

Anthropologie

Zeitschrift für Medizinethnologie • Journal of Medical Anthropology

hrsg. von/edited by: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin e.V. – AGEM

Dolmetscher, f. unter Dragoman.

Dragoman, zunächst vom ital. dragomano, welches, wie das deutsche Wort Dolmetscher, aus dem arab. Worte terdschuman entstanden ist, heißt bei den Europäern im Orient ein Dolmetscher. Der Pforten-D., durch welchen früher die diplomatischen Verhandlungen der europ. Mächte mit dem Divan vermittelt wurden, war bis zu dem griech. Aufstande 1821 ein griech. Christ. Seit jener Zeit wird der Posten durch Türken besetzt, hat aber bei der Zunahme der Kenntnis europ. Sprachen unter den Pfortenbeamten seine ehemalige Wichtigkeit verloren. Auch die fremden Gesandtschaften und Konsulate in der Levante halten einen oder mehrere D., durch welche die Verbindung mit der Regierung unterhalten und sowohl die polit. und kommerziellen Geschäfte als auch die privaten Anliegen der Nationalen besorgt werden. Früher waren diese D. der Regel nach Levantiner. In neuern Zeiten aber haben die meisten Staaten vorgezogen, einheimische Beamte für diesen wichtigen Posten heranzubilden.

Dolmetscher [ungar.] *der. -s/-*, Berufs-Bez. für jemanden, der gesprochene fremdsprachl. Äußerungen mündlich übersetzt. Dabei wird Simultan- und Konsekutivdolmetschen, d. h. zeitlich gleichzeitiges (Vortrag, Rede, über Kopfhörer) und zeitlich nachfolgendes Dolmetschen, unterschieden. Vereidigte D. sind im auswärtigen Dienst, bei Gerichten und anderen Behörden tätig. Die **D.-Institute** der Univ. Heidelberg und Saarbrücken sowie der Fachbereich Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft der Univ. Mainz in Gernersheim bilden in 4–6 Semestern in je einer Haupt- und Nebensprache aus und führen zum Diplom-Übersetzer oder zum **Diplom-D.**; in NRW kann das Diplom auch an Fachhochschulen erworben werden. Außerdem bieten private **D.-Schulen** Sprachkurse an, die zum Dolmetschen und/oder Übersetzen befähigen (z. B. → Berlitzschulen).

Stichwort Dolmetscher aus:

1. Brockhaus' Conversations-Lexikon. Dreizehnte Auflage, Fünfter Band 1883, S. 444 u. 519.
2. Brockhaus Enzyklopädie. Neunzehnte Auflage, Fünfter Band 1988, S. 591.

Die fremden Sprachen, die fremden Kranken:
Dolmetschen im medizinischen Kontext

Foreign Languages, Foreign Patients:
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Zum Titelbild: Repros aus Brockhaus 1883 (13. Aufl.) und 1988 (18. Aufl.) zum Stichwort *Dolmetsch* und *Dragoman* // **To the title:** Repro on the keyword *Interpreter* in the German Encyclopedia Brockhaus 1883 (13. ed.) and 1988 (18. ed.).

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Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin – AGEM, Herausgeber der

Curare, Zeitschrift für Ethnomedizin und transkulturelle Psychiatrie, gegründet 1978

ab 2008 neuer Untertitel: *Curare, Zeitschrift für Medizinethnologie • Curare, Journal of Medical Anthropology*

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**Zeitschrift für Medizinethnologie
Journal of Medical Anthropology**



Herausgegeben im Auftrag der / Edited on behalf of:

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin e.V. – AGEM
von Ekkehard Schröder, auch verantwortlich im Sinne des Presse-
rechtes V.i.S.d.P. / Editor-in-chief

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IMPRESSUM 31(2008)2+3

Verlag und Vertrieb / Publishing House:

VWB – Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, Amand Aglaster
Postfach 11 03 68 • 10833 Berlin, Germany
Tel. +49-[0]30-251 04 15 • Fax: +49-[0]30-251 11 36
e-mail: info@vwb-verlag.com
http://www.vwb-verlag.com

Bezug / Supply:

Der Bezug der *Curare* ist im Mitgliedsbeitrag der Arbeitsgemein-
schaft Ethnomedizin (AGEM) enthalten. Einzelne Hefte können
beim VWB-Verlag bezogen werden // *Curare* is included in a
regular membership of AGEM. Single copies can be ordered at
VWB-Verlag.

Abonnementspreis / Subscription Rate:

Die jeweils gültigen Abonnementspreise finden Sie im Internet
unter // Valid subscription rates you can find at the internet under:
www.vwb-verlag.com/reihen/Periodika/curare.html

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ISSN 0344-8622 ISSN 978-3-86135-755-1

Die Artikel dieser Zeitschrift wurden einem Gutachterverfahren
unterzogen // This journal is peer reviewed.



