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Fear and faith: uncertainty, misfortune and spiritual insecurity in Calabar, Nigeria

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Fear and Faith

Uncertainty, misfortune and spiritual insecurity
in Calabar, Nigeria

Inge Ligtoet

MA Thesis

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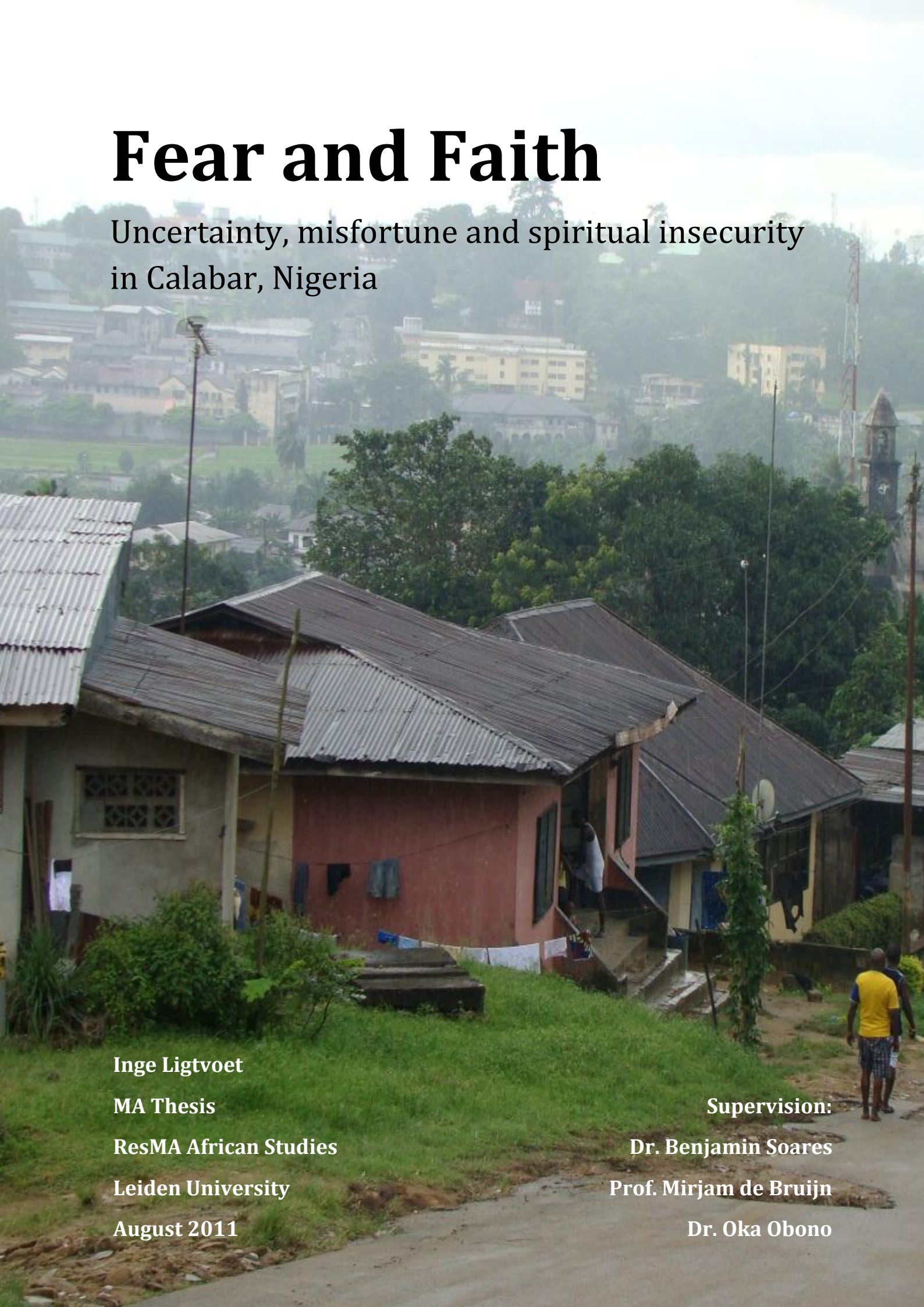
August 2011

Supervision:

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Prof. Mirjam de Bruijn

Dr. Oka Obono



Dedicated to Reinout Lever

†

Hoe kan de Afrikaanse zon jouw lichaam nog verwarmen
en hoe koelt haar regen je af na een tropische dag?
Hoe kan het rode zand jouw voeten nog omarmen
als jij niet meer op deze wereld leven mag?

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Figure 1: Map of Nigeria, indicating states and Calabar



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1. Introduction

The issue of witchcraft in Nigeria recently gained a lot of attention through the Channel 4 documentary 'Saving Africa's Witch Children'¹. This documentary confronts the audience with images of children being branded witches and wizards in Akwa Ibom State of southeast Nigeria. Some of the children were tortured, abandoned and murdered by their families and communities, because of witchcraft accusations. After the documentary was broadcast in the UK and the USA, the phenomenon 'child witches' in Nigeria was extensively discussed in BBC and CNN programs. CNN invited the state's governor, Godswill Akpabio, for an interview in the end of August 2010, in which he stated that the reported abuse of children due to witchcraft accusations was exaggerated by local NGO's and the media, and that the real problem in his state is poverty, not witchcraft². But the media have attributed the child witch accusations to the new Pentecostal churches in the region, more specifically to the activities and discourse of the Liberty Gospel Church of Lady Apostle Helen Ukpabio, which is extremely popular in this part of the country. They claim that with her movies and publications on (child) witchcraft, Ukpabio has incited witchcraft beliefs and accusations in society. Other Pentecostal churches and pastors are also said to be guilty of contributing to the phenomenon, by emphasizing Bible verses like 'You must not allow a sorceress to live' (Exodus 22: 18, NLT) and offering exorcisms ('deliverances') to those affected.

The discussion that the media attention for the phenomenon brought, inspired my research in Calabar. This town in Cross River State, which is situated on the border of Akwa Ibom State and which is home to the headquarters of the Liberty Gospel Church, knows a rich religious history in which spiritual practices, like witchcraft, have always had a significant role. Calabar also knows a long tradition of Christianity, which was brought to the people by the Europeans in the 19th century and which nowadays plays an important role within the town's lay-out and in the everyday life of the people. The majority of the citizens belong to a Christian domination and although statistics are not available, the number of Pentecostal churches in town suggests that there's at least a big market for this form of Christianity. Apart from being known for its rich religious history and its flourishing Pentecostalism, Calabar is also an urban center in which many migrants from all over the country, but mainly from the neighboring states, are residing, studying and working. The ethnic plurality of the town, the rich religious

¹ Documentary by Mags Gavan and Joost van der Valk for Dispatches, Channel 4 (2008)

² Nigerian governor says abuse of child 'witches' exaggerated, CNN, 30 August 2010 (http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-30/world/nigeria.child.witchcraft_1_witchcraft-reports-of-child-abuse-children?_s=PM:WORLD, 1 June 2011)

history and the nearness of the heavily debated Akwa Ibom state, makes Calabar an interesting environment to conduct research on witchcraft, especially since fieldwork in Akwa Ibom is currently impossible due to security issues.

I went into the field with a set of questions that aimed to answer how witchcraft is perceived in Calabar society. An important focus was the media and the ways in which they present witchcraft, relating it to how witchcraft was discussed before radio and television came into existence. Oral histories and stories were important in that regard. But in Calabar I soon came to realize that the media did not report on witchcraft as much as I'd expected³ and oral history was hardly available. In conversations about my research topic with people around town I got easily confused, likewise the topic seemed to confuse my respondents. When I would ask students and their families about witchcraft, they would usually give me stories about a large variety of different spiritual evil; witches and wizards but also ritual killings for example. On an early evening in September 2010 I discussed with a group of male students and lecturers from the University of Calabar and they first claimed I should go to the riverside to find witches. According to most of them, witches inhabit the waters around the town and they regard these therefore as highly dangerous. After some time of discussing others started calling these witches *mami water* spirits and explained that these spirits were of a different kind than witches as they had their own world in the water where they lived permanently, while witches would usually only go out at night, while being ordinary human beings during the day. Later another story of witchcraft followed, differentiating yet another form of it. One of the students informed me about his experiences with witchcraft, claiming that in the north of Cross River politicians sometimes fortify themselves through a 'witchcraft doctor' that makes them chew leaves or gives them charms, so as guns and machetes will not harm them. These 'witchcraft doctors' have ritual prohibitions in order to maintain this protection for the period of time one needs it, like not sleeping with a woman or not eating food that was cooked by a woman. They called this form of witchcraft *odeshi*. The student himself claimed that he once had a wooden pin pierced through his neck in a ritual, which he said was done by similar witchcraft powers. A picture of this was shown to me as 'proof' the next day (photo 1). Other witchcraft powers could, according to these students, be obtained through eating initiated food or eating certain leaves. Once someone would eat these items, they would enter the coven in the night and they would start using their powers for the destruction of their relatives and friends. In church, I heard pastors attribute addictions, barrenness and adultery to witchcraft powers, saying for example that someone spiritually tied the womb of a woman in order for her not to have children. In short, the forms and powers attributed to the concept of witchcraft are many in Calabar and in my

³ With the exception of Nollywood movies, that are usually filled with witchcraft discourse but which I did not want to put at the core of my research

quest to research 'true witchcraft' I fell flat. I realized that I had two major problems in conducting this research. First, witchcraft was not discussed in the media as I expected it to be, which made my set of questions useless and secondly there seemed to be no clear-cut definition of witchcraft for the people I spoke with, which made my fieldwork unrestrained. In focusing on the context of witchcraft within Calabar society, I chose the concept *spiritual insecurity* to cover both the different forms of spiritual malevolence, which are all mostly referred to as 'witchcraftcy' in Calabar (see 1.1), as well as the physical and spiritual context of society as a whole. The thesis covers the existence and interrelation between two local domains of insecurity: that of the physical environment of Calabar within Nigeria and that of spiritual environment, in which the discourse on witchcraft plays an important role.

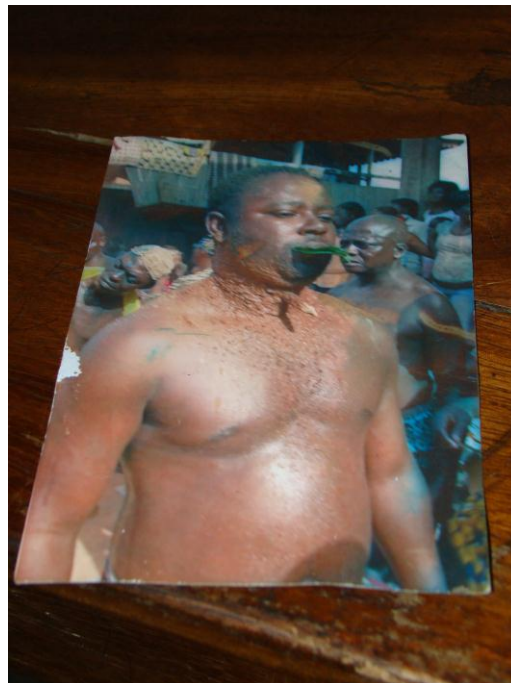


Photo 1: A student claimed that 'witchcraft' prevented him from feeling pain or being killed by the wooden pin that was put in his neck during a festival in Northern Cross River

1.1. Witchcraft and spiritual insecurity

Witchcraft is a term that has often been loosely defined by many scholars that have conducted research on the African continent. One of the first attempts comes from Evans-Pritchard, who clearly distinguishes witchcraft from sorcery in his introduction to a paper on witchcraft among the Azande.

A witch cannot do what he is supposed to do and has in fact no real existence. A sorcerer, on the other hand, may make magic to kill his neighbors. The magic will not kill them but he can, and no doubt often does, make it with that intention. This paper deals with witchcraft and not with sorcery. (Evans-Pritchard, 1935: 418)

Evans-Pritchard explains witchcraft as a non-existing 'magical offence' that can clearly be distinguished from other forms of magic and ritual, but he later also acknowledges that 'witchcraft, magic, witchdoctors and oracles are all functions of each other and are meaningless if deprived of their interrelations (Evans Pritchard, idem). This interrelation of practices has later been further developed and nowadays witchcraft is a term with a broad and supple conceptual scope (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993: xxvi), which has become 'an umbrella concept, used to refer to a great variety of ideas and practices related to the manipulation of mystical powers' (Ter Haar, 2007: 14). In this regard we can understand the discussion with the students in Calabar, who enumerated different practices when answering my question on what witchcraft entails. For people in town, witchcraft simply covers all malevolent spiritual practices in society, even those practices that belong to traditional religious thought. These traditional religious practices have gained an evil character through the influence of Christianity (Ellis, 2007: 46) and the dualistic worldview it introduced in West-Africa (see Meyer, 1998, 1999). But in all the diversity of the practices that are referred to as witchcraft in Calabar, there's an important similarity which is their evil nature. In this regard, Ter Haar's definition of witchcraft could be taken as a starting point in defining witchcraft within Calabar society.

Witchcraft is a manifestation of evil believed to come from a human source (Ter Haar, 2007: 8).

All practices that were discussed with students and lecturers that afternoon in September could be considered manifestations of evil from a human source, be it from a witch doctor or from a child that was initiated in the witchcraft world. But coming up with a profile of a typical witch, the human source that is described by Ter Haar, was as difficult as finding a definition of witchcraft in Calabar. Because the variation in stories of witches and wizards was too broad, and people were generally hesitant in speaking about them or pointing at them, I have not been able to make such a portrait. The only conclusive remark that can be made about witches and wizards is that they are, due to their evil character and without exception, stigmatized in society as the scape goats of all misfortune that cannot be explained. The broad definition of witchcraft and their agents provided me with an extensive field of research, that at times felt incoherent. Because, although the essence of all practices is evil, the actual sources, practices and ideas surrounding the discourse of a practice were greatly diverse. Interestingly, in defining a witch or a wizard, people would often give me very similar stories. Witches were regarded by most of my

informants to be those people that were initiated in the witchcraft world (coven), mainly through the consumption of bewitched food items, who are leaving their bodies in the night to meet with other witches to plan destruction and despair in families and communities. Witches are thought to be closely related people, like mothers and aunts. But it's not only women that are said to be witches: often uncles or male cousins would be accused of witchcraft practices. An important target of witchcraft accusations are the young domestic helps, both male and female, who are usually members from the poorer sides of the family or from the home village. But rich uncles can also be witches, in case they try to protect or expand their wealth spiritually. A sociology of the witch is thus hard to elaborate on, since it's spread over all layers of society, but generally it can be said that witches are closely related to their victims, either in the relational spheres or in proximity (a neighbor for example). In Calabar, it became clear that the entity of a witch was defined more easily than the act of witchcraft itself, which entailed more than one practice. Linguistically it was interesting to hear that locally almost all people, regardless of their educational background or age, would speak of *witchcraftcy* when referring to the practice.⁴ I would like to argue that this term is used in order to unconsciously be able to classify more practices under a concept that is closely related to witchcraft. *Witchcraftcy* then becomes the umbrella term Ter Haar (2007) speaks about, without having to ignore the original definition of witchcraft itself, as a practice of those initiated into the witchcraft coven. I realized that looking for a clear definition of witchcraft would be an eternal quest and decided to take into consideration the overall concept of *witchcraftcy* that for me included all malevolent spiritual practices and beliefs within Calabar society.

