establish and not something that exists “out there”. My theoretical start point lies on the notion that we are all humans and we have the same biological and mental distance from our closest primate relatives, regardless of our ecological or cultural differences. By that, the question if we can attribute the character of theories at the dreaming and religious beliefs of the people examined here remains still unanswered though. Answering this question is the purpose of this essay.

### **The poetics of humanity**

It is ten years now that I have committed to the study of dreams and it was surprising—each time I have encountered somebody and told him/her that I was concerned with dreams—*how many people have told me that maintained dream diaries*. Although all these people had some theory of their own, which was something like a syncretistic theory between psychoanalytic notions and personal symbols, it was after a short discussion that I realised that this theory was developed *long after* the beginning of keeping dream diaries, usually by “reading some books” and “seeking for some answers”.

What is really this need that prompts people to keep dream diaries in the modern world? There is no scientific framework provided

neither by anthropology nor by psychology for answering that question. Not even the diary keepers themselves as well as my self could answer this question. Surprisingly the Naskapi Indians of Labrador may have the answer:

The Naskapi are simple hunters who live in small, isolated family units in a harsh physical environment. This cultural group has neither elaborate customs nor ceremonies to sustain group values. It is also has very little by way of collective religious belief. The individual Naskapi hunter's life is marked by solitude. In being enculturated into his group, he has had to learn to rely for survival on his inner psychological recourses as well as his own physical resources. He sees his inner self, or soul, as his most important life companion. His soul, which he may call "Great Man", or simply "Friend", is immortal. In its immortality the soul acquires great knowledge and power... In life, the individual Naskapi seeks to attune himself to the Great Man within himself. He does this by attending to the meaning of his dreams... In short the use of the dream in this way by the Naskapi is a mechanism for extending sociocultural support to the individual in the absence of other mechanisms. (O'Neil 1976:64)

The idea of another self that emerges in dreams, however powerful, real, ideal, or just different, reveals the need of another recourse of personal knowledge and guidance in conditions of isolation and exclusion, either within the wild north American forest or within the wilderness of urban environments.

### **The reflexivity of the dream self**

Common or relatively similar notions of the dream self and the wandering soul are mentioned in anthropological bibliography (O'Neil 1976, Tedlock 1987 et.al). Among the Arapesh of New Guinea, "a woman's erotic dream about a man other than her hus-

band was interpreted as caused by this man's magical ability to "enjoy sport" with her spirit, the husband was regarded as cuckolded, and that woman's dream lover agreed to desist from his evil magic." (Tedlock 1987:8). By evaluating dreams as revealing *not only our own wishes but the wishes of another person as well*, we ascribe to the dreaming function an important recourse of social knowledge.

This kind of knowledge must be checked out and controlled through social interactions that follow the dream's occurrence; otherwise, it becomes a dangerous power. Let us follow the description of Michele Stephen at this point:

For Mekeo [New Guinea], beliefs in magic and sorcery are closely intertwined with the sense of a divided self... Not only do dreams reveal the actions of one's own hidden self, but also the actions of other people's hidden selves. Furthermore, one's own hidden self appears in the dreams of other people; and what he does therein is just as significant as what occurs in one's own dreams. If other people dream of your hidden self in an erotic manner, or if your hidden self behaves in an abusive or aggressive way to them in their dreams, this indicates a truth underlying your consciously held motives and desires... It is little wonder then that such socially explosive material is rarely communicated in public, and that dreams are usually discussed, if at all, and only with one's intimates. It is also understandable why dream reports were so difficult for me to collect. (Stephen, 1996, 471)

There is a contradiction though in this account. If the dream selves reveal the real motives of the persons there is no need for intimacy and mystification. It is possible that Stephen while engaged to a strong psychoanalytic inclination did not manage to gain trust by these people. Furthermore, it seems pretty doubtful if in such a



“spiritually possessed” social environment the category of “consciously held motives and desires” has the same meaning as it has in our society, or if it has any meaning at all. The notion of the divided self is not something that they themselves use and from nowhere within the Stephen’s paper comes out that such a notion exists in Mekeo’s society. Who knows? It may be that the dream self of Stephen appeared in the Mekeo’s dreams but we will never know what did she tell them about her unconsciously held motives and desires.