Inhalt / Contents
Vol. 31 (2008) 2+3
Doppelheft / Double Issue

**Die fremden Sprachen, die fremden Kranken:
Dolmetschen im medizinischen Kontext**
**Foreign Languages, Foreign Patients:
Interpreting in a Medical Context**

Herausgeber / Guest-editors:
ALEXANDER BISCHOFF & BERND MEYER

Die Autoren dieses Heftes 124

Editorial

ALEXANDER BISCHOFF & BERND MEYER:

Die fremden Sprachen, die fremden Kranken: Dolmetschen im medizinischen Kontext 125

Foreign Languages, Foreign Patients: Interpreting in a Medical Context 129

Artikel

FRANZ PÖCHHACKER: Krankheit, Kultur, Kinder, Kommunikation: Die Nichte als Dolmetscherin . . . 133

MARTINA KAMM & BÜLENT KAYA: Interne Laiendolmetscher – ein Gewinn für die Rehabilitation
von Migranten/innen 143

MARGRITH LIN-HUBER & KARL MUTTER: Der Beitrag des interkulturellen Vermittelns im Kontext
heilpädagogischer Beratung 153

ALEXANDER BISCHOFF, ELISABETH KURTH & SYLVIE SCHUSTER: Der Dialog zu Dritt: PatientInnen,
DolmetscherInnen und Gesundheitsfachleute in der Universitäts-Frauenklinik Basel 163

ŞEBNEM BAHADIR: Das Theater des Dolmetschens: Beobachten, Teilnehmen, Proben,
Darstellen, Verändern 176

SONJA NOVAK-ZEZULA, URSULA KARL-TRUMMER & JÜRGEN M. PELIKAN: Qualitätsgesichert
Dolmetschen im Krankenhaus: Europäische Implementierungs- und Evaluationserfahrungen 187

CLAUDIO BARALDI & LAURA GAVIOLI: Cultural Presuppositions and Re-contextualization of Medical
Systems in Interpreter-mediated Interactions 193

PATRICIA KAUFERT & JOSEPH KAUFERT: The Story of a “Trouble Case”: Language, Culture and the Problems of Translation	205
YVAN LEANZA: Community Interpreter’s Power. The Hazards of a Disturbing Attribute	211
CHRISTINE ANTHONISSEN & BERND MEYER: Ärzte fragen, Patienten antworten (nicht immer): Kommunikation in einem südafrikanischen Gesundheitsposten für Antiretrovirale Therapie	221
Dokumentationen	
<i>Reprint nach 30 Jahren:</i>	
UTE LUIG: Sorcery Accusations as Social Commentary. A Case Study of Mulago/Uganda	231
<i>Reprint nach 20 Jahren:</i>	
ANTONIO MORTEN: Transkulturelle Psychiatrie und Migrationspsychiatrie – Berührungängste in einer Klassenpsychiatrie? Ein Versuch, durch interkulturellen und interdisziplinären Austausch psychosoziale Handlungskompetenz zu erlangen	240
Buchbeprehungen / Book Reviews	245
Kurskatalog “medicine & health” (Wien), Artikel 2002-2009	253
EKKEHRD SCHROEDER: Zur Erinnerung an den 100. Geburtstag von Georges Devereux am 13. September 1908	257
<i>Reprint nach 30 Jahren:</i>	
GEORGES DEVEREUX: Curare zum Geleit. Mytho-Diagnosis: A Teething-Ring for <i>Curare</i>	262
<i>Reprint nach 30 Jahren:</i>	
GEORGES DEVEREUX: Die Verunsicherung der Geisteskranken	264
Programm der 21. Fachtagung Ethnomedizin vom 5.-7.12.2008 in Remscheid: „Kultur, Medizin und Psychologie im Dialog: Bilanzen im interdisziplinären Arbeitsfeld Ethnologie & Medizin“ ..	269
30 Jahre Curare: Dokumentation Ausgewählte Titelseiten III (Documentation Selected Titles): „Der Heilkundige und sein Patient / The Healer and his Patient“ [Dan Acierto – ein philippinischer Geistesheiler; Reprint <i>Curare</i> 5(1982)2] // Schulmediziner in Mitteleuropa, z.B. im Heilstollen von Bad Gastein/Salzburger Land [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 6(1983)4] // Valentine Bao, Heilerin in Tolanaro/Madagaskar [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 7(1984)2] // Heiler aus Tonga, Entspannungsmassage im Rahmen einer psychiatrischen Behandlung [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 11(1988)3]	270
30 Jahre Curare: Dokumentation Ausgewählte Titelseiten IV (Documentation Selected Titles): „Ethnojatrie: Heilerpersönlichkeiten / Ethnoiatrics: Healing Personalities“ Ein nepalesischer <i>Jhākri</i> (Zauberarzt) trommelt sich in Trance. Wacholderrauch als Kultmittel bei Zeremonien [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 4(1981)4] // Der mythologische Häuptling von Ailigandi mit Zeremonialstab [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 7(1984)1] // Frau Konin Murahashi, Acarya des Mikkyo-Buddhismus [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 10(1987)3] // Der Heilkundige Koa Rabau aus Arabure [Reprint <i>Curare</i> 3(1980)3]	273
Résumés des articles de <i>curare</i> 31 (2008) 2+3	277

Zum Titelbild	U2
Impressum	U2
Hinweise für Autoren / Instructions for Authors	U3
Collage : 30 Jahre <i>Curare</i>	U4

Endredaktion: EKKEHARD SCHRÖDER
Redaktionsschluss: 30.06.2008

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Sorcery Accusations as Social Commentary.* A Case Study of Mulago/Uganda