The loose definition of witchcraft has often been justified by anthropologists with reference to the use of the term by Africans themselves (Moore and Sanders, 2001: 3), which is for example done by Geschiere when he argues that 'a social scientist would isolate himself from daily discussions in the societies concerned' by introducing new concepts to cover the range of occult practices (Geschiere 1997: 14). But although I acknowledge that the use of the term witchcraft in Calabar is widespread, I also believe that the concept of witchcraft, or *witchcraftcy* for that matter, does not render justice to the large variety of collected stories and experiences and their socioeconomic contexts. The fear of witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence within society is more deeply rooted in experienced spiritual insecurity due to forms of human insecurity like violence, poverty and political oppression (Ashforth, 2005: 3). Speaking about spiritual insecurity, instead of witchcraft, then gives space to the broad variety of forms and ways in which spiritual malevolence manifests as well as its context.

⁴ The term *witchcraftcy* was used by nearly all my respondents and friends in Calabar, but I was also confronted with the term during trips to northern Cross River, Imo State and Abuja and Lagos.

‘... because the management of dangers and dread named under the rubric ‘witchcraft’ requires the engagement of a host of other powers and forces, from the inherent properties of physical substances to the miraculous powers of Jesus and the Holy Spirit [...] it is not improper to treat witchcraft as a phenomenon in the general domain of spiritual insecurity’ (Ashforth, 2005: 215)

Hence, spiritual insecurity does not only cover the different meanings of spiritual malevolence, by including practices like witchcraft, ritual killings and traditional healings, it also speaks about the physical context of the social belief in these practices. I therefore argue that spiritual insecurity is a better concept to use in understanding witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence in Calabar society. The use of this concept opens up broader perspectives and discussions of daily uncertainties that shape society and the broader spiritual life, including Christianity, within the town.

1.2. Uncertainty and the fear of misfortune

According to Ashforth spiritual insecurity is ‘related, but not reducible, to other forms of insecurity such as poverty, violence, political oppression, and disease’ (Ashforth, 2005: 3). In this regard he argues that the shared assumption of many scholars on witchcraft in Africa that the practice is modern and not traditional is not an adequate way of comprehending it. Herewith he partly goes contrary to Geschiere, who claims that modern techniques and commodities are nowadays central in rumors on the occult (Geschiere, 1997: 2) and that anthropologists should not treat witchcraft as a phenomenon strictly within a local setting, like the village (Geschiere, 1997: 12). He also argues that witchcraft is linked to modernity and development and that new power relations that came into being because of these are explained through witchcraft, which has always existed but which has adjusted to modern changes (Geschiere, 1997, Fisiy and Geschiere, see also Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993). Witchcraft is then ‘both a resource for the powerful and also a weapon for the weak against new inequalities’ as it is related to the accumulation of power as well as it can serve to undermine it (Geschiere, 1997: 16). Although I believe that in Calabar witchcraft is indeed a way of dealing with new power relations within a rapidly modernized society, I think that a much broader approach is required and would therefore like to take Ashforth’s concept of spiritual insecurity as a basis for my thesis. Although I agree that the discourse of witchcraft is a response to new inequalities that come with modernity, but we should therefore not ignore the local perception of the phenomenon. People in Calabar generally do not attribute witchcraft to modern urban life and the recent developments in Calabar, rather they would attribute it to life in the village. My informants would for example all encourage me to relocate to one of the villages just outside of Calabar, as

‘witchcraft cannot be found here, but in Akpabuyo and Odukpani’⁵. I will argue that apart of new power relations due to various modes of access to modernity within society of different socio-economic groups, both in and outside town, spiritual insecurity is also triggered by a more traditional social context within society that clashes with modern expectations. Political instability within the country, with the nearby violence in the Niger Delta and the religious violence across the country as important factors, and economical inequalities are of course factors in daily feelings of insecurity, which, like social violence (Bouju and de Bruijn, 2007), create an environment of uncertainty on which spiritual insecurity breeds. But more traditional social pressures, like marrying at a young age or putting to birth, are also creating a context on which spiritual insecurity can grow. It is therefore that I argue in line with Ashforth that spiritual insecurity is closely related to issues of human security (Ashforth, 2005: 3), not only as a response to modernity, but as a means of dealing with daily economic, political and social uncertainties within society that are not always directly related to renewed power relations and sometimes even come forth out of traditional life.

Feelings of uncertainty within Calabar society are therefore key in understanding spiritual insecurity in town. Witchcraft can be regarded a local representation of social fragility and uncertainty (Myhre, 2009: 138). To understand this statement, it is important to define uncertainty, but this term is, like witchcraft, often loosely defined (Haram and Yamba, 2009). Reynolds White defines uncertainty as follows:

‘Uncertainty refers to a lack of absolute knowledge: inability to predict the outcome of events or to establish facts about phenomena and connections with assurance’ (Reynolds White, 2009: 213)

Haram and Yamba see uncertainty as a term that implies ‘unpredictable outcomes of a negative kind’ (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 13). Unpredictable outcomes are those negative experiences and consequences of daily life occurrences that cannot be foreseen, like casualties in a car crash or unexpected health problems. Uncertainty can then be defined as ‘a characteristic of both the experience of misfortune and the process of dealing with it’ (Reynolds White, 1997: 19). In this sense we can understand spiritual insecurity as a way of dealing with negative unpredictable outcomes of life. It can be argued that transferring the feelings of uncertainty to a spiritual agent (like a witch) is a way in which society tries to alleviate the suffering from this uncertainty (Reynolds White, 1997: 20). A spiritual agent can then be blamed for misfortune in one’s life and the transference of feelings to this agent can therewith minimize feelings uncertainty. I believe that not only economic uncertainties, partially arising from the rapid modernization, but also social uncertainties like barrenness and political uncertainties, like the regional risk of

⁵Akpabuyo and Odukpani are two villages on the city’s borders.

kidnappings, contribute to a society in which people feel generally insecure and in which transcendent agency, by attributing negative experiences and outcomes of daily life to witchcraft, is used to control and minimize these levels of uncertainty (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 24).

Uncertainty is closely related to the concept of fear, as we have seen that it often implies unpredictable outcomes of a negative kind. Those negative outcomes of uncertainties could be summarized as the misfortune of life (Reynolds White, 1997). The fear of misfortune is visible within Calabar society. Houses and compounds of the higher and middle classes, for example, are often protected by high walls and barbed wire, in order to protect the people living there from armed robbers and possible kidnappers. In another setting, the fear of misfortune in the form of road accidents becomes clear from the religious practices to alleviate this fear, that usually precede bus trips in Nigeria, when pastors with big Bibles under their arms pray for 'journey mercies' over the car and its travelers. Uncertainty thus is, as Reynolds White argues, 'a source of anxiety and fear because of the prevailing conditions of insecurity' (Reynolds White, 2009: 214). Fear and anxiety are thus closely related to different levels of uncertainty in Calabar society. Reynolds White categorizes these in four types, namely failure of health, prosperity, gender and personal safety (Reynolds White, 1997: 17). The examples given of the protected houses and the 'journey mercies' of a pastor before a bus trip, are both socially adapted manners in which people protect themselves from failures of personal safety. Likewise have they found ways in which they protect themselves from other misfortune. We can thus argue that uncertainties within society comes with the fear of different personal and social failures (misfortune), and that people have adapted ways in which to reduce or overcome this daily reality of fear in society. Apart from practical/physical methods of reducing fear, like fencing a compound, immaterial/metaphysical ways of dealing with life's uncertainties are widespread in Calabar as well. Dealing with the context of life's uncertainties is part of what Ashforth calls spiritual insecurity (Ashforth, 2005). Attributing misfortune to malevolent spirits, like witches and wizards, and finding ways of preventing and counteracting its negative consequences is one of these metaphysical ways of dealing with uncertainty in society (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 14) and thus with human insecurity. In chapter three I will elaborate on the economic, political and social uncertainty that contextualize Calabar society and that are often explained through spiritual malevolence. It will make clear that uncertainty, spiritual insecurity and the related witchcraft discourse in Calabar society are interconnected and should not be studied separately.

1.3. The role of Pentecostalism

Pentecostal churches have in the last few decades gained important social prominence Nigerian society (Marshall-Fratani 1991, 1998) and they also play a pivotal role within the management

of spiritual insecurity in Calabar society. Catholic, Protestant and Presbyterian churches also have a role in this management, but Hackett argues that 'Pentecostal churches and ministries accord a greater place to negative spiritual forces whether conceived in the form of Satan, witchcraft, ancestral, aquatic, or nature spirits' (Hackett, 2008: 3). Father Len Ojorgu explains in a series of columns on witchcraft in the local Roman Catholic newspaper 'Fides et Veritas' that 'people in our culture miscall a person that is possessed by Satan a witch or wizard'⁶ and in an interview in September 2010 he attributed this misconception of possessed people being witches to the Pentecostal churches, even though he did not deny the existence of witchcraft discourse within the Catholic church. In this thesis I focus on Pentecostal churches, as they are of major influence in managing witchcraft discourse in Calabar and therefore provide a more interesting case study than the mainline churches in town. This does not mean that the mainline Protestant churches or the Catholic Church do not mention witchcraft in their discourses.

Pentecostal churches often provide their congregations with solutions to all kinds of problems in life. Financial issues, family matters, educational challenges or marital problems are all addressed in their services, often by means of prophecies and deliverances. Gifford writes that these salient features of the churches can be explained through their preoccupation with spiritual agents that need to be eliminated (Gifford, 2004: 109). In many of the Pentecostal churches it is believed that almost all physical evil has its source in the metaphysical world, often referred to as the world of witchcraft. Infertility can be caused by a jealous co-wife or mistress that has tied the womb of a woman, while alcohol addictions have been attributed to villagers that have ritually buried bottles of wine. Explaining physical misfortune as having a spiritual cause is one of the ways in which some Pentecostal churches can give relief to people's fear of misfortune. Pastors and prophets claim that by praying or by the execution of certain tasks (often fasting), one can undo the spiritual cause and regain a fortunate life. Sometimes this also involves the killing of those human beings that possess malevolent spiritual powers (Gifford, 2004: 110-111). In a society in which uncertainty and the fear of misfortune are a daily reality for many people, these churches appeal to large congregations. Churches in this sense provide a sense of security for these people, despite the uncertainty and spiritual insecurity in their lives. But apart from providing this sense of security, these churches also preserve the discourse on spiritual insecurity in society by focusing on malevolent spirits in their services. On the one hand these churches thus try to alleviate the fear of misfortune among their members and visitors, but on the other hand they create an atmosphere of fear by repeatedly incorporating witchcraft and other spiritual malevolence in their church discourses. In their discourse on witchcraft, they emphasize the fact that the source of evil is often someone closely

⁶ Frank Corner with Fr. Len Ojorgu, How to overcome witches? Fides et Veritas, vol. 2, no. 12, September 2010

related to a person or a person's house, like family members, good friends or domestic help, so called houseboys and girls. This discourse actually tells people that they cannot trust and should always fear their family and friends. After having provided their congregation with a sense of security when it comes to spiritual insecurity, they equally call into existence a new form of uncertainty in society, namely mistrust. In this regard we could also state that in the urban setting of Calabar, spiritual malevolence is mainly attributed to the villages and the family members still living there. Much of the mistrust and fear is thus aimed at these villagers, which are often close family members of those living in Calabar. Altars for ancestors that were built in parents' houses in the villages of urban dwellers are often said to be the source of misfortune and are generally regarded as forms of witchcraft. It is therefore that I believe that witchcraft is not only to be attributed to modernity, which has been argued by, among others, Geschiere and the Comaroffs, but also to tradition. In this regard I would like to quote Gifford, who argues that Pentecostalism and traditional religious thought are interconnected:

[...] it is obvious that this kind of Christianity [...] preserves many of the preoccupations, concerns and orientations of the traditional believer transposed into the modern setting. (Gifford, 2004: 108)

He then quotes Kwasi Addo Sampong's master's thesis (Theology, University of Ghana) to exemplify this theory:

The needs presented at the prayer centres ... are not any different from those presented at the shrines by traditional worshippers in the early 1900s. The needs have not changed, only the shrines have changed. The new shrine is the prayer centre, whose leader plays the role of the traditional fetish priest (Sampong, 2000, 121; in Gifford, 2004: 109)

To me, therefore, the role of Pentecostal churches within spiritual insecurity in Calabar society is that of an institution that both provides alleviation for uncertainty and feared misfortune in daily life, as well as it provides their congregation with new forms of uncertainty and societal fear. Attributing spiritual malevolence to villages and villagers that hold on to traditional religious values, but at the same time basing their Pentecostal services and discourse on the same values, gives room for discussion whether we can speak of the modernity of witchcraft as theory of understanding the phenomenon completely. The role of Pentecostalism within spiritual insecurity in Calabar will be discussed in chapter five.

1.4. Problem Statement

In line with the previous paragraphs, this thesis explores the many aspects of spiritual insecurity in Calabar. The rapid modernization and development of the town has had its influence on new inequalities within town, that has led to economic uncertainties for both the lower as well as the upper classes. Likewise has the political instability in the country left its mark on the political sense of security in the town. Both economic and political uncertainty seem to thrive on recent developments in the region and the influence of the instability of the Niger Delta and the country as a whole. The spiritual insecurity that is instigated by these forms of uncertainty could in this sense be attributed to the theory of the modernity of witchcraft introduced by the Comaroffs (1993) and Geschiere (1997). But then social uncertainties, which mainly have to do with relational matters like infertility and marital problems, are less products of modernity, but could rather be attributed to traditional or historical societal expectations that have become unmanageable in the modern, urban setting of Calabar. In this sense, we should not only attribute spiritual insecurity to modernity, but there should also be room for linking it to these historical and traditional expectations. This is also what Gifford argues with regard to role of the Pentecostal churches in both opposing traditional religious thoughts and malevolent spirits, but at the same time organizing themselves around the structure of these same tradition, by heavily incorporating the discourse in their services. The clear opposition these churches provide between the urban and the rural, the modern and the traditional, also gives space to rethink the academic assumption of many scholars that wrote on witchcraft of it being a product of modernity. Rather I argue in this thesis that spiritual insecurity in Calabar society is based on a constant tension between tradition and modernity, both in the field of societal uncertainties as well as in that of the ambiguous role of the Pentecostal churches in town.

1.5. Methods of research

The fieldwork for this research took place from August 2010 until February 2011 in Calabar, Nigeria. Researching the controversial topic of witchcraft has demanded a certain level of creativity with regard to the use of qualitative anthropological methods. Although I've conducted some 5 to 10 open interviews with both ordinary citizens of Calabar as well as pastors, bishops and priests, I doubt the validity of most interviews and have therefore included only few of the interviews in this thesis. Some respondents seemed too eager to speak and would come up with details I severely question, while others were reluctant to speak and kept mainly silent. Although I believe that these silences are also data, I do not solely want to rely on them. The majority of the data that can be found in this thesis are therefore gathered through participant observation in different institutions and gatherings of society and from informal conversations with friends, neighbors and other contacts. A selection of these data will form the framework of this thesis.

A large part of the participant observation was done in the Demonstration Chapel in Satellite Town from October 2010 until February 2011. With an average of attending 3 services a week, I can say this has been the most structured part of my fieldwork. I attended this church as a visitor and later as a member. During the first visit of the church I was immediately confronted with the discourse of witchcraft when the leading prophet called me to the altar for a prophetic message. I was then told that my mother was a witch and that she was therefore the one causing my life's problems. By repeatedly visiting the church, attending gatherings and crusades, helping in the promotion of events and 'taking the stage' every now and then, I soon was considered a full member of the church. I remained the odd one out and was usually joked with a lot, especially since I did not attend counseling and only joined in fasting programs irregularly. Although a few workers in the church were aware of my research purposes in town and I made clear to them my interest in witchcraft discourse in the Demonstration Chapel, I was never really confronted with the question why I attended church and felt reluctant to introduce myself only as a researcher, because I believed it would not only change people's perception of me, but it could also influence the services as they were. Also, I feared that introducing myself as researching witchcraft would make me miss out on a lot of the more 'sensitive' information. The information I gathered from the church thus mainly comes from its leading prophet and his preaching, and the stories and testimonies that were shared during services. I did not speak about witchcraft with any of the church members or the prophet outside of the church environment and had little or no relationship with the people in church after service. The data I gathered from the services of the Demonstration Chapel can be found in chapter 4, in which I will speak about the role of Pentecostalism in spiritual insecurity in Calabar.