### **We the intellectuals**

People are not willing to share their valuable resources of knowledge with others, especially when these others do not understand them. In many cases we miss a lot of indigenous knowledge just because we do not believe people and people do not trust us. But sometimes even if they trust us we do not believe them. Carl O’ Nell in his excellent book on dreams referring to the notions of Tikopians and the Trobriand Islanders on incest dreams writes:

It is possible to make a comparison of the significance of incest dreams between the two cultures. A Trobriand Islander believes in the actuality of the dream incest and it provokes shame within him. The Tikopian believes, on the other hand, that he has been seduced by an evil spirit from the dream world in the guise of a close relative. Such a dream produces for the Tikopian not shame but fear. He has not committed incest but has had intercourse with an evil spirit. The act from his dream will bring on misfortune, debilitation, or illness.

Dreams produced by magic in the belief system of the Trobriand Islanders, create in dreamers desires not necessarily their own. Such wishes are imposed on the dreamers, although the dreamer does in fact participate in his own dream experience. Tikopians customarily

blame spirits for forcing or duping dreamers to engage in morally despicable behaviour. When the Trobriand Islander blames the magic of someone else for his dreamed act, or when the Tikopian blames an evil spirit for his, the functional outcome is somewhat the same. Both cultures make use of a “pass the buck” explanation for dreams whose content runs contrary to the moral standards of wakefulness. (O’Neill, 1976,31-32)

In this passage O’Neill, in my point of view, is guided by his own theoretical engagement that seems to be an amalgam consisted by Freudian and social constructionist views. What does the “pass the buck” mean? What if both cultures explicitly trace in their dreams the incest tendency by both sides- the ego from one side and the “object” of the desire in Freudian terms from the other. They just do not take it for granted that the action committed within the dream is one-sided. It may be that the actor that appears in dream as the receiver of the action could virtually be the sender, or the sender could be outside of the dream but still manipulating actions. Is that condition completely absenting in our social experience? In how many cases in every day life do we hear voices coming out from our minds telling us what to do, voices that we do not recognise as our own? Such a radical acceptance of the Tikopians’ notions would challenge seriously the psychoanalytical principles and practises. On the other hand such weird complexity of dreaming performance could not be adequately described by the usual terms of symbolism like “the latent” and “the manifest” content of dreams, rather than by terms like flows, waves or spirits that come from outside.

### **Extending the self out of the body**

Alfred Gell describes the Umeda magical dream practise in New Guinea “for whom smelling is intimately connected with dreaming,

and for whom dreaming means having access to a higher truth” (Gell, 1977, 29).

It is believed that the sleeping man, imbibing the magical aroma of oktesap will thereupon dream a dream which betokens good hunting according to the system of dream augury followed by the Umedas... The Umeda word for dream (ynigwi) is in fact very close to the Umeda word of smell (nugwi)...The dream which foretold the killing of a pig was one such dream, for it did not take the form of a direct representation of the event (the dream of killing a pig was an evil omen, an indication of illness and death in the local community)- the dream indicative of hunting success was dreaming of making love to a woman...The substitution of “making love” for “killing a pig” is not arbitrary. Eating, violence (hunting) and sexuality are alternative “modes” of a single basic activity which the Umeda language expresses by means of only one (tabu).” (ibid, 32)

### Among the Semai and Temiar in Thailand

...The important dreams that do occur from time to time have to be understood in the context of fundamental dichotomy...This is the Dichotomy between “they that kill us” (called mara’ by some Senai) and those “who help us” (gunik)...mara are dangerous beings that may or may not have material form at any given time. Mara are unpredictable and malevolent. They may attack at any time for no reason at all, although doing something wrong or offending a neighbour may increase the chances of being attacked. The only protection against a mara’ is another mara’ who has become friendly to a person of group. Such a mara’ is called a gunik, a kind of protector or familiar, and it may be called upon in times of trouble...it is a matter of luck or chance that a person acquires a protector through his dreams...A mara becomes a gunik by coming to a person in a dream

and stating his desire to make friends. One must however be worry of these mara's because they may be deceiving the dreamer in preparation for an attack upon him. (Domhof, 1985, 26)

### **Dreams and magic as interpersonal experience**

...the proof that a mara' truly wants to become a gunik lies in his telling the dreamer his name and giving him a song. This song becomes the property of the dreamer, who may use it to summon a gunik. The gunik may then be called upon to assist the singer and his kinsmen and co-villagers in a variety of ways, but especially in curing illness and warding off other kinds of attacks by mara' of the same type as gunik! Thus a tiger gunik will protect the villages from attack by "foreign" or "stranger" tigers, and wind gunik protects the hamlet from destruction by "stranger" winds... Their most important element is the trance state in which the individual Semai or Temiar relates to the gunik. It is while a person is in a trance state that the gunik speaks through his human "father" and is sent into the body of the patient to search out the cause of illness (ibid, 27)