UTE LUIG

Abstract African cities in particular are assumed to be centres of social constraint because of their economic differentiation and tribal heterogeneity. This paper tries to scrutinize this assumption by a case study of Mulago, a quarter of Kampala/Uganda. It starts from a hypothesis of MITCHELL who supposed witchcraft accusations to occur, due to the relative anonymous way of live in urban areas, rather within groups characterised by competition and envy than among individuals. In the case of Mulago, two types of social relationships are mainly affected by ideas of witchcraft: those among workmates and those who live relations of love (husband-prostitute) that are socially not accepted. For both types MITCHELL's categorization is correct since these relations are personal and competing. A more specific analysis proves his assumptions even more true. The relationships between neighbours as well as among relatives are free from witchcraft ideas although they are, due to the particular living conditions at Mulago, very close. In contrast to the practise of witchcraft accusations in the rural areas this practice seems to be effectuated on the one hand by an environment that is experience as hostile (e.g. a high crime rate) and therefore favours neighbours solidarity and, on the other hand, by the possibility to limit and, in extreme cases, to cut personal relations and thus reduce social tensions. Although in witchcraft accusations quarrels among lovers dominate markedly in terms of figures and indicate sexual motives, in view of the particularity of the witchcraft accusation within the examined urban milieu it can be said that not so much individual ambitions or a lack of social distance cause these accusations but rather the competition for a „rare good“—be it a desired job or the essential keep by a man.

Hexereianklagen als sozialer Protest – eine Fallstudie aus Mulago/Uganda

Zusammenfassung Da gerade die Städte Afrikas auf Grund ihrer fortgeschrittenen ökonomischen Differenzierung und tribalen Heterogenität Zentren sozialer Spannungen sind, liegt es nahe, diese Annahme dort zu überprüfen. Ausgangspunkt ist eine Hypothese von MITCHELL. Er vermutete wegen der relativen Anonymität des städtischen Lebens Hexereianklagen weniger im persönlichen Bereich als vielmehr in solchen Gruppen, die durch Konkurrenz und Missgunst geprägt sind. Im Beispiel Mulago, einem Stadtviertel von Kampala, sind zwei Arten von Beziehungen durch Hexereivorstellungen betroffen: die zwischen Arbeitskollegen und die zwischen Personen, die ein gesellschaftlich nicht sanktioniertes Liebesverhältnis haben (Ehemann-Prostituierte). Auf beide Situationen trifft MITCHELLS Charakterisierung zu, dass die Beziehung persönlich und konkurrenziell ist. Durch eine Feinanalyse lassen sich seine Vermutungen noch präziser bestätigen. Die Beziehung zwischen Nachbarn wie auch Verwandten sind in Mulago von Hexerei frei, obwohl sie durch die besondere Situation in Mulago sehr intensiv sind. Dieser deutliche Unterschied der Praxis der Hexereianklage im Vergleich zum Land scheint durch die als feindlich empfundene Umwelt (z.B. hohe Kriminalität) bewirkt zu werden, die zum Einen nachbarschaftliche Solidarität fördert, zum Anderen durch Einschränkungen, im Extrem durch Abbruch persönlicher Kontakte spannungsmindernd wirken kann. Wenn auch zahlenmäßig bei der Kasuistik der Hexereianklagen Liebeshändel weitgehend dominieren und auf sexuelle Motivationen hinweisen, so lässt sich doch bei der deutlichen Spezifität der Hexereianklagen in dem untersuchten Stadtmilieu aussagen, daß weniger das individuell le Element und das Fehlen der sozialen Distanz ausschlaggebend für die Hexereianklagen ist. Stattdessen sind es primär Konkurrenz-situationen um ein „knappes Gut“ wie begehrte Arbeitsplätze oder eine lebenswichtige Unterhaltungs-sicherung durch einen Mann, welche Hexereiklagen bewirken.

Keywords (Schlagwörter) witchcraft and sorcery (Hexerei) – socio-economic interpretation (sozioökonomische Interpretation) – social constraint and competition (soziale Spannung und Konkurrenz) – migration – Uganda

* With this reprint after 30 years the printing error in the headline is corrected [1(1978)1], where the word “sorcery” was missing.

After the publication of EVANS-PRITCHARD's classical study of Azande witchcraft and sorcery (1937), much work in the field of the sociology of witchcraft and sorcery had been done. While EVANS-PRITCHARD emphasized the logical consistency of those beliefs, others, like MARWICK (1952) and MITCHELL (1956), were more interested in the structural and normative significance, whereas TURNER focused on the role they play in the development of social processes, which he understands as social dramas (1957).

Despite the different approaches, however, general agreement has been reached that accusations of witchcraft and sorcery are indices of social tension and expressions of social conflict. If this assumption is valid, it may be concluded that there should be an increase of accusations of witchcraft and sorcery in African towns, which, as centres of social change, are generally thought of as generating tension and conflict. Heterogeneity of the population, frequently resulting in tribal strife, economic differentiation, and as the clash of juxtaposed value systems are mostly assumed to be the main causes of social conflict in African towns.

MITCHELL, however, has refined this hypothesis by arguing that, due to the low degree of 'Integration' characterising social life in town, there is no need to express personal tensions through witchcraft accusations except in cooperative enterprises, where interaction is intimate, competitive and potentially hostile (MITCHELL: 1960).

This paper attempts to test MITCHELL's hypothesis and to gain better understanding of the functions, accusations of witchcraft and sorcery fulfil in urban areas. This is undertaken by a structural-functional analysis of accusations of sorcery. In order to understand the situations of conflict, a description of Mulago's major social problems is first attempted.