The second largest part of my research was done on the compound I resided during the six months of fieldwork. The different families I stayed with struggled with different forms of uncertainty and the longer I was on the compound, the more they opened up to me. All people living on the compound knew my research topic and without over addressing it, they would sometimes give me clear insights in uncertainty and the relating spiritual insecurity in their lives, mostly unconsciously. By living with them, sharing food with them and talking about girls' issues with the women of my age on the compound I got to know a lot of daily life in the Calabar setting, even though most of the compound members were not originally from Calabar themselves. The dynamics of the families on the compound, in which I participated, were an interesting example in explaining the different forms of uncertainty and fear of misfortune in town. But apart from participant observation, I also gathered much of the information in chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis from informal conversations with the people on the compound that took place on a daily basis as regular neighbor-to-neighbor talks. These conversations were not meant to be part of this thesis, but eventually turned out to be of great interest. During my

fieldwork I became good at listening to the people I spoke with without writing anything down, but by making notes on the conversation as soon as I would arrive home. When it comes to personal issues, like most of the uncertainties I will speak about in chapter 3, I believe that a recorder or notebook will distract both the researcher as well as the 'informant'. It will make an informal and comfortable setting formal and distant, while at the same time it can well destroy the bond of trust the fieldworker has carefully created with their respondents. In a research like this, in which very personal and even taboo issues are central, I had to choose for the informal conversations, so that I could build a long lasting relationship of trust with my direct neighbors and friends.

The other data in this thesis are also collected from similar occasional informal conversations with friends, students, neighbors, lecturers, religious leaders and self-declared philosophers that I met during my stay in Calabar. These conversations were, like the ones with my direct neighbors not recorded nor written down on the location they took place. I usually took time between appointments to write down notes on the talks I had with people, even if the conversation I had with them was never intended to be part of the fieldwork but nevertheless interesting with regard to witchcraft discourse. The conversations I'm speaking about here usually took place in the evening when I would meet friends in town, but I also discussed during the day with students who were waiting for results around the Law Faculty of the University of Calabar and the area with small restaurants, bars and copy facilities behind that faculty. In the same university I built up close relationships with several lecturers and their (PhD) students from different disciplines – law, literature, economics, social sciences – who were mainly advising me on how to address certain challenges I faced in my fieldwork. These conversations often gave me a lot of information on the lives of these lecturers and their families, even though they were actually only meant to advise me on my research in Calabar.

In the early evenings I would often spend my time in a small local bar that was called 'Church'. Here I had many informal discussions with people that were in some way related to the University of Calabar. The discussions were often guided by questions I posed or by the mere fact that everyone knew I was doing research on witchcraft. The conversations therefore often touched upon witchcraft discourse and the dynamics in the group were fascinating and inspiring for this thesis.. Although these data are not used in all of the chapters,, much of it can be found in chapter 2 and 3, in which I speak about the historical and present relation of the town and its lay-out with uncertainty and spiritual insecurity.

2. Calabar: The People's Paradise?

Cross River State is reputed to be the greenest state in Nigeria⁷. It is bordered by four Nigerian states (Akwa Ibom, Abia, Ebonyi and Benue) to the west and Cameroon to the east. Through its many rivers the state has become one of the most fertile places of the country and two-thirds of it is covered by tropical rainforest, giving the state its reputation for being the greenest state of Nigeria. The rivers and forest also provide the society with an environmental context for spiritual malevolence, like witchcraft. Meetings of witches and wizards are often said to take place in the night, on top of trees or deep inside the forest. Likewise people believe that the rivers are home to malevolent *mami water* spirits, who are said to live in oceans and other waters⁸. Thus, the presence of many rivers and forests that are regarded to be gathering places for malevolent spirits nurture the spiritual thinking of the society in this state and its capital Calabar, which is an urban center, yet surrounded by dense forestation and divided by several rivers.

Cross River State is one of the states in the oil-rich Niger Delta.⁹ In recent decades this region has become an insecure area, with local armed groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) regularly attacking public places and gatherings, and frequent non-organized waves of violence. Even though an amnesty was offered to the militants of the Niger Delta by the government in June 2009¹⁰ and the number of incidents has decreased, the presence of militants and possible outbreaks of violence in the region is still interfering with people's lives. Likewise is the polluted environment, partly caused by the oil industry, preventing many of the region's inhabitants from prospering.¹¹ These economic and political insecurities in the Niger Delta are closely related to forms of spiritual insecurity as people often relate material misfortune to spiritual malevolence. Cross River State has an interesting position within this region, as it is usually regarded to be one of the more peaceful states of the

⁷Cross River sets up Waste Management Agency

(http://www.crossriverstate.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=816:cross-river-sets-up-waste-management-agency&catid=209:quick-news, 13 May 2011)

⁸*Mami Water* spirits are reportedly dwelling in beautiful towns at the bottom of the ocean (Meyer, 1998: 342, footnote 21)

⁹ See for example the classification of the Niger Delta Development Commission of Nigeria (NDDC),

¹⁰ Nigeria offers militants amnesty. BBC, 26 June 2009 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8118314.stm>, 15 May 2010)

¹¹Farming and fishing in the region has become less profitable due to the polluted earth and rivers that are the result of the waste of the oil industry in the Niger Delta.

federation¹² and it is not considered to be part of the violent conflict in the Niger Delta. But this position does not prevent people in Calabar from fearing different types of regional insecurity, as well as the nation-wide insecurity. The violent activities and the related insecurity has spread from the inner delta states to the more peripheral states, of which neighboring Akwa Ibom and Abia are examples. In both these states crime rates have recently risen tremendously¹³ to the extent that 'even indigenes that are outside the state are now afraid to go there to see relatives or conduct business'¹⁴. Many of my informants and friends in Calabar that are from Akwa Ibom would indeed confirm this recent lack of security in their own state. Adiaba, a 30-year old woman from Akwa Ibom residing in Calabar with her fiancé, would usually express her anxiety whenever her husband-to-be would leave town for wedding arrangements in his home village in western Akwa Ibom. The fear of becoming a victim of crime, especially kidnappings, was also present during business trips to Aba (Abia State) of Rose. Rose is a woman in her late forties with a successful boutique on Calabar's biggest market (Watt). She would purchase her women's clothes, shoes and bags on the markets of Lagos, Aba and Onitsha where prices are lower. For security reasons she would adjust her style whenever she was travelling. 'Whenever I travel to Aba or Onitsha I will wear old worn clothes and bathroom slippers. Anything to make kidnappers and robbers believe that I'm from a very poor family. I have nothing, but nowadays they do not care about that. If you look even a little bit neat they will catch you and make your family look for money.' Although the reality of kidnapping is much more complex¹⁵ and chances of being kidnapped or becoming a victim of other crimes for an ordinary citizen in the region are small, people do generally fear the possibility. The current political and religious situation in Nigeria as a whole is also putting stress and fear into the minds of people in Calabar, who are considered to be safe in this peaceful town far away from the recent religious and political violence in Jos and Maiduguri, but as violence spreads, so does the fear of the instability in the country. A clear interest was felt during my stay in the field of young people who were angry and upset with the previous governments for not solving the violent conflicts in the country. Although their involvement would often not go further than complaining and debating about the country's problems and future, and there was no threat of violence in it, a clear pro-Niger Delta

¹² Website of the Cross River State government

(http://www.crossriverstate.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=721&Itemid=97, 6 May 2010)

¹³ Insecurity worsens in Akwa Ibom: Human Rights Activist and Business Man kidnapped. Sahara Reporters, 17 February 2011 (<http://www.saharareporters.com/news-page/insecurity-worsens-akwa-ibom-human-rights-activist-businessman-kidnapped>, 6 May 2011) and The Security Challenge in Aba. The Nigerian Voice, 5 October 2010 (<http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/35803/1/the-security-challenge-in-abia.html>, 6 May 2011)

¹⁴ Insecurity worsens in Akwa Ibom: Human Rights Activist and Business Man kidnapped. Sahara Reporters, 17 February 2011 (<http://www.saharareporters.com/news-page/insecurity-worsens-akwa-ibom-human-rights-activist-businessman-kidnapped>, 6 May 2011)

¹⁵ In general it can be said that most kidnappings affect the rich and (politically) important people

sentiment could be felt. This was most obvious from discussions about the 2011 presidency elections in which candidate Goodluck Jonathan was put forward by most in Calabar, largely because he was from the south and would therefore be able to solve the conflict in a manner that was beneficial for those in the Niger Delta.

The atmosphere of fear surrounding the violent conflicts in different parts of the country that was clearly felt during my fieldwork, seems to evolve out of the interconnection of material insecurities, like kidnappings and other political or religious violence, and people's fear of malevolence of the spiritual realm. In a society in which misfortune in the real world is attributed to the works of the evil spirits, like witches and wizards, in the metaphysical world, it can be well argued that the violent nature of the region and the instability of the country as a whole has contributed to a sense of spiritual insecurity.

The government of Cross River State aims to maintain the special position within the region and the country.¹⁶ They want to provide visitors with 'a safe and relaxing atmosphere away from the commotion and congestion of the Nigeria's big cities'¹⁷. To achieve this, the former government initiated a plan to transform the state into a business and leisure paradise. The rapid modernization of the state and its capital that followed this initiative, has left its marks on society and people's expectations of life. Big projects like the Tinapa Business Resort in Calabar are valued highly by almost all of the town's citizens, even though most of them have never been able to visit it as they cannot afford the high costs of transportation towards it. Likewise is the Obudu Mountain Resort praised by all Cross Riverians, yet the roads towards this exclusive place are still bad and only few people have actually been to the place. People in Calabar generally speak of the modernizing projects that aim towards tourism in their state in a proud manner, but realistically the facilities are only built for the fortunate few. To the majority of the people of Calabar these facilities represent the wealth and life they desire. The plan to transform the state and the rather rapid implementation of it, has caused major inequalities in town as the modern and luxurious side of Calabar contrasts sharply with the level of prosperity of most inhabitants. The feelings of discrimination and envy that derive from the inequalities in society are, like violence, related to spiritual malevolence. It is well believed that evil spirits are the cause of the inability to prosper as well as they are believed to be capable of removing one's wealth and power. Envy that stems from feelings of discrimination due to the inequalities in town can cause malevolent spirits of the less privileged to attack the prosperous, but it is also

¹⁶ Their website states the vision of the government to be 'the most peaceful State by forestalling, resolving and managing intra and inter-state conflicts.'

(http://www.crossriverstate.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=636&Itemid=49, 16 May 2011)

¹⁷ Tourism in Cross River State

(http://www.crossriverstate.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=716&Itemid=37, 15 May 2011)

believed that these spirits can be approached to gain wealth. The prophet of the Pentecostal *Demonstration Chapel* in Calabar (chapter 4) once proclaimed that a man was kept from the wealth he was supposed to achieve, because a family member in the village was 'sitting on it' spiritually. Prayer and worship would be able to conquer this spiritual malevolence. A society in which people have recently commenced facing the daily reality of economic discrimination due to rapid modernization, provides the context for these spiritual insecurities.

Most churches in town, both Pentecostal and Catholic as well as Pentecostal, have made these feelings that determine citizens' daily lives part of their discourse. Many people turn to God with their desires for prosperity and sentiments of discrimination and envy, and churches give them the solutions and advice they desperately seek. But the churches do not only provide their congregations with a sense of security, by promising wealth and progress, they also benefit from a discourse of mistrust and fear (chapter 4). By explaining the lack of prosperity as a worldly expression of spiritual malevolence, they contribute to the level of spiritual insecurity already existing in Calabar, which is beneficial for these churches as this insecurity ensures their existence.

As becomes clear from this introduction, spiritual insecurity derives from many aspects of life. In this chapter I seek to portray Cross River State and Calabar in a way that the societal complexities upon which witchcraft discourse feeds in this town become visible.

2.1. An historical perspective on spiritual insecurity in Calabar

Cross River State exists as a state on its own since 1987 when the region that is now Akwa Ibom was separated from it. The state, which was part of the former Eastern Region (until 1967) was known as the South-Eastern state until 1976 after which it received its current name. Its capital Calabar knows a long history, in which the trade in slaves and palm oil and the arrival of the missionaries play an important role. These events changed the town's society immensely and have, in different ways, influenced local spiritual beliefs like traditional religion, witchcraft and ritual killings. Likewise have the colonial period and the civil war, that affected the area heavily shortly after independence, left their marks on levels of insecurity in Calabar society nowadays. These levels of insecurity have then also influenced the religious and spiritual lives of the people. An historical context of the town, focusing on main events in Calabar history, will thus contribute to our understanding of current-day feelings of uncertainty and spiritual insecurity in the society.

2.1.1. Slave and Palm Oil Trade (1668-1891)

The coast of Cross River, and Calabar in specific, know a long trading history. Even before colonialism, in the middle of the seventeenth century the region was visited by Europeans for trade and it is assumed that the Dutch and the Portuguese were in the town's hinterlands in the 15th and 16th centuries, but this has never been recorded (Hackett, 1989: 20, Röschenhaler, 2002: 89).¹⁸ In these early years of exchange between the Europeans and the inhabitants of the coast, the trade was mainly about slaves and ivory tusks (Latham, 1973: 17). In the 19th century, Calabar¹⁹ eventually 'developed into an important trading centre, chiefly because of its strategic location at the conjunction of waterways' (Hackett, 1989: 20). The area soon became the centre of slave trade, with 823.700 slaves having passed through Calabar between 1711 and 1810 (Latham, 1973: 18). Although officially Great Britain announced slave trade illegal in 1808 and abolished it in 1834, the external slave trade in Calabar continued until 1841 as a result of the Kings of Old Calabar benefiting from the exchange of slaves in return for goods (Latham, 1973: 22). With the decline of slavery 'a dramatic increase in oil exports occurred' (Latham, 1973: 55) as it had soon become clear that palm oil was the most lucrative commodity to be obtained from the Bight of Biafra (Northrup: 1976: 354). The town continued to be the center of palm oil trade until 1891 when the Efik lost their monopoly on the trade after the British had found their way into the Calabar hinterlands where palm products could also be bought (Latham, 1973: 90).

Both the slave trade and the trade in palm oil have left their marks on Efik society. The Efik, who are the traditional inhabitants of Calabar²⁰, had always been mainly fishermen until the arrival of the Europeans when they rapidly had to become businessmen in order to benefit from the international trade. It was in that time that witchcraft and sorcery accusations were a way of relieving social tensions amongst relatives by blood or marriage, especially with regard to the increasing incorporation of slaves in Efik society. These accusations were mainly instigated by the conflicts that arose between those who owed their status to the traditional lineage system and those who owed their status to their wealth as merchants in overseas trade (Latham, 1972: 249). Evidence of this is mainly to be found in the higher political sphere, although Latham argues that these accusations also occurred at the ordinary level (1972: 259). The political dominance of the two most influential political entities of Calabar at that time, the Eyamba ward and the Duke ward, was the 'consequence of their commercial success in the European trade' (Latham, 1972: 253) and sorcery accusations had emerged as a weapon in the disputes over this dominance. The Eyamba and Duke wards were closely related as they

¹⁸ The first document of trade with Calabar date from 1668 (Latham, 1973: 17)

¹⁹ In this paper I will speak of Calabar, but generally the town was called Old Calabar until the beginning of the twentieth century.