Roy Willis who studied the spiritual ritual of ngulu in Zambia writes about the essential influence of drumming and dancing:

Several tentative conclusions appear to follow from my material on ngulu performances. One is that group ritual activity accompanied by drumming and other rhythmic actions does have the power, in favourable conditions, to trigger "altered-state" experiences among participants. The ability to experience such states appears to be a genetically transmitted faculty common to all human beings (see Winkelman 1992:109), and thus presumably has or had survival value for the species as a whole. In the Lungu ngulu performance, some participants enter states of non-ordinary consciousness in which they appear to be-

come aware of forces outside and beyond the worlds of familial and tribal life, forces which in anthropology have been called “ecological spirits”. As a participant observer from a foreign culture, I was not personally aware of contact with any such entities, but I did experienced what I took to be a peripheral form of the altered state apparently accessed by the ngulu doctors and initiates. The most salient effect of this personal experience was dissolution of the ordinary reality boundaries of selfhood through a transient loss of temporal and spatial coordinates. One consequence was the disappearance of all sense of social structure and hierarchy in relation to my fellows: a pleurably convivial state of harmony, which Victor Turner has famously called *communitas*. This was also a state in which identification with what might be called “spirithood”, in the sense of liberation from temporal and spatial constraints, was experienced as reality. I am here pointing towards an expanded sense of ‘*communitas*’ from Turner’s essentially sociocentric conception of a state of ‘antistructure’ (Turner, 1969). and when I say ‘spirithood’ I refer to a ritual experience which, to a Westerner, appears as a strange fusion of the spiritual and the erotic”. (Willis, 1999, 123)

Through these long quotations it is well demonstrated I hope how the very notions that follow the dream world are applied in the healing, hunting and ecological rituals too, as well. One could not decisively distinguish the trance states of rituals than those of the dreaming states of consciousness. As is asserted by other ethnographers and anthropologists as well, (Fernandez, 1982, Graham, 1995) people tried to re-established in rituals conditions that within dreams occurred automatically from the world of spirits. In some cases rituals imitated dreams and dreams was an inexhaustible recourse providing rituals performative material as the example of Senai singing ritual illustrates. The most important though it is not only this close interrelation between dreams magic and rituals but actually how, by what means this interrelation is achieved. This

interrelation is achieved by socialising constantly the individual's dream material, that is transforming personal knowledge and intuition into social property. On the other hand, this socially elaborated knowledge through myths, rituals performances and recounts of social events and individual deeds re-enter the dream world as new material from the outside (Kracke 1987, Stewart 1997). This kind of social exchange of feelings intuitions and innovations reveals the dialectics instead of the dichotomy between the individual and the social group. As Willis puts it, this kind of dialectics has or had a survival value for the species as a whole. It must not be dismissible that this very kind of dialectical interrelation between the individual and the group was realised through and within the world of spirits and that which we later called animism.

### *Conclusion*

I think that even now after a hundred and fifty years of anthropological endeavour we can hardly understand what animism or more accurately the world of spirits was or is all about. It does not seem to be the case of a failure of distinction between imagination and reality as Edward Tylor assumed. On the contrary there is not a binary distinction at all, nor a dichotomy of this type. Instead of that there seem to be a triple structure of active relationships while the world of spirits representing the ecological and cosmological factor, functions as the intermediation among these relationships. These relationships refer to the self the body and the nature at one level the interpersonal relationships at another and the group integration at the third one. All these levels interact to each other through feelings intuitions performances and rituals.

Returning to my initial assumption that the dream theories and practices of the ecological or pre-literal societies reveal what dreams are all about, I might better abandon the argument which was useful as a heuristic device rather than a final point. Of course we have a

lot more to know about humans and humanity, that is primarily for ourselves, by studying the ecological societies. But the real problem is how we study them. I consider my initial question if we can say that they have or had theories as more essential at this point.

I do not think though that we can talk of “theories” in that case. We do not have theories here to deal with. We do not have modes of thought to deal with and in that sense headlines like “how natives think” or “the savage mind” seem themselves more native and savage rather than the notions and the alluded peoples’ thoughts that they elaborate. We are dealing with experiences. Complex experiences like dreams and rituals that are at the same time physical, interpersonal and social interactions. Anyhow my argument might help us to believe and trust people that really had these experiences and they did not make them up; because, in fact, we do not believe them. We say they have theories while they have experiences. And I cannot see how can we compare our theories with their experiences. One cannot compare and understand an experience through theory but through another experience.