Mulago and its Community¹

In spite of Mulago's geographical position inside the peri-urban belt surrounding the City, it appears more urban than peri-urban, if we consider building, land-use and population density as criteria for being "urban" (O'CONNOR & SEMUGOOMA 1968: 5). As a result of this position Mulago developed certain functions for the African labour force.

Its nearness to the City, cheap accommodation and uncontrolled growth were of advantage in the choice of residence.

2) Mulago Hospital built in 1913 served as a major source of employment from the start.

3) The development of a retail market created opportunities for earning a livelihood through petty trade.

Despite the quick development and growth Mulago's classification as an "urban village" (SOUTHALL & GUTKIND 1957: 100) is still justified, considering the lack of sufficient urban facilities and sanitary conditions for the constantly expanding population. GUTKIND's estimation of 2000 inhabitants might cautiously be replaced by an estimation between 5000-6000 (idem: 97). Mulago's dominant structural feature is its division into the business part with the highest population density inside Kampala, which contains very poor housing, referred to by its inhabitants as the "slum", and into a fairly rural area with lower density and better housing.

Like most African towns Mulago has a heterogeneous population of approximately 25 tribes, compared to GUTKIND who estimated 31 tribes. They are mostly of recent origin in town; the average length extending from 5-10 years, except the Ganda, who are often born there or have spent considerable periods of their urban life in Kampala. In comparison to areas like Kisenyi or Kibuli the impact of cultural diversity is somewhat reduced, as the tribes in Mulago are predominantly from the Western Region, including Rwanda. Nevertheless the Ganda (42.1%) constitute the largest single group. Though there is a distinct economic and cultural cleavage between the Ganda and the migrant people of non-Bantu origin, the latter are so few as almost to discount its sociological significance, in Mulago at least. This small enclave of people are the speakers of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic (or Para-Nilotic) and Sudanic languages and include the Luo (2.9%), Teso, Acholi, Lugbara, and Madi.

In Mulago the significant division is between the Ganda and other Bantu speakers. The differences are less cultural than economic.

Land- and house ownership, better education and easier access to better Jobs put the Ganda at a great advantage in relation to the non-Ganda for acquiring wealth and status inside the urban social system. There are, however, slight indications that the non-Ganda are successful in minimising the existing gaps. A survey of ownership of business enterprises still reveals the dominance of the Ganda (60 as against 40 per cent), which is especially obvious in their ownership of the larger and better stocked shops and European styled beer bars, but it also indicates the desire of the non-Ganda to become economically equal. Many of the Kiga assessed their

economic opportunities quite favourably since they noticed greater equality of chances since the 1966 revolution.

Ganda still own nearly three times as many houses as non-Ganda, who may be more likely to lack the capital needed for construction or simply to prefer not to settle permanently in town and to invest their capital in their places of birth.

Nevertheless the migrants have become quite conscious of improving their educational and occupational standards. Although economic inequalities between heterogeneous groups are bound to lead to considerable tensions and open conflict, the degree of open tribal strife in Mulago is relatively low. A more important reaction appears to be the displacement of aggression in the form of privately expressed tribal prejudices; the greatest social distance again being observed between Bantu and the non-Bantu minority.

The Economic Situation in Mulago

Economically Mulago represents one of the poorer sections of Kampala, as the majority of the population are employed in unskilled, skilled as well as lower grade clerical Jobs². As a result of the stagnation of Uganda's economy in the years between 1958 to 1963 (Uganda Enumeration of Employees 1967), Job opportunities are outstripped by demand and are heavily competed for. Because of rising aspirations and expectations of life style, a considerable decrease of "target working" has been noted. The tendency is to-wards a combination of permanent wage employment supplemented by agricultural production, performed mostly by the female members of the family and/or paid labourers in the rural areas; either on a subsistence level or if possible by cash-crop production. Although this has led to greater stability in the length of residence in town, the rising unemployment poses serious problems.

Most of the jobless belong to the younger age group, who have had better education and whose aspirations for a white collar Job are easily frustrated, while the expectations of their kin in the rural area are unrealistically high. As a consequence many a migrant delays his return home out of fear of being ridiculed by his fellow tribesmen for his apparent failure in the light of other's successes. It would not be surprising to find that this constant frustration and relative deprivation turn them into a Potential danger to the person and property of the more successful inhabitants in the Community. A statistical survey suggests that this may be so: it shows that Mulago has the highest crime rate inside Kampala³,

though Kisenyi is generally considered to be the centre of thieves and prostitutes.

The Situation of the Family in Mulago

The economic problems are connected with and mainly the cause of family problems. In many cases extremely low wages prohibit the establishment and/or maintenance of a family in town. The bulk of wages lies between 100 to 300 shs, which is hardly enough to eke out a living and support a wife and children in town⁴. Although more than half of the men state that they are married, many wives live either for a short temporary time with their husbands in town or entirely in the rural area, the Ganda being a frequent exception. The men who live with their wives in town for the most part have a better paid Job with more skill and show a greater tendency to spend most of their lives in town, provided they keep their Jobs. No precise figure can be given on this for the whole of Mulago, be-cause the actual composition of the family, which is very fluid, can only be properly understood by consecutive surveys over a considerable period of time. However, of the married male Kiga migrants in Mulago a survey reveals that 60.8% never have their wives with them in town, 11.1% have their wives commute between country and town and 28.1% have wives who live with their husbands in town for substantially longer periods at a time.