²⁰ The Efik are the traditional inhabitants of Calabar together with the Qua and the Efut

originated from the same family.²¹ A violent way of addressing the power dispute would break the traditional family's solidarity. Accusing members of the other ward of *ifot*, the Efik term for both witchcraft and sorcery, was a non-aggressive way of fighting out the issue at stake, considering the traditional family ties. Although in the end, of course, those accused of *ifot* were brutally killed by being made to prove their innocence by drinking the poison ordeal to prove their participation in the *ifot*²² (Latham, 1972). But apart from these *ifot* accusations, other spiritual forces united the 'new' Efik society as well. The *Ndem Efik* cult, which had been very important within the fishermen's society Calabar, lost its effectiveness during the slave trade. The priest of the cult of *Ndem Efik*, an aquatic deity, used to be the 'ultimate judge of crimes for which there was no precedent' (Latham, 1973, 35), but lost his role in the era of Calabar slave trade. But at the same time a new cult came into existence to interfere with the new commercial occupation of society: *ekpe*. *Ekpe* was regarded to be a secret society, which is still alive in Calabar today and of which practices can be found in Cuba (see Miller, 2009), that had religious, social, judicial and commercial functions (Latham, 1973: 37) and that was in control of trade processes. The entity *Ekpe* was a forest spirit that could never be seen by the people, but it was used by the leading men of Calabar 'to exercise control over law and commerce, in the name of a deity of which the rest of the population was kept in awe' (Latham, 1973, 37). As *Ekpe* is portrayed to be a spirit force in the form of a leopard, people would generally fear its power and be hesitant to raise objections, and so leaders of the *Ekpe* society were able to sanction people or collect debts from them in the spirit is name. Like *ifot* accusations, the appropriation of *Ekpe* in nineteenth century Calabar was a way to deal rather peacefully with the incorporation of slaves within the traditional lineage system of the society.

2.1.2. First Contact with Christianity (1846 – 1884)

Through their intensive contact with Europeans during the slave and palm oil trade, the Efik people had their first encounters with Christianity.²³ These contacts were not institutionalized in missions, but as development seemed to come with the understanding of God among the British, people were interested in it. When slavery was abolished and the British wanted to stop the Efik from continuing internally in 1843, King Eyamba V asked them to not only compensate the Efik for the loss of income, but also to send missionaries to educate the people and teach them about God. It was only in 1846 Hope Waddell finally arrived in Calabar with the Scottish Presbyterian

²¹ The Eyamba and Duke wards grew from the compound groups established by the outcast illegitimate twins of Efiom Ekpo's daughter. Efiom Ekpo was the fifth founding father of Creek Town (Calabar) (Latham, 1973: 34 and 9).

²² Those that died of drinking this poison ordeal would be found guilty of *ifot*

²³ Earlier contacts with Christianity were in the late seventeenth century when da Monteleone, a priest from Portugal, received requests for missionaries from Calabar chiefs. He never got permission and therefore the mission never took place.

United Secession Church (USC), where they were granted a plot of land to build their mission. They taught children in different subjects, but soon the locals came to understand that conversion was the missionaries' main aim.²⁴ This was a disappointment as the people had been eager to learn other things than God in order to develop the society (Hackett, 1989: 62) and they maintained their traditional religious thought.

One of the mission's main challenges thus was the way in which they were to deal with these local traditions and spiritual thought. The age-old religious traditions and spiritualism in Calabar and its secret *Ekpe* society were an obstacle in getting the Christian message across and thus there was a need for an incorporation of these existing spiritual beliefs within the mission's discourse.²⁵ A way in which this was done was by incorporating the idea that 'Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and that witchcraft was one of the works of the devil' (Hackett, 1989: 61); an idea that seems to be as much alive today in many of Calabar's churches. But the concerns of the missionaries with Calabar traditional spiritual thought and its cruel consequences in the form of human sacrifice, eventually resulted in the realization of the Society for the Abolition of Inhuman and Superstitious Customs and for promoting Civilization in Calabar (SAISC) that was supposed to watch over the realization of the abolition of human sacrifice in *Ekpe* law and other inhuman customs, like the killing of twins (Hackett, 1989: 64). This missionary society existed for over 10 years and eventually gave back power to the *Ekpe* society in 1861.

Although the missionaries had been able to minimize the sacrifice of human beings within the *Ekpe* law, they were less successful in other areas. The killing of twins and the persecution of their mothers was still very much alive and it was hard to convince the people of the inhumanity of the practice. Twins were regarded to be evil and there was a need for them to be killed so that they would not destroy the lives of the people around them. They were often buried in pots in the *akaiekpo* (evil forest), where corpses of slaves could be found as well (Hackett, 1989: 73). With the arrival of Mary Slessor in 1876 things started to change with regard to this practice. The young Mary Slessor, who's still praised in Calabar and known as the Mother of All Peoples (Hackett, 1989: 68), was appointed to teach in the day-school of the mission, but through a tour down all the mission stations she quickly realized the difficulties of the situation in Calabar (Livingstone, 2004: 25). With determination she fought for the rights of twins, their mothers and all civilians until her death in 1915 and she even adopted many of the children that were doomed to be killed or abandoned by their families. An official end to the civil rights abuses in Calabar came with the Hopkins Treaty of 1878 that was signed 'to put an end to the murderous customs of the people' (Hackett, 1989: 68). This treaty outlawed human sacrifice,

²⁴ Although the Presbyterian Mission did not record its first baptism until 1853 (Hackett, 1989: 67)

²⁵ This incorporation of local spiritual thought within the Christian Mission has been extensively discussed in Meyer's book about the Peki-Ewe in Ghana (Meyer, 1999)

the killing of twins and the use of the *esere* bean(Hackett, idem). This bean was also called the 'ordeal bean'. People accused of witchcraft were to eat the seeds of this poisonous bean and were found guilty if they died.

With its teaching programs, incorporation of indigenous spiritual thought within their mission message and with the successes in providing a safer environment by outlawing human sacrifice, the Presbyterian church laid the foundation for later Christian movements. Not only for those missions from Britain that found their way to Calabar during colonial times, like the Roman Catholic Mission in 1908 or the Methodist Mission in 1914 (Hackett, 1989: 78-79), but also for later local Christian movements that form the basis of current-day Pentecostalism in town.

2.1.3. Calabar under Colonial Influence (1884 – 1960)

On September 10, 1884, a Protection Treaty was signed by Consul E.H. Hewett with the 'Kings and Chiefs' of Old Calabar, after which the Oil Rivers Protectorate was established in 1885 (Efiong-Fuller, 1996: 10), with Calabar as its capital.²⁷ Thirty years and different protectorates later²⁸, in 1914, the Nigeria Federation was created out of the northern and southern protectorates, which would be under the rule of the British until 1960. Different mission churches had arrived in Calabar and were competing over land and people. But it was also in these early years of colonialism that the missionaries worked together with the Protectorate to establish bureaucratic, medical and educational facilities to develop the region (Hackett, 1989: 95). Apart from their contribution to the development of institutions and facilities, the missionaries were also keeping an eye on society under colonial rule. Uchegbue argues that 'sometimes certain missionaries vehemently opposed the 'high-handedness and brutal approaches' by which the secular colonial authorities treated the local subjects (2010: 5), which would eventually lead towards a better relationship between the mission churches and the people of Calabar. But this trust relationship made the missions interesting mediators for the colonial government, which would often appoint missionaries in government positions (Uchegbue, 2010: 5). Being dualistic entities in society, the missions were more successful in exterminating 'obnoxious practices' like ritual killings than the colonial government was, despite their military expeditions (Uchegbue 2010: 8). But during early colonial years the variety of missions became larger and disputes over territory started dominating the religious life (Hackett, 1989: 95).

When the missions got less financial support from their home countries due to the ongoing First World War, they had to incorporate more indigenous activities within their

²⁷ Because of being the capital city of this Oil Rivers Protectorate, which laid the basis for the later colony and current-day Nigeria, Calabar is often said to have been the first capital of Nigeria.

²⁸ In 1893 the Niger Coast Protectorate was established and in 1900 the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria came into existence (Efiong-Fuller, 1996: 10-11)

missions (Hackett, idem), which eventually stimulated the growth of African Independent Churches, as it had given space to broaden the definition and ideas of Christianity in town. African Independent Churches arose from local initiatives rather than from the involvement of missionaries and were led by Nigerian leaders. They could be regarded as opposing the missionary churches in town (Hackett, 1989: 95) and incorporated ideas from more traditional religious thought into their discourse. In that time local spiritual movements arose in the lower Cross River area from Port Harcourt. These movements were seen as revivals of the Holy Spirit by Rev. J.W. Westgarth, a member of the Qua Iboe Mission, who decided to institutionalize the movement in the 1920's. This was heavily criticized by the government, which called the movement a form of 'African witch-hunt' (Hackett, 1989: 98), but eventually this indigenous Pentecostal-like movement opened the doors for spiritual churches from abroad, that would later lead the town into Pentecostalism.

In 1933 the Apostolic Church of Britain started its mission in Calabar. Around this time the town underwent a depression, due to high unemployment rates and the collapse of primary produce prices (Hackett, 1989: 100). It was at the same time that witchcraft beliefs were again very much prevalent in society, after they had been largely been limited by the mission churches in the decades before. The fact that the Apostolic Church did believe in the evil of witchcraft and incorporated it in their mission discourse, unlike the other mission churches, made them more popular. People were not obliged to choose between 'Christ or *ifot*' (Hackett, idem), but they could be Christian while at the same time acknowledging the existence of witches. This inclusion of spiritualism within their discourse is again an important aspect within the new Pentecostal churches of Calabar today, as they 'accord a greater place to the works of the Holy Spirit, and by extension, to negative spiritual forces whether conceived in the form of Satan, witchcraft, ancestral, aquatic, or nature spirits' (Hackett, 2008: 3).

During World War II the various European missions were again affected by the lack of financial support. With the Pentecostal revival in town and the Apostolic Church that had already lost members to indigenous splinter groups, the road towards a larger variety of Pentecostal churches was paved. Many of the mainline Pentecostal churches of today, like the Mount Zion Church, were then established, partly with support from similar churches from the United States (Hackett, 1989: 102).

2.1.4. Calabar and the Civil War

After Nigeria gained independence from the British in 1960, Calabar society was soon disrupted by the Civil War (1967-1970) in which the self-declared state of Biafra opposed the Federal Nigeria. The southeastern area of Biafra, including Calabar and Bonny Island, was soon after the beginning of the war captured by the Nigerian military. Calabar was retaken by the Nigerians

only 3 months after the war, but it did leave its mark on the town's social and religious life. Many regular types of religious activity were suppressed in the years of war, which stimulated new forms of religious trends (Hackett, 1989: 106). As a consequence of the war, churches often became places of refuge for people and in various desperate situations informal prayer groups were generated, some of which survived and went on to become spiritual churches after the war (Hackett, 1989: 119). People who were traumatized and insecure after the war had ended, sought new religious affiliations, because they questioned the validity and relevance of their respective churches before the war (Hackett, 1989: 119). They vowed new religious activities to help prevent similar gruesome events to happen in the future. Therefore, after the Civil War new religious movements started to appear in town, many of them focusing on spiritual healing, witchcraft protection and miracles. These organizations attracted many members as their aims to heal were in line with people's desires after the war had destroyed their families, villages and bodies. It is thus clear that new organizations and religious and spiritual thoughts could feed on feelings of uncertainty within a society that was war-torn and fearful of similar events happening in the future, which I will argue is also the case for current-day Calabar.

2.1.5. Conclusion

In the preceding subparagraphs I have introduced different periods and events that have influenced Calabar society not only socially, but also spiritually. Economic changes during the trade era transformed the social structures of town, resulting in *ifot* beliefs and accusations to peacefully solve family and power disputes, that were no longer issues of Efik men alone, but also of the slaves that had to some extent integrated in society. The turn to palm oil trade after decades of slave trade in town created the need for a more commercial organization commanding profitable business. With a spirit entity reportedly ruling the *Ekpe* society, its leaders could adapt to people's traditional fears of spirits. Fear of *Ekpe* and the uncertainty with regard to his actions, would make them obey the *Ekpe* society leaders. Both *Ekpe* and *ifot* accusations were incorporated into Efik society due to the assimilation of slaves within their society. It becomes clear that social changes in town came with a need for new ways of dealing with them. As we can see this was done during the trade era by enhancing already existing spiritual beliefs (*ifot*) and new spiritual entities (*Ekpe*), but it can also be observed during the aftermath of the Civil War, when new religious and spiritual organizations found their ways within Calabar to provide salvation and solutions in the devastated town and the society that had changed as a result of that. Likewise had the earlier interaction with missionaries and the colonial rulers had its impact on spiritual life in town. Missionaries changed the religious landscape of Calabar by introducing Christianity and exterminating inhuman practices that were linked to traditional spiritual thought, like the killing of twins and the use of the *eserebean*. But

although missionaries gained a lot of trust during the colonial era, when they mediated between the imperial government and the local people, churches that incorporated ideas of witchcraft and evil spirits in their discourse could eventually grow during the epoch of World Wars that scaled down the financial support for the European missions, giving way for more indigenous forms of Christianity.

It is clear that Calabar society has constantly adjusted its religious and spiritual body of thought to the changing circumstances of their environment. Feelings of uncertainty in society and societal fears demanded different coping strategies, of which many could be found within religion. This is not only the case for historical Calabar, but it can also be observed in the society today. The rapid modernization of the town and the state, and the different forms of (spiritual) insecurity that this modernization brought on in Calabar, have implored new coping mechanisms. These, as I will discuss later, are anchored in the Pentecostal churches of the town today, which I will further discuss in chapter 4.

2.2. Spiritual insecurity in present-day Calabar

The people of Calabar proudly carry the motto of their state ‘The People’s Paradise’, which is emphasizing both the clean and green environment of the state as well as the relative peace of it in the unstable region and country. The name of the town itself is turned into an acronym, ‘**Come And Live And Be At Rest**’, which again promotes the town as being the ideal spot to live and visit. Throughout the country people generally have a positive image of Calabar. They attribute many favorable things to the town, of which the food and the women are praised most. But Calabar is famous for other things as well. The efforts of Cross River State’s former governor Donald Duke (1999-2007) to develop the town and the state are praised across the country. He swiftly modernized the state for it to become an attraction for both tourists as well as business investors. Projects, like the *Tinapa Business Resort* and the *Obudu Mountain Resort*, are luxurious, state-of-the-art locations where one can enjoy life and business to the fullest. Besides these major projects, Duke also initiated the ban on *okadas* (motor bicycles for commercial transport) from the streets of Calabar in 2006²⁹, which made the town not only less dangerous but also much less crowded and noisy. But the changes that came with the rapid modernization of town also has its negative sides. It instigated unemployment for the hundreds of *okada* drivers in town that made a living out of this business. They were forced to start driving cars, which most of them could not afford, leaving them jobless or working for transport companies that would pay

²⁹ This ban was initiated in 2006, but due to turmoil cancelled soon after. Current governor Liyel Imoke eventually put the ban in order in November 2009.

them little. And although many people in town are excited about Duke's modernizing projects, the ban on *okadas* makes some of them complain about the cost of public transport that increased due to it. 'Before, we could take an *okada* and pay small money for a short ride. Now you pay 50, sometimes 70 naira for reaching the end of the street,' explained a journalist of a local newspaper. Like the *okada* ban has had its positive effect on the town as a whole, but disadvantaged many individuals, so did many of the other projects Duke initiated. The resorts and luxurious facilities he has established all over the state are praised by most, but visited and used by few as the majority of the locals cannot afford the cost of transport towards the projects or are frightened off by their high entrance and entertainment prices. Likewise has the poor infrastructure of the state obstructed proper accessibility. The rapid modernization of town has emphasized the existing socio-economic differences within Calabar society. Access to the new facilities within town is not available for all classes, discriminating those in the lower classes. On the other hand, those in the middle and upper classes have to manage envious reactions towards their capability of accessing the modern life Calabar is providing them. Apart from this recent modernization process having changed society economically, people of all positions in society have had to adjust to their violent environment in different ways as well. With kidnappings and armed militants being daily reality in the Niger Delta region and the threats of religious and political violence coming from other parts of the country, society has also changed tremendously on a political level. As described in the introduction to this chapter, the atmosphere in Calabar itself is not violent, but tense due to the instability of the region and the country as a whole. Both the economic and political insecurities that come with the town's geographical position as well as the modernization process it underwent in recent years, have instigated modern spiritual insecurities and new coping strategies that have been addressed mainly by Pentecostal churches. In this paragraph I will further elaborate on the ways in which economic and political insecurity has left its marks on the body of thought around spirituality in present-day Calabar, while it will at the same time be visualizing the town's lay-out.