Modern theories on dreaming and religious experiences start from the point of mistrust and scepticism towards dreaming and religious experience. We tend to reduce experiences in linear prepositional explanations, to decipher ‘symbols’ and to discover social constructions everywhere while there are only feelings, intuitions, personal and collective creativity, healing, fears and hopes. Of course we can see through these performances of feelings and actions something deeper and integrative that pervades society. But is that a structure of mind or an abstract, rule governed social structure?

I think nor the one neither the other. In the depth of the religious experience and practise we find what we see either on the surface:

*social and ecological relationships*. By neglecting the world of spirits we neglect the social relationships and the relations to the nature that this world indicates. And by that we become “civilised”. Jane Schneider (Schneider, 1990. 24) points on that:

Through a succession of reform movements, of which the Protestant Reformation was but the most thorough, literate clerics and preachers of Western Christianity progressively demonised European peasant animism, assimilating beliefs in earth spirits and spirits of the dead to a concept of ontological evil and then, after the Enlightenment, denying the existence of these spirits altogether. Western social scientists, themselves a product of this centuries long process of disenchantment, give us two competing accounts of the peasant culture that fell victim to the trend. On one side is a romantic folk model that emphasizes homogeneity, and a-historical traditionalism, the permeation of the everyday life by the sacred and the subordination of individuals to the community. Negative images stress superstition and idolatry-the ‘idiocy’ of rural life. (Schneider, 1990, 24)

Anyhow in one-way or another the basic concept remains otherness and alterity. We are not allowed to believe in superstitions even though we admire the traditional peoples creativity. But they remain distant, they remain the others. What if they are not? What if the same spirits that kill Senai kill us too?

And the same spirits that save them save us as well? It is not a matter of theory though. It is a matter of active relationships. And who of us would not accept as real the Iroquois notion:

The dreams of a sick person were sometimes interpreted as the dreamer’s wanting or needing a friend. Occasionally a specific person would be dreamed of by the sick individual. During ceremonies con-



ducted by the Eagle Society among the Iroquois sick persons were matched with friends suggested by their dreams. The friendships thus established implied lifelong relationships between the matched individuals characterized by mutual helpfulness and regard. (O'Neill, 1976,64)

It was the spirits of alienation and isolation both from nature and the group that pre-literal people tried to exorcise. Sometimes they succeeded, sometimes they failed.

We 'westerns' and civilized are failing from the very beginning, because we deem this spirit of isolation as a good one. In fact this is what kills us. But fortunately not all of us:

Then I knew the Africans were right, there is a spirit stuff, there is spirit affliction, it isn't a matter of metaphor and symbol, or even psychology. (E. Turner, 1993,9)

By crying out for saving animism and the world of spirits, which is really in danger exactly in the same manner as the wild forests are, seems to me the same as if we cry out for social change.

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## APPENDIX 2

### MINOR ANTHROPOLOGY (2006)

We, Nico Tassi (UCL), Melania Calestani (Goldsmiths) and Ioannis Kyriakakis (UCL), all finishing PhD students in London, have formed a group called “Minor Anthropology”. Each one of us has written a brief text in order to explain what Minor Anthropology is and what we are standing for. We see Minor Anthropology as a long term commitment, beyond academic careers, expressing a form of consciousness and a way of life rather than merely a methodological stance. The texts below express our personal restlessness which does not usually find space or consideration in the traditional curricular activities. We haven’t included ethnographic materials to justify our statements as at this stage we are still trying to clarify our most urgent preoccupations. However, it is our field experiences that inspired our ideas and reflections. After long discussions on our field experiences in regular meetings for more than six months the following points have emerged as common ground among us:

- We regard ethnographic research as developing from the researcher’s restlessness rather than from a void in the theoretical

production. We also see the field as consisting of contested social and ideological parties to whom the researcher inevitably responds by *taking sides*. Anthropological practice requires us to take political stance and it is similarly political to ignore this or to cover it up. We suggest that fieldwork should be regarded more as an engagement and a deep concern with people's problems rather than just an initiation rite to the academic world.