The prolonged separation of families causes substantial conflict since it puts a great number of men in a quasi-single status for a long time. Apart from the practical disadvantages of having to do housework, washing, cooking etc. - the psychological consequences of lacking the warmth and comfort of a home and regular sexual satisfaction may even be greater. As compensation for their psychological as well as their material needs many migrants take a mistress during various periods in their town career. Due to the imbalanced sex ratio in most migrant ethnic groups, the mistresses tend to be drawn from different ethnic groups and are called *harlots* or *malaya*. These liaisons last various lengths of time. The majority of the older married men tend to prefer occasional relations for a short period, while the unattached younger men often have longer lasting unions.

People who retain "traditional" views on the status of women, such as the Luo, Riga and those from northern Uganda, do not consider women in town adequate for marriage due to what are interpreted as their loose morals and relentless pleasure seeking, and to the fact that such unions can be broken off at any time at the convenience of the partners. The great number of ma-

trifocal families gives ample proof that such unions are very unstable. They are especially widespread among the Ganda, the women mostly supporting one to two children on their own. Although urban sex codes may be less rigid than those in rural areas, illegitimacy is to a certain degree frowned upon, though less so among Ganda, Toro and Haya.

One might be justified in comparing the attitudes most of the younger men in Mulago display towards sex, violence and alcoholism with a behavioural pattern commonly termed "machismo" in Latin American studies. In Mulago "machismo" is more based on one's sexual conquests and number of girlfriends.

These values are expressed and reinforced by peer groups or gangs. In the absence of satisfactory family ties, such personal relationships are of great importance. These can be manifested in close ties with all sorts of kin, in feelings of brotherhood extended to unrelated members of the same or culturally similar tribes and in longstanding friendship and neighbourhood ties. Because mutual economic aid occurs within such relationships they are considered a main safeguard against the permanent insecurity of town, especially by the people of the lower occupational strata. They are even more important when there are no established voluntary associations to resort to in times of need, as in the special case of the Kiga in Mulago.

The sphere of activities within the Kiga peer group revolves around the beer parties, which are focal points of social gatherings. They provide an alternative urban prestige system to that which rests on such formal properties as educational level and type of Job. Peer groups are predominantly ethnocentric and so have this extra basis of solidarity. They therefore alleviate the feelings of insecurity and unfamiliarity with an alien environment. These beer parties make the participants temporarily equal, bringing the less and more successful into harmony and so minimising the antagonisms caused by educational and economic inequality. Here, conflict and tension concerning the Community are discussed, measures decided and the deviants brought back to adherence to Kiga norms. Hence the main function of these beer groups is to preserve one's personal and ethnic identity which, as we have seen, is exposed to considerable threats from outside as well as from within the Community.

Thus it is not at all surprising that the security of long established friendship ties found in the neighbourhood are considered more valuable and are sought after more than the physical comfort of better houses. Although 73% of Kiga residents ranked Mulago next to the last in

comparison with other areas of Kampala, only a minority was willing to move to better houses if opportunities arose and economic conditions were favourable (cf. MARRIS:1961). This suggests that most of the Kiga in the lower occupational strata who are likely to be found in Mulago see a greater Chance for economic and psychological security through ethnic group loyalty as compared to individual achievement.

Definition of Sorcery

Despite apparently multiple causes of strain and anxiety, relatively little overt conflict was observed in the community, except for occasional fighting at beer parties and cases of theft, which often result in the thief being beaten to death. However, several case studies suggest that some conflicts are dealt with by "supernatural means" where no alternative direct sanctions are available.

In this paper sorcery is to be understood according to the distinction EVANS-PRITCHARD has drawn between witchcraft and sorcery (1937). The main difference is that sorcerers use medicine (material substances) combined with a magical formula "to harm those against whom they bear ill will" (MIDDLETON & WINTER: 1963), while witchcraft is understood as a mystical and innate power. In this paper a further distinction is made between sorcery and magic, the criterion of "sorcery" as "destructive magic" or as I would prefer to say "aggressive magic", medicines used for personal gain and for protection are enumerated under the more neutral term of "magic". The most frequently used objects in the latter category are charms to acquire or keep a Job, and various love potions, used for securing a lover or for continuing the relationship. Of these magical measures are proved ineffective recourse is mostly taken to sorcery. The Kiga word for sorcery is *oburogo*, which, following BEATTIE, is to "injure somebody by the frequent use of harmful substances or techniques" (BEATTIE 1963: 29). There are different techniques of *oburogo*; the one most commonly used among the Kiga as well as among the Nyoro seems to be poisoning⁵.

The Nature of Misfortunes in Town

In the course of the research, however, no clear-cut distinction was reached as to which particular types of misfortunes were attributed to sorcery, witchcraft or ancestor spirits (*mizimu*). Traditional beliefs continue to be held and there is a general readiness to apply "proven" methods or those with a reputation for being superior.