2.2.1. Love, sex and food

Calabar is known throughout the country for many favorable things. Certain features are attributed to the town in specific. The recent modernization of the state is praised by both the state's citizens as well as the rest of the nation. Projects like the *Tinapa Business Resort* are instantly mentioned when discussing Calabar. Likewise many people speak about the regional food and 'the Calabar woman', both of which are highly esteemed, but also have strong spiritual connotations.

On my flight to Lagos in August 2010 a man from Enugu state vibrantly spoke about the diligence, passion and modest pride of the Calabar women, which was confirmed over and over

to me by both locals as well as other people across the nation. It is often said that women of Calabar are great lovers and the story goes that when a man is taken care of by a woman from Calabar, he will never leave her again. Although this might be considered a myth, it is true that historically girls in Calabar were provided extensive sexual education during their initiation period, which could have culturally distinguished them from other women in the country. After girls were circumcised, they stayed in seclusion for an extended period of time, in which they were fed well to gain weight (the so called fattening period) and were taught how to be sexually agile. Blankson Ikpe argues that 'during the period of seclusion, young women were taught the subtleties and the intricacies of man-woman relationships, of sex and sexual pleasures and satisfaction' (Blankson Ikpe, 2006). It could thus well be argued that the mentioned 'myth' entails an essential truth, that culturally women of Calabar are more prepared for (sexual) service than those in other parts of the country and thus capture a man's heart more easily. But many believe that they consult traditional healers to help them seduce a man. These traditional healers, that are often mediators for married and unmarried women, make them a love potion or love medicine (*ibok ima*) which can be 'put in food or drink of one's partner, unknown to him' (Offiong, 1999: 124) or they make these women special charms to increase the love (Offiong, idem). In a society in which marrying early is a pressure felt daily by young men and women, these charms and love potions are regarded to be ultimate resources to succeed. And although these charms are referred to as 'lucky charms' and are sometimes created to prevent the malicious attacks of evil spirits (Offiong, idem), they are generally believed to be the works of spiritual malevolence themselves. This is very visible in popular Nollywood movies, in which the interference of traditional healers in people's love lives is an important recurrent theme. Many of these movies seem to argue that this form of spiritual mediation is dangerous, as there's the risk of being spiritually possessed or the charm having an antipodal effect and one might be forced to repay the healer for it eternally, either materially or spiritually. It is thus that this socio-cultural pressure to marry early and the nation-wide image of the women of Calabar as being great lovers, has created a modern environment in which young people have to live up to unrealistic expectations given their socio-economic status, changed lifestyles and educational commitments. This clash between societal expectations and personal limitations leaves youth with feelings of uncertainty about their future for which they find spiritual solutions, often in the new Pentecostal churches (chapter 4).

Women in Calabar are not only known as great lovers, but also as excellent cooks. The Calabar cuisine is known for its large variety of soups and the time-consuming preparations of dishes. *Afang soup* is the most famous local dish, made of *afang* leaves and containing a lot of different meat and seafood. This dish is widely available in town and its direct environment, but is rather hard to be found in other parts of Nigeria. Local restaurants also serve *edikaikong soup*,

which is a local form of the nationwide eaten *vegetable soup*. On special occasions, for example during Christmas, women sometimes prepare *ekpang nkwukwo*, a dish made of water- and cocoyam porridge rolled in banana leaves and cooked with palm oil and a variety of meat and seafood. The women in Calabar take a lot of time in preparing these soups and serve their guests with all hospitality and generosity. But being known for its food does not only attribute favorability to the town. As it is generally believed that food is the most important medium for transferring witchcraft powers from one person to the other, food consumption also has a negative connotation in Calabar. It is therefore that people are very cautious to eat food prepared by strangers. Simon, a 25 year old student from Ugep residing in Calabar, explained to me: 'You don't know what someone puts in your food. It could be poison or it could be witchcraft powers. You should always be very careful.' Children are taught to not accept any food items from other children in school, because of the possibility to be initiated into the witchcraft world. It is remarkable that food is feared in a society in which the preparation and consumption of food is of major significance.

It could well be argued that the overall appreciation of the food and the women of Calabar needs some kind of explanation as to understand why it is so good. Witchcraft powers are often attributed to those people with special gifts, like talented children or beautiful women, and it could therefore be said that specific potentials within Calabar society, like , are explained in a similar way. And thus malevolent spiritual connotations with food and women in Calabar can be understood as the societal need to explain such potential by means of spiritual possession.

2.2.2. Development initiatives and commercialized traditions

The former governor of state, Donald Duke and his successor, Liyel Imoke (2007-), have aimed to transform Cross River State into a state attractive for investors and tourists from both Nigeria and abroad. By rapidly modernizing the state and Calabar, they have also aimed to contribute to the welfare of the people by '...putting in place, a comprehensive package of development that would positively affect the lives of every Cross Riverian [...] in addition to providing everyone with fresh opportunities for effective participation in the overall development of our state and nation'³⁰. Several projects initiated in the state reflect these aims and the government puts emphasis on education in this regard, by having the vision that 'by 2013, all citizens of Cross River State will be receiving qualitative education to meet the work force demands required to

³⁰Address by His Excellency, The Governor of Cross River State, Senator Liyel Imoke, at the Swearing-In of 17 Newly Elected Local Government Chairmen at the Main Bowl of the Cultural Centre Complex, Calabar on Friday, 14th December, 2007

support the ongoing socio-economic development of the State'³¹. But this rapid development and modernization has left its mark on Calabar society. Access to the successes of the government initiatives depends on social class and background. The rich and successful inhabitants of town, who are living together in housing estates like State Housing and Satellite Town, have easy access. They have the means to reach and make use of projects like Tinapa business resort, while those in the middle and lower classes of Calabar have little or no access to these. Likewise is the case for access to the education system. The university of Calabar, where a large part of my fieldwork was done, is an institution of prestige which is, as one student expressed it, 'not for the poor'.

It is argued that 'witches are modernity's prototypical malcontents' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993: xxix) and that 'discourses on sorcery or witchcraft are intertwined [...] with modern changes' (Geschiere, 1997: 2). The described development and rapid modernization in town thus could have directly contributed to the belief in witchcraft powers. But I believe that the inequalities that were reinforced due to the recent development of town have also had their influence on societal relations and with that on the belief in witchcraft. The inaccessibility of modern life in Calabar for the lower and middle class enforces feelings of discrimination and envy, while at the same time the upper class in society enjoys the town's developments with a fear of potential malice. The tensions and disrupted social relationships between these different classes instigate feelings of uncertainty for both. Myhre argues that 'witchcraft concerns relational fragility, rather than a narrative about, and a means for dealing with, social changes' (2009: 120). In this paragraph I will look at the highly divisive societal relationships within Calabar and the forms of insecurity that stem from these, in the context of the recent development and modernization of the state with the aim to attract business investors and tourists.

One of former governor Duke's main accomplishments with regard to urban and tourism development is the establishment of the Tinapa business resort which was created to attract both tourists as well as investors. The enormous site contains a building with enough space for over 50 shops of which about 10 are now in use by telephone companies, banks and the large department store T-Mart that sells exclusive fashion and products. Some empty shops are temporarily used by artists exposing their wooden carvings and paintings, but most of them remain vacant (photo 2). Even though the Resort was declared a free trade zone in November 2006 and is regarded to be 'an investor's paradise'³² has not increased foreign investments so

³¹ Website Ministry of Education

(http://www.crossriverstate.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=604&Itemid=49, 22 May 2011)

³²Tinapa: Free Trade Zone (<http://tinapa.com.ng/business/modules/news/article.php?storyid=2>, 17 April 2011)

far. Other facilities of the resort, like the hotel, water park and film studios (photo 3), are also barely made use of. But the aim of the Tinapa Business Resort is to become the next international trade and retail zone, following the footsteps of Dubai³³, and this is what is widely believed in Calabar to have happened already.



Photo 2: Empty shops in the deserted Tinapa Business Resort



Photo 3: The barely used Tinapa Film Studios

Most people speak proudly about the resort, believing it to be a very busy place just outside of town. But hardly anyone has actually visited the resort, and they have thus never seen the deserted nature of the place. This is due to the fact that it is over 8 kilometers out of town and no public transport reaches further than the urban agglomeration '8 Miles' after which one has to charter an expensive taxi to reach the place. The resort is therefore one of those development projects accessible for the upper classes of town, who can reach the area by private transport, but it remains largely inaccessible for the lower and middle class. Apart from transportation costs, the prices in the shopping mall and the entrance fee for the swimming pool are extremely high, so entertainment can only be enjoyed by those that can afford the 1000 naira entrance fee of the water park or the designer clothes in the shops. But actually witnessing the resort is not important in the creation of people's image about Tinapa. They gladly echo the discourse of pride over the business resort, provided to them by the state government and those that promote the place on the resort's website, which definitely gives an exaggerated picture of the place³⁴. Likewise people also praise the Obudu Mountain Resort in the Obaniku local government area in northern Cross River. This former cattle ranch has been transformed into a

³³ Nigerian Resort makes MAPIC debut (http://www.tinapafreezone.com/news/news_18.html, 17 April 2011)

³⁴ The website of Tinapa Business Resort (www.tinapa.com.ng) provides the reader with an image of the place being completely finished and occupied. For example, the website tells us that there are 54 exclusive shops on the premises, while in reality this doesn't exceed 10.

luxurious leisure resort, with exclusive accommodation, spa facilities and a private air strip for visitors coming from Calabar who do not want to follow the 322 km of bad roads leading up to Obudu. The resort is built in the mountains of Cross River, a cool place where visitors can get away for a few days to get in touch with nature and enjoy the wide scenery. But apart from these extraordinary views, visitors are also confronted with the differences between the luxury of the resort and the circumstances under which the people in the nearby village have to survive. They had to give up part of their land to the resort and in return received education for their children, but basic needs like water and food are not widely available. The contrast with the resort, with a steak restaurant and flush toilets, is striking and therefore clearly illustrating the inequalities at stake.

The development of the state into a tourist destination is not only accomplished through projects like Tinapa and Obudu Mountain Resort. Traditions and cultures of different towns are now being commercialized for the public. The New Yam Festival (Leboku) in Ugep is an example of this (photo 4). The festival that has been celebrated for centuries is now completely sponsored by the state and MTN Nigeria in order to attract more visitors from outside town to take part in the cultural display. Likewise, many events and tourist attractions have been called into existence, like the yearly Calabar festival and carnival, all to underline the state's motto of being a paradise to the public and the ideal spot tourism. But these reinterpretations of culture and traditions also contribute to new inequalities as local traditions transform to cultural displays and people's cultural values are undermined by the commercial vision of companies and the state.



Photo 4: Young girls dressed traditionally for the Leboku festival that has been commercialized by the state government and companies like provider MTN

One of the newer is the Christmas celebration in Calabar, also known as Calabar Festival, which is an event that commences on the 30th of November every year with the tree lighting ceremony in the Millennium Park and only ends 32 days later during the Thanksgiving service in the Cultural Centre on the 1st of January. The festival attracts thousands of visitors from all over the country and abroad and the town's accommodation for this period of the year is fully booked far in advance. In the months preceding the festive period the town undergoes a transformation. Almost all hotels and houses along the main streets are covered with a fresh coat of paint that hides the filthy walls that remind people of the heavy seasonal rains and the harmattan dust that had covered them. The sides of pavements are also painted again in a fresh black and white pattern by young men that bend their backs for miles making sure their small brushes cover all sidewalks of the town. During my fieldwork I saw the university's main gate regaining its yellow color and the bare steel of Calabar's walking bridges got covered with a layer of metallic varnish. Potholes were filled, while gardeners worked hard on the town's public gardens. Restaurants and bars started buying their beers and soda's in excess to sell it at double the price during the festive period and sellers of call credit sold their cards for an extra 10% of the price 'because of Christmas'. Economically, this Christmas period is crucial for the existence of many local small and medium-sized businesses, like hotels, bars and restaurants. In the last week of November the town's roundabouts are decorated with large red, green and golden cloths. The transformation of the town is remarkable as it illustrates the ability of the local government to cover up the social deterioration of many parts of town. The thick layer of fresh paint on the houses and hotels in the most visible parts of town can be regarded a metaphor for the development projects of the state that cover up disadvantaged parts of the Calabar society. The transformation of town during the Christmas period and the transformation of the state as a whole, display the way in which the lower classes are submissive to the general image of Calabar as a prospering town in Nigeria.

The garden of the Cultural Centre in Calabar is the heart of the Christmas celebrations in town (photo 5). In November a small shopping center is built out of wooden plates and the garden is scattered with hundreds of small wooden stalls that can be hired for selling food, drinks or other goods. During the festive period these stalls are turned into little bars and restaurants, with plastic tables and chairs surrounding them, strings of small lights attached to the wood and loud music coming from sound systems. The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) provides the festival site with necessary electricity, but power cuts silence and darken the festival on a regular basis, leaving those bar owners that can afford a generator and fuel with most customers, while the other stalls are lightened up by the flames of the many barbeques with grilled fish or grilled spicy meet, called *suya*, on the site. Every evening visitors can enjoy several live bands performing in between the different bars and during the day there's a lot of

entertainment for both adults and children in the form of pool tables and a line of televisions for video games for which a fee has to be paid. Inside the Cultural Centre there are several cultural performances by people of different parts of Cross River State. In 2010 there were amongst others, Ogoja, Obudu and Yakurr local government area days, while other days were organized for interactive sessions with Cross Riverians in the diaspora. And in the U.J. Esuene Stadium, a five minute walk from the Cultural Centre, a daily entertainment programme is being held in the evenings, including performances of nearly all of Nigeria's biggest music artists and several international acts. But local bands, jazz artists, dance groups and comedians are also taking the stage during the 30 days of the festival. The performances can be enjoyed by everyone as there's no entrance fee and for those that cannot be in the stadium, the acts are all broadcast live on local television. The Tinapa Business Resort is used for the more formal and exclusive events of the Christmas celebrations. It is here that Miss Calabar Carnival is elected and a grand banquet is organized with the state governor. People can take part in these events by paying a fee of about 2000 naira, which most of them cannot afford.