- Neutrality of the social scientist is impossible for the anthropologist. The researcher's own cultural background, her gender, her political and religious persuasions are essential parts of the research and they affect its direction, let alone the selection of topics and areas of study. However, it is still today common practice in the academia to foster an ideology of neutrality and detachment crucial in producing THE anthropological knowledge. This ultra-human 'cult of aloofness' feeds the supremacy of academic knowledge versus 'minor knowledges', which risk being simply serviceable to the reproduction of the former. Our own stance is one of injecting local knowledges not merely into academic knowledge but also into the atmosphere and demeanours of anthropology departments.
- Personal engagement with both the subject and the informant remains paramount for an anthropology striving to rejoin the anaesthetised social scientist with the vitality of the everyday and construct a radical continuity between life and theory. Instead of an exercise of discourse, anthropology has to be seen as playing the role of an interface between local and scientific knowledge, drawing together the different worlds of the anthropologist who acts as a mediator between them.

We acknowledge that this is a specific perspective on anthropology

and it is not necessary that all anthropologists agree with it. All we are saying is that this specific perspective has to be considered and respected as equally valid to existing others, within anthropological departments.

### 1. MINOR ANTHROPOLOGY by Nico Tassi

The post-modern critique elaborated a sophisticated assessment of academic principles, procedures, their constructed nature and rhetorical mechanisms. However, the experimentations of post-modernists also led to ineffable conceptualisations of the subject as well as to a metaphysical inconsistency. Eventually, after the post-modern critique, the discipline has ‘re-anthropologised’ itself, has redrawn boundaries and rules, methods and rhetorical forms and imposed its limits on intellectual production.

In a time when anthropologists are debating about the re-professionalisation of anthropology, my intention here is to foster a concept of ‘profession’ rooted in its etymological connotation. ‘Professionalisation’ also means ‘to profess’ a discipline with fervent dedication rather than sanitised aloofness. I certainly derive this idea of ‘professionalisation’ from a ‘backward’ cultural background, a ‘southern’ quirk, a residual of a non-scientific world that academic demeanours have often tried to uproot. This naïve resistance can lead to envision myself as a ‘capricious adolescent’ performing a kind of romantic rebellion rooted in a survival of pre-modernity destined to fade away. However, as an anthropologist and a ‘southerner’ I am ethically forced to pull together those worlds and backgrounds that the academia strives to keep apart. Rather than from a void in anthropological theory, in the ‘south’ anthropological research continues to develop from the researcher’s

restiveness. The emotional attachment and sometimes political engagement with the 'subject' have constituted central presuppositions for those marginal anthropologies and originated methods and languages which displace the disciplinary rules and boundaries of the dominant anthropology. But above all, in the 'south' the imposed spatial and conceptual boundary between academic theorisation and social life is not as clear cut as it is in the Anglo-Saxon world: in the 'south' that boundary seems too much of a fictional sophistication to be taken seriously. Especially in the 'south', with its status of 'marginal discipline' located somewhere between humanities and social sciences, anthropology has often escaped the definition of a cumulative recipient of knowledge. It cannot be an abstract store where knowledge is piled detached from things and beings for the sake of a cumulative progress of science.

I believe the product of anthropology must be a living knowledge not a disembodied, anaesthetised 'material' deprived of its flesh, blood and vitality so as to be easily manipulated by the social scientist. Nor anthropology can be an experimental, ephemeral discursive art. We must be able to 'touch on the raw' we must be able to shake, to move with our work the most generous part of our dominant culture, we must melt the hardened emotions and desires of the most humane part of the oppressors.

I would like to borrow here the concept of 'minor' from the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Unlike other concepts as 'subaltern' or 'southern', Deleuze defines 'minor' as not holding that oppositional tension towards a dominant knowledge. For Deleuze a 'minor' language implies a struggle for recognition, a denounce of the conventions and worn out discursivity of a major language but also the awareness that a minor language is becoming

locally major. Deleuze rids off the ‘minor’ language of a sense of marginality and places its crucial identity in its transformative role rather than in a static oppositional position.

I am sympathetic with the idea of minor because it allows vindicating a different approach to anthropology. By “minor” I don’t mean a marginal understanding of the discipline, but the experiencing of anthropology in the flesh as a prolongation of life-experience rather than just a discursive and logical exercise. What I am trying to say is that I would like to shape a disciplinary avant-garde rooted in the vernacular of my provincialism; I would like to infect a major discipline with the joy and the suffering, the blood and the texture of a minor knowledge.

Approaching anthropology from the periphery and from anthropologically ‘backward’ perspectives I have come to consciously develop an attitude of uneasiness for the sanitised language and demeanours of mainstream anthropology. As a ‘foreign’ anthropologist both in Britain and at home, I am trying to make present, to translate, to convert into a diaphanous and legitimate stream the language which seems so unfamiliar. I believe we need to challenge the almost alienating anthropological jargon in order to communicate the materiality of personal restlessness. The objective is to infect anthropology its ‘methodological atheism’ and dispassionate neutrality with desire and zest transforming it into a living instrument bounding up together the different worlds we live in as well as the fragmented strings of our existence. From a purely disciplinary and professionalized knowledge, a minor anthropology will try to create a ‘radical epistemological continuity’ between life and theory, between the texture of everyday existence and the atmosphere of anthropology departments.