Thus the following list of misfortunes is not distinguished according to the methods applied but only suggests frequency of occurrence, whereas the case studies referred to are limited to those which were attributed to sorcery. In order of reported frequency, the following misfortunes were experiences by my informants: Mental Illness (27), lack of Jobs (18), body swelling (15), barren-ness (14), impotence (11), stomach trouble (11), loss of Jobs (7), failure of business (7), and death caused through traffic accidents (6). Although some Kiga informants conceded that in some cases natural causes could have been responsible, too, they insisted that mental illness, loss of Jobs or failure in business and especially death caused through traffic accidents are nearly exclusively effects of witchcraft or sorcery. This reveals a tendency to explain and treat situations or events, which are characteristic of urban circumstances, by traditionally known means and remedies. A presumption that this might only be the case until other explanations and methods have been learnt or adopted by longer urban residence appears unjustified, as many of the victims reported considerable (up to 10 years) length of residence in town. Thus the use of accusations of witchcraft and sorcery appears to be one of a number of dimensions of a cultural and social continuum between African towns and their surrounding countryside; a more obvious and better known example is the close network relationship many labour migrants have built up between their home villages and the towns.

Structural Aspects of Accusations of Sorcery

In Mulago accusations of sorcery mainly express two types of conflict, resulting from sexual and economic competition. The relationship, which is most frequently disrupted by accusations of sorcery, is the one between “harlots” and their lovers. Although in most cases the accusation is levelled by the lover against his former girlfriend, the underlying tension arises out of the competition among the women themselves, either between a husband’s wife and his “harlot” or between several of his girlfriends.

Due to the great importance Mulago’s men attach to “machismo”, most wives, especially those living temporarily in the villages, constantly fear that their husbands may take a harlot. That only two instances of accusations of sorcery were recorded is to be explained by the carefulness most men display to conceal these relationships when their wives come to town⁶. Although sexual jealousy has a part to play, the desire for securing economic support for themselves and their children ap-

pears to be dominant for most wives. Thus the situation seems to be an “urban Variation” of the conflict between co-wives, as the economic conditions in town hinder the establishment of polygamous marriages. Yet in cases where such marriages exist accusations of sorcery are used as a means to re-solve conflict, as two examples show. Thus MITCHELL’S conclusion (1960:196) that “in the face of a large majority of foreigners, the family is essentially a tightly integrated co-operative group” and that acts of hostility and aggression are expected from outside forces of the larger society, should be treated cautiously. I would rather suggest that the anxiety to ensure education for one’s own children—in town as well as in rural areas—seems to be much more dominant than a postulated feeling of family cohesion and obligations to solidarity.

In the relation to the sex ratio in Mulago, which is fairly balanced, the heavy competition among “the harlots” is unexpected. Thus others than demographic factors have to be considered responsible. As in the case of conflicts among “co-wives” economic motivation is again prominent, although sexual jealousy should not be underestimated. Regarding the insecure social position of the women in town, which is exposed to continuous hazards, the reason becomes at once obvious. Of the 39% unattached women only 55% have a Job; the average wage level does not exceed 50 to 100 Shs, which forces them to look for economic support elsewhere. As housing is scarce and difficult to get, notwithstanding the relatively high rent (20-30 Shs), the anxiety for securing a more or less permanent supporter becomes evident. Furthermore, the independence of the women in the rural areas—based on trade of surplus crops in the market—is reached only by a few of the women in town, since most of them do not have enough capital to start trading or to make a living by brewing beer. Thus a considerable number of women, especially those of migrant tribes having severed ties with their kin in the country, have only to choose between various types of Prostitution of finding a more permanent partner in a lover relationship. Since the severance of ties with the rural areas are frequently caused by expectation of a better standard of living, resulting frustrations and hence feelings of aggression are made manifest.

In accordance with the heavy economic competition already mentioned above, relationships between co-workers are also frequently disrupted by accusations of sorcery. Envy, ambition to outdo one’s rival, as well as limited opportunities for success were found to be the main claimed motives, which induce co-workers to use sorcery against each other. In many cases long series

of quarrels and false denunciations preceded the accusations, which were only made when the individual's self-interest was fundamentally threatened. This situation was brought about, if sexual rivalries in additions to economic competition reinforced tension. As in traditional situations of conflict the accusation of sorcery was used as the only means to achieve catharsis in the relationship, as geographical mobility due to scarcity of Jobs was made impossible. The presumption, however, that geographical mobility would occur if feasible, needs cautious consideration, as in cases involving harlots and their lovers geographical mobility took place only after the actual occurrence of a misfortune. A possible explanation may be the interwoven network of relationships of the Riga in Mulago, which accounts for their reluctance to give up local ties.

Tribal prejudices play a viable part in the accusations of sorcery between workmates, since they mostly involve members of different tribes, with charges of nepotism frequently being thought of as the main motive. The greater frequency of accusations between the Riga and the Ganda reflects their greater likelihood of competition; not only do the Ganda outnumber other tribes statistically but are also to be found more often in the position of better Jobs. It would, however, be false to conclude that solidarity to one's own tribe prohibits the use of sorcery among its members in town, such as when many Riga beer brewers constantly complained about their beer being charmed. It is however suggested that this is a more frequent occurrence among the „aspiring“ who actively seek social mobility and who pay adherence to these values only by lip service. In case of the beer brewers this conclusion is not entirely unjustified, since many of them belong to the more prosperous people, who often own houses or even their own businesses.