Photo 5: An outdoor pool table on the festival terrain of the Christmas celebrations, with in the background some of the bars that are scattered around the place. In the evening the place gets filled up

The festivities around Christmas are in fact building up to the main event of the month, which is celebrated yearly in the last days of December. The famous Calabar Carnival attracts over a million local and international spectators every year and is advertised as being ‘a unique visual display of innovation and creativity, featuring cultural influences and traditions from the past and the present in its costumes, drama, dance and music’.³⁵ Since 2004 five different bands have been formed who create an act around the Carnival’s theme, with costumes, dances and pamphlets being the main ingredients of their performances. Every year the bands Bayside, Passion 4, Masta Blasta, Seagull and Freedom compete on the streets of Calabar to win the prestigious price of 10 million naira (over 45.000 euro). Everyone can become a member of one of these bands by paying a small subscription fee (500 – 2000 naira) for which they will receive their costumes and food and drinks during rehearsals, the ‘dry run’ and the actual festival. Every band has thousands of members who are divided in groups of different levels and ages, that create their own performances and costumes based on the band’s general concept. Rehearsal schedules are tight, with in the last weeks before the carnival daily get-togethers in all kinds of locations, including churches. About two weeks before the main event, all the bands perform for the first time during a ‘dry run’ through the streets of town. They walk the 12 kilometer track in their band t-shirts and try to already impress the large crowds that gather to see this street rehearsal.

The 2010 Carnival was carrying the theme ‘Our Strength and Resilience: the Bedrock of Our Future’ and started off on the 26th of December with the children’s carnival in which young boys and girls danced for a large audience throughout Calabar. The different bands had chosen their little Carnival kings and queens who were interviewed on local television, repeating inspirational quotes related on the carnival’s theme they were nursed with during the rehearsals. This event already gathered a large crowd, but the Carnival the next day shut down the town completely. Shops were closed, restaurants opened late or not at all and public transport was not available in most parts of town. The few taxis that decided to carry people would find roadblocks on almost all of the main streets, as the Carnival takes the bands over a 12 kilometer track through the center of town. People from all over town gathered along the route at around 1 pm, eagerly waiting for the colorful bands to pass (photo 6). The Carnival was supposed to commence at noon in the U.J. Esuene stadium, but due to heavy rainfalls the night before and the damage that had caused to the bands’ vehicles, the procession eventually started three hours later to end 12 hours after its departure, in the middle of the night, in the same stadium. The bands all interpreted the theme of the Carnival in their own way. Bayside, the band of former governor Donald Duke, commenced the event with a truck transformed into an

³⁵ About the Calabar Festival

(http://www.calabarfestival.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=5, 19 April 2011)

enormous lion, which was their interpretation of strength and resilience. Other bands symbolized the theme with different images of family foundations (parents, kings and queens). Masta Blasta, the band of current governor Liyel Imoke, presented the audience with displays of different ethnic groups and a chronological overview of Nigeria's history, depicting strength and resilience to be the foundation of the country (photo 7).



Photo 6: The Queen of Passion 4 band



Photo 7: Masta Blasta band depicting and promoting 'Unity and Love, Peace and Progress'

In as much as the Christmas festival and the yearly carnival aim to unite people from different socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, it remains a period aimed at financial gain. The preparation and celebration of the festival does indeed bring together people from different social classes, but the diverse fees that need to be paid for band membership and entrance fees for events still distinguishes them. Although the government has made a large variety of events freely available for all, there are still many aspects of the celebration that are only accessible for the wealthy few. Prices of entertainment, even in the form of sodas and beers during the free performances in the stadium, rise tremendously during the Christmas period and the people with lower incomes are not able to enjoy these. Likewise is public transport slightly more expensive during the festivities, which causes problems for mobility within town for the less privileged. And although the local small businesses also gain from the festivities as they can

increase prices of their products (like sodas and call credit scratch cards), it is the major investors that benefit most. Bar owners in the garden of the Cultural Centre that have alternative power supplies attract more visitors than those that rely on the general electricity supply. Likewise the sponsors of this festival and the state benefit greatly from the activities and the flow of visitors they attract. The celebration of this festival, like other development projects of the state, thus also enforces existing socio-economic disparities.

The Calabar festival initiated from the state government's aim to increase income from tourism and was therefore created as a commercial event, but in other occasions local traditional festivals have been commercialized in order to achieve the same. An example of that is the Leboku New Yam Festival. The Yakurr, an ethnic group inhabiting a large part of Cross River State that are centered around the town of Ugep, yearly celebrate the harvest of the yam with their New Yam Festival, also known as Leboku. This festival which is usually celebrated during the month of August is also the beginning of the new year for the Yakurr. During the festival period people commemorate their ancestors through rituals, like the pouring of libations. Leboku has been celebrated for centuries, but was adopted by the state in 2005 to promote tourism in Cross River. The festival has ever since been sponsored by MTN Nigeria and the state government to attract visitors from outside the town. Especially the weekend in which the Etangala (masquerade) wanders through the streets of Ugep has become an attraction to visitors from within and outside the country (photo 8). As with the Calabar Christmas festival the commercial celebration of the Leboku festival entails financial gain for local businesses, but the main beneficiaries here are MTN Nigeria and the state, that both invest large sums of money in the celebration of the festival. People's historical local traditions are nowadays covered by modernization and commercialization and used for financial gain. Because the financial benefits are mainly for the upper class and the state government and not for the people whose traditions are being celebrated, this again enforces existing inequalities in society.



Photo 8: The Etangala masquerade followed by thousands of people from in and outside of Ugep

The different forms of development in the state, in forms of modern establishments like the Tinapa Business resort or commercialized traditional festivities, are very visible in Calabar and its environment. Financial gain is the aim of these modernization processes. But the inequality in accessing the recent developments, festivities and their benefits, for different classes of society have widened the already existing disparities, and so have the geographical placements of these projects. The new inequalities have instigated high levels of social violence in the society, which can be defined 'as any intentional act designed to subdue someone against his will by inflicting him psychological distress (anxiety, anguish, despair, fear, i.e., any feeling that is feared because it has the effect of) or physical suffering (corporal and personal injury)' (Bouju and de Bruijn, 2007). New inequalities in town have thus elicited 'a web of mutual suspicion and constant consideration' (Myhre, 2009: 138) that marks society in modern Calabar and which is a breeding ground for discourse and belief in different forms of spiritual insecurity. That is, social violence manifests itself in witchcraft and other forms of spiritual insecurity that give meaning to and help understand feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. It is therefore that, as Geschiere (1997: 16) argues that witchcraft could be regarded 'a resource for both the powerful and a weapon for the weak against new inequalities', which means that one can use it for the expansion of already existing wealth and prosperity in the upper class, but it can also be used for weakening exactly that wealth by the lower classes that feel discriminated by the inaccessibility of new developments in the state. Witchcraft is concerned with exactly the forms of relational uncertainty that originate from these enforced disparities in town, 'in the sense that it [witchcraft] is an ever-present possibility that they can be subverted from within [social relationships]' (Myhre, idem). I therefore argue that the modernization and development of the state have enforced disrupted social relations, both within classes as well as between classes, which eventually are explained in terms of social violence and spiritual insecurity, in which locally the discourse of witchcraft is most prevalent. This is a recurrent observation within the history of witchcraft discourse in Calabar. In times of great social disruption, like the slave trade era, one can also observe the use of spiritual agents in discourse to explain and control social life. *Ekpe* is an example of this, as it was a deity that was used by the leading men of Calabar to exercise control over their land, but *ifot* accusations also took place mainly within a social environment (in or in between families, see 2.1.1) to protect traditional social ties and bonds from breaking down. During the civil war social relations were also disturbed due to ethnic divisions. Biafra was an invention of the Igbo and the different ethnic groups of Cross River were therefore inferior. Ethnic consciousness, which I will discuss for current day Calabar in chapter 3, was thus an important factor in the social disruption during the civil war and it is observed that in this time witchcraft protection became highly popular, especially in the new religious movements that appeared in Calabar (2.1.4). It can be well argued that there's an

interconnection between social disruptions and high levels of spiritual insecurity. Geschiere's argument that witchcraft is a product of modernity is therefore not complete. To understand spiritual insecurity, and thus witchcraft, one must also take into consideration these historical observations and realize that witchcraft can well be argued being a response to social disruptions, coming both from modernity and development as well as from human insecurity, of which the civil war and the slave trade are examples in Calabar history.

2.2.3. A highly divided Christian unity

Calabar is a melting pot of people with different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, living peacefully together but apart. The town is heavily divided in different areas in which people with similar backgrounds live and work together, excluding those that do not belong to their group or class. The people in the different groups are often vulnerable for the same risks in town, i.e. have the same risk position (Beck, 1992), which is quite visible from the layout of the town. People with higher incomes live together in housing estates, their wealth being heavily protected by high walls with barbed-wire and glass pieces. Those with lower incomes are at lower risk of being attacked for their wealth and live in open compounds, but still lock their houses with both door as well as key locks. This paragraph will visualize the different neighborhoods and the risk positions of the people living in it, arguing that the mutual tensions the social divisions cause, contribute to societal feelings of mistrust and uncertainty, which are often explained in terms of witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence. But I will also show that, despite the divisions in town, Calabar is scattered with (historical) clues of Christianity that connect most of these different groups, apart of the small Hausa community in Bogobiri that is predominantly Muslim, creating a liberal form of unity between the people.

Calabar's center³⁸ is mainly built around two of its main roads: IBB Way and Ndidem Usong Iso Road, of which the latter one is better known as Marian Road. On these roads one can find bars and restaurants as well as shops, hotels and pharmacies. Ndidem Usong Iso Road is a long and wide street, usually full of traffic. Street hawking is prohibited in Calabar, but sometimes you will find women and children selling water, popcorn and plantain chips under the hot sun, while young boys are promoting rat poison and mouse traps to people waiting in the traffic jams. Taxi-drivers do their very best to bring people to their destinations as fast as possible by trying to surpass the many cars waiting, which leads to loud honking, mutual swearing and dangerous situations. Along Ndidem Usong Iso Road one can find the large Marian market, which is often praised for its relatively clean environment (compared to the bigger Watt market) and which is said to be the best market to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. This neat

³⁸ Calabar exists out of two Local Government Area's: Calabar South and Calabar Municipality, of which the latter is regarded to be the center.

market is situated close to the State Housing district, which is home to many expats and upper class Nigerians that protect themselves from kidnappers and armed robbers by living behind high walls and large dogs. Marian Road is considered to be the best place to spot *oyibo* (white men) and with facilities like clubs, fast food joints and exclusive hotels, this area is also regarded as being the hotspot for going out in the night. It is thus clear that this part of town is for those that can afford luxury and entertainment and living in the housing estate is regarded a status symbol. But behind the many shops and entertainment facilities on Marian Road, one can find open compounds where large families live in single rooms. They are confronted with the daily problem of their lack of access to the modern facilities that surround them. But what binds these upper and lower classes along Marian Road, which is named after the biblical figure Mary, is their Christian faith. The area is home to some of the largest churches in town, with the Liberty Gospel Church of Helen Ukpabio situated in the center of the neighborhood. The people of different backgrounds meet each other on Sundays in one of the area's churches, where ethnicity or socio-economic class is of less significance than in their daily lives.

Along IBB Way many small shops and restaurants are situated. In the area around this road leading from the U.J. Esuene stadium up to the Atimbo district, many Yakurr-migrants³⁹ have their homes. Some of the bars and restaurants along the street therefore sell Yakurr delicacies like *yendomblom* (leaves served with palm oil, pepper and groundnuts), served with fish or meat and bottles of palm wine. The street is also home to one of the old Catholic churches, the Holy Cross church, and the state's broadcasting company CRBC, both situated opposite the town's police barracks and prisons. With the exception of the many Yakurr, the main inhabitants of this neighborhood are the police officers who live together in the large barracks occupying a large piece of land in this area. They've created their own local center of activities along Otop Abasi street, with bars and restaurants of Yakurr owners that are mainly used by police officials.

From IBB Way one can go all the way to the airport and further into the suburbs of Calabar, eventually reaching the Akpabuyo local government area. Neighborhoods like Atimbo and Edim Otop, that can be found along this way and which belong to Calabar, are known to be home to the less privileged and are often viewed to be villages in itself. It is these areas that most less privileged people occupy and this is clearly visible from the poorly protected compounds and houses, the market-like shops along the road selling a few products and the less maintained drainage-canals, roads and cleanliness. The contrast with the modern and recent housing estate Satellite Town that borders Edim Otop is striking and the daily reality for the people in Edim Otop that only have to walk a few minutes to notice highly maintained streets and villas behind high walls.

³⁹ The Yakurr come from central Cross River State and have their center in Ugep

Satellite Town is one of the most recent urban projects of Calabar, which came into existence about a decade ago. The land behind the University of Calabar and next to the premises of the Teaching Hospital is very expensive and has mainly been bought by professors, lecturers in the university, pastors and businessmen, to build their residences. Houses in Satellite Town have high fences with barbed wire or pieces of glass on top of them and most of the estates have gatemen that open and close the gates only for invited guests. Public transport in and out of Satellite Town was non-existent during the first half of my fieldwork in Calabar. Since most people in this neighborhood have one or more cars on their disposal, public taxis could not make enough money by including Satellite Town in their routes and smaller *okadas* that take one or two passengers are no longer allowed in town, due to the ban on commercial motor bicycles. The few people in Satellite Town who do not own a car, would usually take public transport to Edim Otop to return home walking. During the Christmas period *keke napeps* started to dominate the neighborhood's landscape. These auto-rickshaws were already present in towns like Umuahia and Aba, but found their way to Calabar because of a need for smaller public transport in town after *okadas* had been abolished. Facilities are, like public transport, little in this part of town. A few shops sell water, soft drinks, preservable food items and toiletries. The neighborhood has two bars and several hotels which have little customers to care for. Churches, on the other hand, are numerous and some of them crowded. Various smaller and bigger Pentecostal churches found their way to Satellite Town as there was still land for sale in these areas. According to people that have been living in the neighborhood for a longer time, these churches have come into being only recently, with the Demonstration Chapel being an interesting example (chapter 4). This church, that used to be situated in a small building along IBB Way, commenced service on Victory Way in Satellite town as of February 2010. First masses were held in open air on a piece of land that one of the church members had bought. In the months after, bricks and roofing created a large church building and the church saw its members grow exponentially. Interestingly, Demonstration Chapel is not visited by many people who live in Satellite Town. Most of its members are from other parts of town, many from Edim Otop, which again shows how Christianity connects the people of different socio-economic backgrounds. But on the other hand, the division is still there as it was in Edim Otop where the Demonstration Chapel went for a crusade in December 2010 to save the people from witchcraft powers that kept the families of the area in decline.

A roundabout on IBB Way which has a big statue of two hands tied together on top of it, close to both Satellite Town and Edim Otop, marks the beginning of Etta Agbor street towards the University and Calabar South. The statue illustrates unity, which is promoted in town, but the fact that it is situated on the crossroads of Satellite Town, Edim Otop and the main road to the University, Calabar South and the entertainment area along Marian, makes clear that this

promoted unity is indeed symbolic, not a reflection of reality. Etta Agbor is again full of small shops, selling spare parts for generators, cars or computers. Young men repairing electronic devices of all sorts had their small workshops along this road and many internet cafés are situated in this part of town. The noise and smell of generators providing these places with 'constant' electricity cannot be found as loud and strong anywhere else in Calabar. Internet cafés are usually crowded with students from the University of Calabar who search for information online or type out notes and papers. Others have their work done by manual typists that occupy a part of the street, neatly typing out students' works in the hot sun, while young boys selling call credit and women selling sliced watermelon, peeled oranges and bananas with ground nuts, occupy the same area next to one of the university gates. Opposite the university gate one can find many small restaurants and bars where students go for lunch and afterschool drinks. Local gin, which is very popular among male students and lecturers, can be taken in a dark bar behind these restaurants. The spot, also known as 'Church', became a key location in this research. The nickname of this local bar is interesting, as it again confirms the fact that Christianity is the bonding factor within Calabar society. Students and lecturers from different faculties and departments and from different states in Nigeria, all come together here to discuss life, while drinking the alcoholic gin. These lecturers and students also have different socio-economic backgrounds, but in 'Church' they are the same, for as long as there are drinks. Those with higher incomes, like university lecturers, contribute more to the bottles of gin that are shared within the group. Although there's no faith-based relationship between the bar and its name, it is interesting to notice that a meeting spot is named after such a highly religious institution.