My intention is to vindicate the role of anthropology as a liminal discipline between life and theory, science and art, informing science and its philosophy and injecting into it the hue and strength of non academic knowledge. I envision anthropology as a discipline against disciplines, a capricious adolescent depending on the parents and still rebelling against parental guidance; an interface at the far end of sciences spectrum deconstructing traditional hierarchies of knowledge and reconstructing a fluid connection between the hard science and the everyday life.

#### DREAMS OF POLYVOCALITY AND COMMON SPACES

By Melania Calestani

Anthropology helped me to make more sense of the world. It has been a long personal journey since I started to study this social science, which gives special attention to human relations and social interactions. Some of the theories and thoughts emerging from this dynamic discipline have accompanied the last six years of my life, answering some of my questions or generating even more nuances around them. Here I am, still not tired of it, still in search of new responses, still up for new challenges.

All those theories and thoughts have been the red-bricks of my ivory tower, where I retreated several times to escape the shallowness of everyday life. I enjoyed it for a while, but shifted to new directions later on. I guess that my fieldwork had a big impact on this. Living at 4.000 meters of altitude in the Bolivian plateau showed me a new perspective, a new way to engage with reality.

I was inspired by the writings of Cesar Brie, the founder of the *Teatro de Los Andes*. Brie found in the theatre a means to create a



common space where he and local people could express themselves, revealing a parity of 'knowledges' as well as an encounter of different perspectives and worldviews, fused together in a new imaginative dimension. This space conveyed mutual engagement, elimination of hierarchy and power, construction of equality through the creative process, sharing of feelings and of our human condition.

I felt in the same way during my fieldwork, in the daily challenge of building social interactions and human relations, of creating that common space that Brie was describing and searching for. It's the creation of an empathy, in which we communicate with words, gestures and actions that makes us the same despite our many differences. It's this act of finding universal aspects in opposition to specific and locally constructed ones; it's our search for new imaginative dimensions that bring us together as a collectivity. A collectivity which is built through the opposition/encounter between the group and our own identity and individuality, but also through the opposition/encounter between the outsider and the insider ('the other'). This has been widely discussed in anthropological literature, but what acquires certain relevance for me is being able to creatively express these interactions in an original way.

For me being an anthropologist is not only a matter of getting a PhD, but it also plays an essential role for the understanding of my own identity in relation to my group(s) as well as the others. It's that creative process that engages me in search of new dimensions and means of communication. As Coffey (1999:126) writes, it is a process of connecting lives. However, our texts should not be full of ourselves, neglecting the others, but they should become a balance between them and us. Charmaz and Mitchell (1997:194)

argue that “as there is merit humility and deference to subjects’ view, and reasoned, systematic discourse, so too there is merit in ‘a visible authorship’”.

The middle position they advocate calls for ‘a vocal text’ (Coffey, 1999), creating a polyvocality and suggesting an understanding of the world which is shaped and forged by different voices. It is a weaving process: different coloured strands form a unique picture, producing a piece of cloth that conveys collective and individual memory, like the Andean *aguayos*. *Aguayos* are usually used by Aymara women to carry their goods and babies, but they are also representative of the community memory. Each community has its own specific design with symbols and stories, each community writes its own history through weaving.

In a world where globalisation is becoming an increasing phenomenon, there is a constant need to produce different perspectives, different voices and different textual and no-textual pieces of history. It is a democratic process that should aim to include all material representations and anthropology should engage even more, providing through-provoking, challenging and new innovative ways to express our history. It is not only through infinite inter-connections between autobiographic and biographic writing that anthropology can engage in this imaginative and creative path, but it should include other means of expression that can be closer to ordinary people, that can be embraced and understood by wider audiences.

Academia should aim for a higher degree of engagement, accepting varied forms of writing, different styles, different uses of the language and unique expressive patterns. Creating common spaces as in the case of Brie should become one of the main scopes for

anthropology; knowledge should not only be shared among anthropology departments or at 'experts' conferences', but should become a common propriety, a common belonging, a common representation of identity and history.