Compared to the knowledge we have about accusations of witchcraft and sorcery in rural areas, the near total absence of accusations of sorcery between relatives in Mulago is striking, although not entirely unexpected⁷. The importance and solidarity of kinship ties in town and their artificial creation in case of non-available kin are too complex to be satisfactorily evaluated by one type of behaviour, as with increasing economic differentiation kinship attitudes under-go modification. Thus in cases of greater economic security and in-dependence kinship ties tend to be less intimate, which can be interpreted as a preventive method to avoid undue dependency on family resources.

Considering the very dense housing conditions prevailing in Mulago by which privacy is limited to an ab-

solute minimum, conflict between neighbours was relatively seldom and accusations of sorcery insignificant. If conflict arose, it was either resolved by open quarrel, intervention of the muluka-chief and in very serious cases by leaving the area. In general, however, harmonious relationships seemed to be widely spread and close co-operation genuine. This was as much the case among the small nuclei of tribal clusters, being spread all over Mulago, and resulting from the informal influence tenants exercised in allotment of rooms, as among the tribally mixed neighbourhoods. Besides being based on sympathy and mutual understanding the motive for holding together often resulted from the ever present fear of thieves and robbers. Furthermore, as the main objects for competition, such as securing Jobs of promotion, are closely connected with the socio-economic structure of town and thus beyond the direct influence of kin, neighbours or friends, possible conflicts are minimised. The importance of this argument can be judged from the tension-ridden atmosphere among the harlots in Mulago, as their „objects of competition“ are close at hand and exposed to all kinds of influence.

Functional Aspects of Accusations of Sorcery

AS MIDDLETON and WINTER pointed out (1963: 13), sorcery seems to be „an inevitable weapon of the weak, the downtrodden, the poor and the envious“. In town the use of magic and sorcery is believed to become instrumental in securing either a better position and/or in defending their rights. Consequently, the victims are more liable to be found among the successful minority which has succeeded in town. Most of these socially mobile men are either clerks or in other clerical and skilled positions, with an above level of education. However, that the successful ones are envied and particularly prone to be bewitched, is common for most African societies.

The Riga being a traditionally segmentary society (EDEL 1957) can at least be expected to have ambiguous feelings towards any deviation from the concept of egalitarianism. This was supported by the difficulties, imagined or real ones, which many of my informants with advanced education encountered in their native villages. But the feeling of egalitarianism is not limited to the economic sphere alone but becomes operational on all levels of social life. Although generosity at beer parties, boasting of sexual conquests and fashionable appearance are central values in Riga group like in Mulago, aggrandisement of any kind leads to distrust and ambiguity and can result in the use of sorcery to re-establish the status quo inside the group. Hearing these

Table: ANALYSIS OF ACCUSATIONS OF SORCERY

Tribe	Education	Job	Relationship	Misfortune	Case recorded by
1 V:Kiga A:Toro	Some Prim. Some Prim.	None Barmaid	Wife Harlot	Illness of Child	Victim
2 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Prim. Some Prim.	None Barmaid	Wife Harlot	Illness of Wife	Husband
3 V:Kiga A:Ganda	None None	None None	Co- Wives	Divorce	Accused
4 V:Kiga A:Kiga	None Some Prime	None None	Co- Wives	Illness of Child	Victim
5 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Comp.Sec. Some Prim.	Salesman Barmaid	Lover Harlot	Loss of Job	Victim
6 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Sec. Some Prim.	Clerk None	Lover Harlot	Mental Illness	Victim's Friend
7 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Prim. Some Prim.	Carpenter None	Lover Harlot	Mental(*) Illness	Victim's Friend
8 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Sec. Some Prim.	Clerk None	Lover Harlot	Loss of Job	Victim
9 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Compl.Prim. Some Prim.	Cook Beer Brewer	Lover Harlot	Car Accident	Relative
10 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Sec. Compl.Prim.	Clerk Officeboy	Work- mates	Loss of Job	Victim
11 V:Kiga A:Rwanda	Some Prim. Some Prim.	Cook Cook	Work mates	Illness	Victim's
12 V:Kiga A:Ganda	None Some Prim.	Porter Mechanic	Work mates	Death	Relative
13 V:Kiga A:Ganda	Some Sec. Some Sec.	Student Student	School- mates	Death	Friends
14 V:Kiga A:Mudama	Some Sec. Compl. Prim.	Clerk Driver	Neigh- bours	Illness of Child	Child's Mother
15 V:Kiga A:Kiga	Compl. Sec. None	None None	Nephew FBW(**)	Loss of wife and death of father	Victim

(*) = Mental Illness occurred after loss of job.

(**) = father's brother's wife

V = Victim
A = Accused

Prim. = Primary school
Sec. = Secondary school

consequences in mind the individual tends to be careful to subject himself to social norms in order not to become a target. Hence the mere possibility of sorcery, if reinforced by casual application, can be a means of social control. Especially in the absence or incompleteness of family councils in town belief in sorcery becomes instrumental in bringing deviants back to conform to socially accepted behaviour. This was amply demonstrated by the cases where harlots attacked their lover's wife or children, as with only one exception the harlots were forsaken by their lovers in order to restore proper family relationships. Furthermore, in a situation of economic conflict, belief in and threats of sorcery can be successfully used to minimise emerging differences by constraining conspicuous consumption and eventually directing a more equitable distribution of resources.

Insofar as aggression is directed against people belonging to a higher economic stratum but still to the same class (using class in the Marxist sense of a group of people having the same relationship to the means of production), beliefs in sorcery stabilize and conserve the status quo: They enable aggression to be projected onto „equals“; and they thereby temporarily disrupt but do not seriously threaten the overall social system.