The customers of 'Church' are mostly staff and students of the University of Calabar (Unical), which is one of the two universities of Calabar and is the one situated most central. The Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) can be found further outside town, but has not been part of this fieldwork. The campus of the university is a town in itself. Just after the yellow gate that marks the entrance of the premises one can find minibuses that form the public transport on campus. These buses drive up and down the road, from the entrance to the main library, and pick and drop students along the road from where they can reach their respective faculties. All over campus one can find small stalls and shops where students can buy office utensils, chewing gum, handkerchiefs and biscuits. Scattered around the premises are copy shops, where students can type and print documents or copy books or papers. Behind the main library many restaurants and bars can be found for lunch and afterschool drinks. Apart of the school buildings, one can find several male and female hostels a little outside of the main campus and the more centrally built post-graduate hostels, where MA-students have their rooms. The area where the hostels are situated, is usually referred to as Malabo, named after the capital of Equatorial Guinea. Citizens of that country that fled the war in the 1970's found refuge in what is

now the university hostel premises. Ever since, students of the University of Calabar are called Malabites (male) and Malabresses (female). Like in every part of the town, churches can be found on the university campus as well and they play an important role in the bonding of students. Student congregations of the Liberty Gospel Church and Deeper Life Ministries are present as well as several other smaller churches. The Presbyterian church is currently building a new church, which is going to be the biggest church on campus and is weekly visited by both students, staff and people outside the university. All these churches form a bridge between people of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds that study or lecture at the university of Calabar. Diversity is then again seemingly neutralized through a shared Christian faith. There's also one mosque on the university premises for the Islamic students and staff, who are, of course, not bonded by the Christian faith. This illustrates that the described unity is more a symbolic reality.

Although the center of the town, with entertainment and education districts, is situated in Calabar Municipality, the commercial heart of Calabar is definitely found in Calabar South. Watt Market is the biggest market of Calabar and one can find everything imaginable here in remarkable order. Inside the market there's a separate space for meat, fish and vegetables and a special lawn for wrappers and curtains. Household goods, like fridges and gas cookers, are found in a specific street, while another street is devoted to the sale of plastic furniture. Bedwell Street, just out of Watt Market, is home to car mechanics and shops selling spare parts for vehicles. One can bring one's car to this place and have it completely fixed and refurbished within hours, which leaves the street usually extremely crowded and chaotic. In another part of the market there can be found many shops selling cosmetic goods, jewelry and hair accessories. This is also the area where women can have their hair and nails done, either on the street or in small salons in the large concrete building inside the market. It is used for the sale of cheap clothing and shoes, which can easily be recognized by the large piles of clothes and footwear on the streets, salesmen shouting prices and a big crowd of women. Just outside of Watt Market towards the river banks one finds the remains of Old Calabar. Poorly maintained colonial buildings are occupied by large families and old but renovated churches, like the first Presbyterian church of the town and the biggest Catholic church, can be found here as well. A walk up the hill will bring one to the grave of Mary Slessor, while downhill on the river banks the boats to Akwa Ibom State depart.

Calabar South is also marked by main streets like Goldie and Mount Zion, the names of both being clues of the long Christian tradition in town. Hugh Goldie was one of the first missionaries in town, while Mount Zion is named after the hill just outside the biblical city of Jerusalem. Likewise are many other streets in this part of town referring this long tradition, like Mary Slessor Avenue. On the junction between the Goldie and Mount Zion, a small market can be

Calabar Municipality and Calabar South are geographically divided by Mary Slessor Avenue, but apart from this division people would generally comment on the social differences. Many would attribute violence, riots and other social turmoil to Calabar South, while they would say 'those things' could not happen in Calabar Municipality. Entering the streets of the latter in the night is believed to be less of a risk than doing the same in Calabar South, as rioters and robbers would dwell in that part of town. During the six months of fieldwork I rarely noticed these social divisions of the town as both areas seemed stable and there were no reports on any violence. The town was not influenced by turmoil in either of the LGA's. It was only on the 19th of January 2011 that Calabar was shocked by the riots at Etim Edem, a motor park on the busy Watt Market and thus on the border of the two local governments, that killed four. The decision of the Calabar South local government to forcefully move all transportation to Etim Edem park caused the clash between bus drivers and the police.⁴² The measurement of one local government area then influenced both, as police and military kept order in a large circle around Watt Market, prohibiting commercial cars to drop and pick up people over a wide distance for weeks.

The only exception to the division of groups over town, who are yet unified through Christianity is Bogobiri. This part of town is inhabited by the Hausa community. The big yellow mosque, one of the four in town, marks the center of this neighborhood and gives away that most of the people here are Muslims. Bogobiri is known for its Hausa money traders with their long white gowns, its large daily fruit market and the well appreciated preparation of *suya*, a popular form of street food made of grilled meat and hot spices for which people all over town come to this neighborhood. During my fieldwork, the area was going through a period of occasional violence, notably in the form of shootings and armed robberies in the night. This had nothing to do with the conflict between Muslims and Christians as it is known in the north of Nigeria. Generally the large Christian majority of people in town gets along well with this Muslim society. After the presidential elections of 16 April 2011 in which a General Buhari from the north lost from his southern opponent Goodluck Jonathan, unrest and violence took over many parts of Nigeria's north and Hausa communities in the rest of the country. To secure the safety of the people of Bogobiri, policemen and an armored tank were stationed in the area, but no violence took place⁴³. Hausa's from nearby states have, over the years, come to Calabar for solace⁴⁴, but it is remarkable to notice that they still live in a separate part of town, even though it is relatively central. This marks yet again the divisions within Calabar society.

⁴² Police, drivers clash claims 4 in Calabar, 20 January 2011

(http://www.leadershipnigeria.com/ns/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23581:-edem-edem-calabar&catid=16:headline-news&Itemid=143, 17 April 2011)

⁴³Police deploy officers to Calabar Hausa community, 19 April 2011

(<http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Home/5690913-146/story.csp>, 25 April 2011)

⁴⁴Police deploy officers to Calabar Hausa community, 19 April 2011

(<http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Home/5690913-146/story.csp>, 25 April 2011)

As becomes clear the melting pot of people of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds that Calabar is, is actually highly divided. This disunity is not only visible through the lay-out of town, in which you can find certain facilities and products in specific parts of town, but it also becomes clear from the division of groups of people within the town's borders. First of all, there's a division in class and socio-economic background. The upper classes live in housing estates, like Satellite Town and State Housing in well protected compounds, but these are closely connected to nearby areas in which the less privileged and lower classes live. Likewise have different ethnic groups claimed their own space within Calabar society, like the Yakurr and the Hausa. Those in the upper classes have to protect themselves and their property with high fences and dogs in order to keep kidnappers and robbers out, while those in the lower classes are of less risk when it comes to falling victim of these crimes. But so do the Hausa have their own position, as they are a vulnerable group in town with regard to the religious conflicts in the North that play an important role on the national level. In this way, all the groups occupying the different areas of Calabar discussed in this chapter, have their own risk position, i.e. are vulnerable for different societal risks. To minimize risk and danger and to ensure certainty in their lives, people resort to various means and discourse (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 15). Witchcraft and other forms of spiritual insecurity, like ritual killings and traditional healing, are the means of dealing with the uncertainty that stems from these group divisions and the related risk positions in Calabar society. Interestingly, the Christian faith, and mainly the Pentecostal churches, that unites the different groups in Calabar is also benefiting from the uncertainty within society and makes use of the witchcraft discourse for their own prosperity (see chapter 5).

2.2.4. Conclusion

Current-day Calabar is known for its women and food and its rapid modernization schemes, but it is also known as a Christian center in which people from all backgrounds can peacefully live together. In this paragraph I have tried to demonstrate that the tensions that arise from the image of Calabar women, the establishment of development projects, the commercialization of traditions and the division of different groups of people in town have all had their influence on the levels of uncertainty that are felt among the people of Calabar. Social relationships have changed, increasing levels of mistrust and fear within society. Due to these changes and divisions, there's no social safety net in order to bear social and individual risks and to try to alleviate them, witchcraft has become a local discourse that people use to explain and make sense of uncertainties in their lives. By looking at risks and uncertainty as occurrences that have a transcendental cause, people can 'resort to different pragmatic strategies to minimize the adverse effects as well as prevent its future occurrence' (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 14).

Pentecostalism, which has had a major influence on Christian life in Calabar, plays an important role in the minimization and prevention of these malevolent forces. I will return to this theme in chapter 4.

3. Fearing Misfortune: Uncertainty and Spiritual Insecurity

'No wizard is going to destroy this compound. Whoever you are attacking. Your power is powerless. Your power is powerless. Your power is inferior. Your power is superficial. Your power is fake. Every possible darkness that is moving against us. Every spiritual power attacking us now, oh Lord, I begin to destroy them. So many people in the market they are wicked. Destroy them, in the mighty name of Jesus. I'm going to send Holy Ghost arrow upon them. No evil can open the door. We are untouchable. No accidents, no deaths, no armed robbers, no kidnappers. My Father Lord, my brother's school is beginning, everybody's school are going to begin. Father, punish kidnappers, oh God, and tell them to pray for their sins. Father, you are able to cross their legs, cripple them and destroy them. Nobody in this compound shall be kidnapped. May they not kidnap anybody. Be they fair, be they black, be they white. They shall not be kidnapped. In the mighty name of Jesus.'

It was the 8th of September 2010 when I woke up to this family prayer of the Chukwuebuka family, led by their youngest daughter Chika. I had been living on their family compound for little over a week and was confronted for the first time with a loud morning prayer. Wednesday mornings usually started for this family at around 5 a.m. with these family prayers, that were led by one of the family members and that were accompanied by loud singing, confirming (saying amen) and speaking in tongues of the others. The prayers were usually very similar, focusing on destructive powers. Witches and wizards, but also kidnappers and armed robbers were attacked in their prayer points as they would usually be regarded as the source of all misfortune in the family's life. From this short fragment of a long morning prayer, one can observe that spiritual powers are to be found everywhere around the family; in the market, in the schools and in the compound. People's daily lives are thus under constant threat of malevolent forces, both spiritual as well as physical, and there are different levels of fear of the misfortune that these life's uncertainties of life can bring them. In this chapter I argue that the misfortunes that are feared by many in Calabar society can be categorized more generally in economic, political and social uncertainty. These uncertainties ultimately instigate what Mbembe and Roitman call 'the crisis' or the 'atmosphere of insecurity and tension' in society.

'... acute economic depression, the chain of upheavals and tribulations, instabilities, fluctuations and ruptures of all sorts [...] make up the fundamental experiences of African societies over the

last several years. [...] this age [...] is what Africans and others have called 'the crisis' (Mbembe and Roitman, 2002: 100)

The response to this state of 'crisis' that comes forth from lived uncertainties in daily lives of the people is often of a violent nature: anger, verbal abuse and physical violence (Mbembe and Roitman, 2005: 125). The socioeconomic and political tensions in Calabar, the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole, instigate different forms of physical violence in society, of which armed robberies and kidnappings are often cited examples. This feared violence then in itself becomes another major part of the atmosphere of insecurity in town, leaving society in a constant state of tension, based on fear of the current climate of instability and insecurity in the country. The discourse of witchcraft thrives on this fear (Ter Haar, 2007: 18), since to explain unfortunate events and to minimise uncertainty, agency is assigned to malevolent spirits - something which was already observed by Evans-Pritchard in his understanding of the Azande oracles (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 15). It is thus by its very nature that the discourse of malevolent spirits is related to uncertainty (Geschiere, 1997: 23).

The malevolent spirits can be attacked by forms of ritual or prayer, which is heavily promoted by the new Pentecostal churches in town. Reducing uncertainty in one's life has so become a matter of spiritual intervention rather than human political intervention, as the last has turned out to be unsuccessful so far in eliminating misfortune in society. Spiritual solutions and religious solace are searched for to relieve the tension of the uncertainties and the related fear in society. The response to the 'crisis' is thus not only of a physically violent nature, as Roitman and Mbembe argue, but more so of a spiritually violent nature, by assigning agency to malevolent spirits and spiritually attacking them, through prayers and rituals. Therefore I argue that 'crisis' in Calabar, due to economic, political and social uncertainties in society are closely related to the high level of spiritual insecurity in town.

In this chapter, I will further expand on the different forms of uncertainty that form the basis of the state of 'crisis' and that are interconnected with the high levels of spiritual insecurity in Calabar, by introducing the lives of the different people who live on the Chukwuebuka family compound. Their daily struggles, fears, hopes and wishes give a clear example of uncertainty within Calabar society in general and the ways in which people deal with these daily realities. Living with these families on one compound gave me the opportunity to understand better their stance towards life and spiritual insecurity than any formal interview I had with people in town. The data in this chapter therefore are mainly based on participant observation and informal discussions I had with the different members on the compound. Their daily lives will illustrate the economic, political and social uncertainties that are part of society and that form a breeding ground for spiritual insecurity and the discourse of witchcraft in Calabar. Although the different

uncertainties are discussed separately in the different paragraphs, it should be noted that they're highly interlinked and cannot be regarded separate actors within the field of spiritual insecurity. It is the dynamics and interrelations of the different uncertainties that I discuss in this chapter that contribute to what Roitman and Mbembe call 'the crisis'.

3.1. The Chukwuebuka compound

The Chukwuebuka family (Igbo) from Imo State has been living in one of Calabar's estates for about 8 years. They bought a plot of land when it was still affordable and gradually started building their house, still working on it today. Three smaller houses on the family compound are sublet, of which two are permanently occupied. The Chukwuebuka family exists of Victor and his wife Rose, 5 daughters and a son. Rose is the financial head of the family. The profit she makes with her shop on Watt Market is much higher than the profit her husband makes with a similar shop on the same market. She travels to Aba, Onitsha and Lagos regularly to buy new products for both her and her husband's boutique. Victor divides his time between his shop and his activities as a landlord. His youngest daughter Chika (19) often sells in her father's shop, like she does in her mother's, when she's not at home doing chores in the house. She has the ambition to study in the United States and spends almost all of her spare time on studying for an aptitude test to get into an American university. In the years before she failed entering the University of Calabar and Imo State University. Her sisters, Obinna (23), Ogonna (23) and Nkiruka (21), have succeeded in enrolling in the University of Calabar, where they study accounting and nursing. They spend most of their time in their respective faculties, but they also help their parents out on the market after school. Ikenna (8) is much younger than his sisters and a blessing for his father, as he's the only son of the family. He's enrolled in a primary school in the neighborhood. Even at a young age, Ikenna is very active in a Pentecostal church in Calabar South. He, his mother, Obinna, Ogonna and Chika are all attending services in this church almost daily. The three girls are choir members and have rehearsals twice a week, while every Thursday they all spend their night in church during 'tarry night'. This is a night service in which members of the church come together to praise and worship God, and to be witnesses of miracles and deliverances. Usually these nights start in the evening (8 pm) and end by the break of dawn. Nkiruka does not attend the same church as her mother and sisters, as she was told by the pastor of the church that she did not dress appropriately, but instead goes to a nearby Pentecostal church. Victor is the only member of the family who has remained a Catholic and so

he never accompanies his wife and children to their churches. Every Sunday morning he leaves for a Catholic mass by himself.