Informants should be given the opportunity to express their opinions on the anthropologists that carry fieldwork in their communities; each anthropological account should include their reflections, language, perspectives, varied expressive images and patterns. Only in this way we can try to achieve a parity of knowledges, a democratic balance between us and them. Anthropologists should write or produce objects and images that make sense in their field sites.

When I finish my thesis I am going to go back to Bolivia to give a copy of my PhD to the communities I lived in. I might decide to translate it, but even in that case, can it be considered a common space? What does it mean for an Aymara peasant or an urban market seller in El Alto a thesis like mine? How can they use it? For them my thesis is an alien object that talks about them, a reproduction of their identity that they do not completely understand because of the language and style that have been adopted. For them my thesis is an unknown and a disconnected means to reproduce their reality. It becomes a foreign object, denying the existence of a common space or belonging.

I dream about a day when anthropological accounts will be based on polyvocality, when common spaces will be meaningful in both directions, when our identities will be woven together in colourful pieces of cloth. I dream about a day when this democratic process will take place.

3. TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY FOR RE-ARRANGING  
THE ORGANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE:  
WE ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE  
By Ioannis Kyriakakis

No matter how we define it, we anthropologists are constantly dealing with knowledge. Knowledge is not just a bulk of representations in the mind, since it is always and constantly materialised in objects, institutions and relationships. Therefore with knowledge we get rid of the dichotomy between mind and matter, which we inherited from philosophy. It was inevitable that philosophy could not resolve itself the dichotomy that itself created; anthropology is, for some of us at least, the way out. However, knowledge is not produced, transmitted and accessed by everybody in the same way, and this is our own burden (especially for social anthropologists who did not attempt to trick the problem by inventing new concepts and new sub-disciplines).

Let us take this as given for the time being:

*Power relationships determine to whom and in what ways knowledge is accessible.*

Power relationships are relationships between human beings vested with either a natural or a supernatural legitimacy regarding who must have the possession of Knowledge and who of “knowledges”. We can see the distinction clearly in western educational systems, which now are universal. What is taught at schools and universities is “Knowledge”, whereas all the rest are “knowledges”. In the same vein, social formations without formal educational systems maintain the distinction in the forms of sacred “Knowledge” and mundane “knowledges”, however interrelated the two might be.

The legitimacy of who should be the carrier of one or another and under what circumstances, is not knowledge itself but it claims to be the *proper organisation* of knowledge, that is, it is the *politics* of Knowledge. It seems that there can be social formations without class distinctions or institutionalised politics or even without a notion of society as such, but one can hardly imagine any social formation without a sort of organisation of Knowledge.

*Anthropology is the discipline that targets from its very beginning at the rearrangement of the organisation of Knowledge, by attempting to enter “knowledges” into Knowledge, therefore it constitutes a continuous intellectual revolution (Hereby, I am not claiming any consent; these are my own ideas, my own conception of anthropology).*

It is another issue *how* we try to do that; some say through field-work itself, others through writing, Martin Holbraad suggested *through concepts informed by and referring to both*, and I have no problem to accept the last, but this is not my point here. I am attempting to grasp here the vital force that urges us to get engaged with anthropology in the first place, and despite our differences unites us in the last instance. To put it more simply, I quote Evans Pritchard: *“it is ordinary people the anthropologist is interested in”* (*Theories of Primitive Religions* –Oxford University Press: Oxford 1965:119). Since almost from the beginning we are interested in ordinary people, it means that we recognise *ad hoc* that there is a fundamental distinction in this world as we inherited it, between ordinary and non-ordinary people, and this means that *this distinction is the milestone of our discipline* whether we are conscious of it or not.

Evans Pritchard was apparently in total consciousness when he

wrote: "I am sure that men like Avebury, Frazer and Marett had little idea of how the ordinary English working man felt and thought, and it is not surprising that they had even less idea of how primitives, whom they had never seen, feel and think." (*ibid.* 108-109)

Anthropology has been born into an environment of "Knowledge" -the world of the Academy, but it opposes and constantly challenges this environment by inputting "knowledges" of ordinary people into it, since ordinary people provide anthropology not only with raw material (data) but also with the means of acquisition and some times with the means of the elaboration of the data (methods and partly also theory). That's why anthropology can be also taken as a method itself for other disciplines.

We are and we will always be caught up in the middle of an anti-phasis between academia and ordinary people. This is our fate and we have to accept it. It is both burdensome and fascinating, but this is what it is, if one cannot bear it, she cannot be an anthropologist. This paper is just a suggestion on how we (or at least some of us) can cope more effectively with this situation.