Psychologically, the belief in sorcery allows self-justification in case of failure which is important since institutionalised means for shrugging off failure are non-existent in Mulago. The harlots seem to be a case in point, as it is especially their weak social and economic position which exposes them as scapegoats. Their observable envy and revenge is thought to derive from their low position, and may be condemned by others in self-justification⁸. Through extra-punitive measures the individual is thus capable of projecting his failures onto others, thus preserving his sense of identity which enables him to redefine his position in the urban social system and remain competitive therein. (cf. JAHODA 1966:199-200 and LLOYD: 1966). This is an effective mechanism because only a few can successfully realize their aspirations in this situation of limited resources.

Conclusion and Summary

The data presented so far confirm MITCHELL's hypothesis (1960: 201) that accusations of sorcery are closely linked to co-operative enterprises, "where interaction is intimate, competitive and tense". It was shown that this resulted from the economic conditions in Kampala and the type of social relationships found in Mulago.

As the attainment of a higher standard of living is the primary incentive for most migrants, economic competition is automatically determined as the most important source of possible conflicts among them. Even in those relationships, which seem to be based on other than economic interests, namely sexual interests, the economic element cannot be overlooked. I would therefore argue that due to the insecurity and instability that characterises life in Kampala, the search for economic security has penetrated all spheres of life, sub-ordinating other conflicts to the basic economic one.

The difference in the type of social relationships in town, compared to the rural areas, seems to provide an explanation for the fact that accusations of sorcery in town are apparently limited to few types of relationships. The heterogeneity of Mulago's population, the strangeness of its environment and the impersonal atmosphere impede intimate interaction with a greater circle of people and leads to rather superficial and uncommitted relationships.

With the extension and differentiation of the individual's social network in town, greater selection in determining the type and intimacy of a relationship is rendered feasible. Thus by means of geographical mobility, residential distance and temporary limitations of relationships, possible conflict can be avoided.

Where interactions are close and emotionally toned, as is the case with kin, friends and neighbours, they are based on mutual assistance and solidarity in the face of common difficulties and are therefore less prone to be disrupted by serious conflicts. If however conflicts and hostility occur, they are more likely to be expressed openly, which allows for retributive action, since tribal mores provide no regulation for situations of conflict between strangers, whereas in rural areas people frame their conflicts in accusations of sorcery because they are prohibited by social norms to express their hostility openly.

However, the occurrence of accusations of sorcery between strangers in ethnically mixed work groups suggests that, even in the absence of clearly defined customary mores, sorcery can be used as a weapon in „new“ situations provided the underlying conflicts are similar to those experienced in the rural areas. Thus the use of accusations of sorcery in town as a means to express conflict seems to be dependent on two factors:

– That the object of competition is open to the influence and manipulation of the competitors, who are assumed to evaluate the object highly

– That the relationships between the competitors is tense and emotionally toned and cannot be resolved by other, institutionalised as well as non-institutionalised means.

Editor's note/Anmerkung der Curare-Redaktion

Dieser häufig beachtete Artikel aus der *Curare* vor 30 Jahren ist heute insbesondere deswegen aktuell, weil er all das diskutiert, was im aktuellen Migrationsdiskurs von ethnologischer Seite beigetragen werden kann. Die ethnologische Feinanalyse kann aufzeigen helfen, scheinbar kulturelle Probleme dort zu verorten und zurück zu verweisen, wo sie entstanden sind und gelöst werden können: im korrigierbaren sozioökonomisch Konfliktfeld.

Notes

1. Research was carried out in Mulago during an 18 months' period between 1968-1970, being made possible by a German Government grant, and focused mainly on family and urbanization problems among the Kiga. The data concerning Mulago as a Community are the result of a brief survey which was designed to enable comparison with SOUTHALL & GUTKIND's data (1957), and are therefore limited in scope. When the greater part of the paper is devoted to the situation of the Kiga, it is due to a more intimate knowledge of their problems.
2. For simplification the classification of Jobs was reduced to three categories, thus differing from the one used by SOUTHALL and GUTKIND. Skilled is here understood to apply on the Job, e.g. driver, carpenter; unskilled is used to classify those Jobs for which no special knowledge is required, e.g. watchman, sweeper; clerical may refer to typists and secretaries as well as the large number of ordinary clerks who have received no formal training but who are literate.
3. The relativity of this statement should be borne in mind in view of the tendency of crime statistics to be understated and the approximate estimate of population figures. Oral Communication from Mr. Dan ABBOT, Wisconsin. All figures refer to 1968 when not stated otherwise.
4. Note the dose similarities between Kiga and Nyoro beliefs in sorcery corresponding to their mutually intelligible language.

5. Furthermore, a tendency was noted to resolve this problem rather by physical violence, either between wife and harlot or between husband and wife, than by accusations of sorcery, which apparently were only used, if no satisfactory solution for either party could be reached.
6. Similar findings were reported by LA FONTAINE for Leopoldville where accusations of sorcery were less frequent among relatives in town than between relatives in town and in the countryside.
7. Furthermore, this reflects the ambiguous attitude most men display toward the harlots. Although they are indispensable in the circumstances of town, the consumption of money, which they induce distinctly conceived as a threat to the improvement of the standard of life of one's own family, which for many is the ultimate reason for coming to town.

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