There is a lot of discussion within anthropology, about performance, representation and reflexivity during the late years, however we must think that this discussion cannot be fruitful outside the main framework that enabled anthropology to exist till date: *we are interested in ordinary people*. Malinowski was responsible for our first revolution against academia, when he took us out of the libraries and sent us to the field. The long prepared and impending second revolution I suppose and I suggest that it will be that *we are ordinary people as well*. This revolution was partly and experimentally, with a bit of reluctance expressed by Bourdieu short

before his death (Bourdieu 2003: *Participant Objectivation, in Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 9, 281-294.*). Bourdieu writes: “Nothing is more false, in my view, than the maxim almost universally accepted in the social sciences according to which the researcher must put nothing of himself into his research. He should on the contrary refer continually to his own experience but not, as is too often the case...in a guilty, unconscious, or uncontrolled manner. Whether I want to understand a woman from Kabylia or a peasant from Béarn, a Turkish migrant worker [etc. etc.]... the most difficult thing, paradoxically, is never to forget that they are all people like me...” (pp. 287-288).

Bourdieu here goes a little further than the proposition “*we are interested in ordinary people*”. He stresses that these people are people like us and we should never forget this. But when I say that somebody is *like me*, what else does it mean than that somebody *is not* “the other”? If the people we study are not others, this means that our constitutive condition and incentive as anthropologists **is not** “*the search of the distant and exotic other*”. Let me not discuss here, whether it was like that from the beginning (which I fervently believe and that’s why I pay my respects to the ancestors), or it happened in the process; this is an interesting issue but not to me here. If and when the other is not other anymore, our work cannot be simply about making the “other” less other, we are not recording peculiarities but normativities. Even if ways of living and thinking seem peculiar to us during the first period of our fieldworks, *it would be impossible to continue living together with our informants*, were not the peculiarities rapidly transformed into normativities, and we know that, and we always knew it! However, what we really experience in the field is experienced only by us and our informants, but not by the rest of the people of *the culture we are coming from*. What we have in front of us to

overcome in that case is not the conception of the other, but the conception of ourselves *as others, not in the field, but back home!* Who we are, *and why we are doing this*. This is the question that Bourdieu does not answer.

If they are like us, then we are also like them but not quite, since we are in the academia, therefore we have *access* to “Knowledge”, which they do not have, and this means that we are *politically more advanced*, neither intellectually nor culturally. My suggestion is that we should not give up this advantage for the sake of pure “Knowledge” as the post-modern critique suggested.

Ordinary people never give up the means for making their cases known, for improving their lives. I suggest that *we* should do the same: *be ordinary people, be rough and simple, be emotional, be engaged, and be political*. How? One might ask. By being honest I would answer. By being ordinary people, and that means by being *ordinary people in our own cultures, back home*. What I suggest is rather not a theoretical than a political proposition. I suggest that we should start speaking the language of the common people, the ordinary people both in the field and back home, because we do it in the field, but we don't do it back home. It is not a question of theory, everybody has a theory, indigenous and working men and women have theories as well, grand theories, allow me to say, it is not even a question of either essentialism or ethnocentrism, it is not even (allow me this blasphemy please) a problem of methodology! The problem is the language. We can use and forge our theoretical elaborations in the everyday vernacular which is used by ordinary people both here and there. Nothing and no one prohibit us from that apart from the (evil to me) *spirit of Academism*. *It is possible*.



Since what we write in our theses, articles, books, is practically what we have *learnt* in the field, the opposite is also true: the way we speak and write within our departments and publications affects the way we learn what we learn in the field, because we go to the field in order to speak and write afterwards within the academia, let us not be pretentious about that. The question is not *what* we do, but *why* we do it. If this is the point, and if it is really impossible to conduct successful and productive fieldwork, nowadays *without being ordinary people* ourselves, as I personally believe beyond doubt, we need I guess to state this fact clearly towards the Academia as well: *We work here, but we don't belong here. Unlike the rest of you, we are anthropologists, we are ordinary people.*



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In this book, Kyriakakis unfolds the argument that the academic system tends to produce an image of the world as a bulk of unfortunate contingencies irrelevant to the global distribution of power. Especially for Africa, where Kyriakakis conducted his doctoral research as a social anthropologist, he claims that contemporary tendencies in social science conceal the fact that colonialism never ended. On the contrary, it expanded and deepened its grip on the people's minds along with their labour, their crops, and their minerals. The book is autobiographical, it explains a radical change in the author's views while in the field, and it could easily be an exciting novel if it weren't a bitter reality. A must-read for people interested in social change.

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