Next to the Chukwuebuka's lives the Bassey family. This young family exists of Mark, his wife Patience and their 3-year old son Bright. Mark and Patience married in October 2010 during a traditional wedding ceremony in Ikom. A *white wedding* in church was not allowed, as Patience was pregnant with their second child. Mark is a politician in a local government area in the northern part of Cross River State, but they nevertheless reside in Calabar, where Patience had been enrolled in University before she got pregnant unexpectedly. Mark spends most of his time in the local government area he works and is thus barely at home, which leaves his wife with a lot of work and stress, especially during her pregnancy. To help her out in the house, her cousin Grace is living in their house with them. Grace helps Patience daily with cooking and cleaning, after she returns from Secondary School.

Onyii from Imo State lives in one of the compound's houses by himself. He's in his mid-thirties and finishing his studies in gynecology. Even though he's not yet allowed to practice medicine, people generally refer to him as 'doctor', holding him in high esteem. Nkiruka Chukwuebuka is often taking care of his cooking and cleaning, as Onyii is usually too busy to do it himself. Being in his mid-thirties, he claims to be ready for marriage and he's looking for the right girl. Like most others on the compound, Onyii attends a Pentecostal church in town, but he only attends service once a week.

The different life phases the members of the compound are in and the interpretations of their lives exemplify the social dynamics in Calabar and, therefore, I have chosen my experience on the compound as the main guide through this chapter. Examples from lives and experiences outside the compound can also be found in this chapter.

3.2. Political uncertainty

Political uncertainty comes in many forms in Nigeria. First and foremost one notices that there is a lot of mistrust among her citizens towards the national and regional governments. Many of the discussions I had with students and other youth, either in Calabar or in other parts of the country, were about corruption and bad leadership. Unemployment, poverty, violence and environmental hazards are all attributed by them to the self-enriching nature of many of Nigeria's former and current leaders who use the large sums of money they earn with their jobs for a luxurious life, while they leave the country in a state of poverty and chaos. No wonder the General Elections of 2011 were such an important issue for the country, especially in the south,

where presidential election candidate Goodluck Jonathan was regarded the hope of the nation. Being a man from the Niger Delta himself, they saw him as the one that would start dividing the country's resources equally and bring the money from oil production back to the region where it is from. According to them, a presidency of Goodluck Jonathan would satisfy the people of the south and bring an end to the longstanding conflict in the Niger Delta, which would eventually lead to higher levels of human security in this part of the country.

But for decennia the people of Calabar have had to live with political insecurity in their region. The uncertainties that come forth from politically driven issues are many. Visible things like a lack of electricity and infrastructure, due to corrupt contracts, are a daily reality for people all over the country. Other political uncertainties are less visible, but rather need to be sensed while in the field. In the short fieldwork period of six months I have only started to grasp some of these sentiments.. I would like to illustrate two cases of political uncertainty that I found striking during my fieldwork and that I believe have direct effect on both human as well as spiritual insecurity in town.

3.2.1. Ethnic consciousness

Chika (19) graduated from Secondary School in 2009. Three JAMB tests⁴⁷ later she was still doing chores in her parents' house on a daily basis, as she failed to get admission at both the University of Calabar as well as Imo State University. She decided not to wait for the next JAMB in the summer of 2011, rather she was planning on studying in the United States. Frustrated by the system in Nigeria, she explained to me that she had not gotten admission to the University of Calabar twice, due to the fact that a number of places in the course she applied for was given to students born in Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Benue states only. According to her, it was because some students from these states with lower scores on their JAMB exams were admitted, that she was still at home doing housework. Rather she would go to the US, where she believed there are more opportunities, jobs and higher incomes for a better future.

Even though I've not seen her JAMB results myself and the story Chika told me might be wishful thinking of her side, rather than actual truth, it is a fact that a large part of the available places for first year students are meant for students from inside the state or nearby states. While admitting students for the department of Economics, one lecturer from Akwa Ibom expressed his frustration over this system when he was to decline students with excellent JAMB scores over those from the region. The case of Chika and her struggle for admission is of course individual and her sisters have proved that it is possible to enroll in a program of the University of Calabar, even if you were born in another state. But the underlying problem and the frustrations of the admission process is illustrating a much deeper layer of political uncertainty

⁴⁷ A Nigerian aptitude test to get into University

in society. The fact that admission for universities is partly based on state of birth has its origin in the nation's federalism and the omnipresent ethnic consciousness in Nigeria, that forms the basis of a large part of political violence and uncertainty.

'Ethnic consciousness and its structural externalities of chauvinism and ethnocentrism, stereotyping and politicization, discrimination and recrimination, offence and defense, and attack and reprisal, are believed to be deeply entrenched in Nigeria. They also form a crucial part of the worldview and existential realities of most individuals and groups.' (Omeje, 2007: 25)

The violence that this ethnic consciousness brings is not always physical, although occurrences of violent behavior towards different ethnic groups have marked the nation, giving it a bad reputation to the outside world. Most ethnic violence is verbal and often comes in the form of collective stereotyping and discrimination. We can therefore label this violence 'social violence' as by effect it is destroying autonomous judgement and decision-making of individuals in society (Bouju and de Bruijn, 2007). The system of admission at the university, which has left Chika unable to enroll in the last years, is one of the visible forms of discrimination in Calabar. Other forms are less visible, as discrimination through stereotyping is often expressed in rumor and gossip. The Ibibio, from neighboring Akwa Ibom state, make up a large part of the Calabar population and they've become 'the butt of ridicule and stereotypes including the blame of the insanitary conditions of Calabar' (Hackett, 1989, in Ukiwo, 2007: 51). A female tailor, who was born and raised in Calabar, explained how she was frustrated by Akwa Ibom women that would call themselves 'Calabar women' after the good name of the women of town, but how they would abuse this name by dressing loosely and not knowing how to treat guests the way a lady from Calabar would. Likewise were the Igbo, who have dominated Calabar for a long time, stereotypically called dishonest, especially when it came to money and business. One friend from Northern Cross River portrayed this once by saying: 'An Igbo would go as far as selling his own mother's head to get money'.

Social violence in the form of stereotypical thinking and discrimination does not affect Calabar society visibly, but as the town is a melting pot of different ethnicities it does have its effect on societal relations. The mutual mistrust this social violence brings is weighing heavily on Calabar society, as friendships and other relationships, even family bonds, are constantly evaluated. The effects of this mistrust on society are not only material, but also spiritual. One of the ways to make sense of the mistrustful relationships in Calabar society is by explaining it through witchcraft or other forms of malevolent spiritualism. Material fears related to this social violence, like the fear of the fraudulent reputation of some ethnic groups, are being attributed to the agency of malevolent spirits in order to be able to control and minimize the levels of

uncertainty these fears bring to society, by means of ritual or prayer (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 24, Gifford, 2004: 109). In the case that someone is not able to perpetrate the fraudsters or robbers who attacked them physically or to control malice from other ethnic groups, they can attack the malevolent spiritual force that leads these people to do these things in the physical world, to thus find some way of minimizing their risks and uncertainty.

3.2.2. Political violence: kidnappings

Bright was three years old and like many children of that age, he was not allowed to play outside without the supervision of his parents. But like any other child Bright every now and then refused to listen to his parents and left the compound without his mother Patience noticing. He would play around the borehole opposite the compound and interact with the children next door, who were usually playing soccer after school. It never took long before Patience noticed her son missing and she was always extremely worried in the few seconds it took her to find the boy. She was not afraid her son would get lost or hurt in playing, but rather she feared Bright to get abducted by malicious people. 'My husband is a politician,' she told me once after she had been yelling at her son for going outside the compound, 'I'm afraid they will kidnap Bright'. As I noted earlier, Patience's husband was a political figure in one of the local government areas in the northern part of Cross River state. He was hardly ever with his family, as his work requested him to be present in the local government area, especially during the 2011 elections campaigning period. Patience was left alone in the house, with their three year old son and a pregnancy. Without the protection of her husband she felt extremely vulnerable for political repercussions. 'Some people are not happy with what my husband is doing, so we have to be very careful,' she told me during an informal interview I had with her at the end of January 2011. It is true that politicians and their family members have long been the target of kidnappers in Nigeria from whom they generate large sums of ransom money. In neighboring Akwa Ibom and Abia states, several politicians and other important public figures and their family members were kidnapped during my fieldwork period. Even though her husband was not an important political figure yet, Patience always feared that her husband's work would attract violence towards their family. She even questioned her pregnancy, as she was afraid that she would force her child to live a life of constant threat.

Patience was fearing something that might never occur, but this does not mean that the threat she feared was not real. Kidnappings are a daily reality in the Niger Delta, or at least they were before the amnesty of 2009. But still rebels and militants take hostage people every now and then, either public figures or other innocent civilians. In September 2010, fifteen young children in a school bus were abducted in Aba, to be released a week later after intervention of the state government. This kidnapping attracted a lot of attention across the country and

renewed the fear of abductions in town even though the political atmosphere in Calabar does not enforce physical violence upon society. Kidnapping is one of the most feared consequences of political uncertainty in the area, not only by those in public positions but also by the people in general. There's a high level of consciousness of possible kidnappings and the possibility is kept in mind especially when someone is traveling outside the state into the states where the numbers of abductions are much higher than in Cross River.

3.3. Economic uncertainty

A much heard response in Nigeria to 'how far?', which is the Pidgin way of asking how someone is doing, was 'I just dey', which I would translate as being fine in a slightly pessimistic manner, especially since it would often be accompanied by a sad face or a clear sigh. In many conversations with friends, this answer would be followed by a complaint of lack of money. As a European researcher who's thought to be 'rich', I might of course attract these kinds of responses, but in general I believe many people in Calabar are facing insufficient means to live the modern life their environment offers them. Prices of primary goods are high, especially around Christmas, and those from the lower classes cannot afford proper meals. Likewise, they and the society's middle class, cannot afford the modernities around them. External beauty, clothing and electronic equipment like televisions, dvd players and computers are increasingly important status symbols within society, but they cannot be afforded by many. The recently accomplished urban development projects of the state, like Tinapa or the Marina Resort, are for those in the upper classes only. The economic inequalities in Calabar society have caused different forms of uncertainty for different classes. Their positions within society make each of the classes vulnerable for economic uncertainty, albeit in completely opposing ways. In the next two sections I illustrate the economic uncertainty of both those in the lower classes, that have little or less money on their disposal⁴⁸, as well as the opposite side of economic uncertainty, which affects those that can reasonably afford modern life in Calabar. One of the consequences of economic uncertainty in society is the context it provides for discourse on witchcraft and other spiritual malevolence. As people in Calabar have 'the tendency to not blame one's own

⁴⁸ Due to the fact that I had to live with a middle class family for security reasons (as those in the lower classes wouldn't usually have the necessary compound protection), I haven't been able to participate on a daily basis in the lives of those in the lower classes in Calabar. In this chapter I will therefore focus on a young woman in a middle class family, who has 'less' money on her disposal to enjoy the modern life she wants to live. Although not being able to speak about the lower class of Calabar society, that doesn't even have the means to purchase primary needs, might be regarded a consequence of a flaw in my methodology, I do believe that the story of youth of middle class families also illustrates an important economic aspect of uncertainty which influences the youth of society, that make up a large part of Calabar's population.

shortcomings but to shift the responsibility to external agents' (Offiong, 1983: 80), it can be well argued that people's own failure of achieving that what they aspire, whether it is due to the political situation in the country or not is instigating higher levels of spiritual insecurity in society.

3.3.1. *'Looking for money'*

Nkiruka was spending hours in front of my window every morning before she would go to school. She was not always talking with me, neither was she monitoring my movements. Sometimes she would ask me for mascara or my hair brush. The window of my small house was a mirror on the outside and Nkiruka was inspecting herself in that mirror thoroughly before she would enter the streets. She would try on different dresses, change the style of her hair and look for the right accessories. The blue belt around her waist would only be worn if she had blue sandals, blue earrings, blue bracelets and something blue to cover her hair to match. Like many young women in Calabar Nkiruka was very concerned about her appearance and she wanted to look as modern as possible. Preferably she would spend her afternoons on the market, looking for the right accessories to match her newly bought skirt or the dress that was made by her designer tailor. Every three months she would relax her hair and buy a new weave-on⁴⁹. At all times, Nkiruka's look was perfectly styled. It was all she would spend money on: appearance. I often wondered how she had been able to buy all the shoes and clothes she wore and how she afforded the matching accessories in all colors, considering she was a student in the university and her mother would not even give her money for transportation or food. When she asked me to lend her 6000 naira so she could buy herself a new mobile phone, I asked her how she would ever pay me back. 'I will look for money,' she answered.

I had often heard students and friends say they would 'look for money' and always found it fascinating. With the high unemployment figures in Nigeria, especially among the youth, almost none of them had a job. Nevertheless, they would proudly show me their Blackberry or designer outfits. Ubong, a 32-year old MSc student at the University of Calabar, who was marrying in December was 'looking for money' ever since my arrival in Calabar and finally was capable of organizing a large and expensive wedding ceremony four months later without having a job and without much support from his parents. When I would ask him where he was looking for money, he would not really answer me. 'Here and there' was all I got as a reply. I later found out that Ubong took up little roofing projects in both Cross River as well as Akwa Ibom state, with which he could pay for part of the wedding. The other modes of income were never

⁴⁹ A hair piece that is woven into a woman's own hair.

revealed to me, but by following Nkiruka I got to understand better where money can be 'looked for'.

Nkiruka's spending was far above her financial means. As a student without any job, she was still able to afford her dressings, hair and make-up. Because I was living with her on a compound, I found out that 'looking for money' entailed two ways of getting financial means. First, by 'hustling', i.e. using specific skills to earn money or selling clothes above market prices and secondly, by means of borrowing. Nkiruka often 'hustled' after school. As she was good at weaving and braiding women's hair, she was often asked by friends and acquaintances to do their hair. Sometimes these women would come to the Chukwuebuka compound to have their hair done, but mostly Nkiruka would go to their houses after school, coming back home late at night. Apart from doing women's hair, she would buy cheap, but modern clothing from the market. When going through large piles of clothes, she would always think of specific persons to buy for, to which she could hopefully sell the items for a little more than the price she bought it for. Like with the hairdressing, Nkiruka would also earn a little bit of money with this selling of clothes. But the income she generated from this 'hustling' would sometimes be little to none when for example no one wanted to have her hair done. She would therefore also borrow money from friends that she promised to pay back as soon as she could get some money from the hustling again.

The story of Nkiruka is an anecdote that describes a general economic issue in society, both among those in the lower classes as well as those in the middle classes, and especially the youth. Although Nkiruka would often succeed in finding the money to live her life the way she wanted it, many people in Calabar face the daily struggle for economic prosperity and ultimately fail. The high unemployment rate in the country leaves many jobless and without an income. They have not only their luxurious lifestyle to care for, but more importantly, they have to feed their families. The appeal of modern commodities, for which many aspire, are expensive and unattainable for most. Students want to dress fashionably to fit in youth culture and families of all classes wish for the available electronic devices that give them status. But all that town has to offer them cannot be afforded. Offiong describes this form of economic uncertainty as follows:

'There is great disparity between the aspirations of the people and their real chances of success, and this has led to a high rate of failure' (Offiong, 1983: 80)

As seen before, this failure or misfortune is often attributed to malevolent spirits. The inability of people to achieve their economic goals, either in finding employment or in having sufficient means, can be explained by witchcraft discourse. It is for example said that someone can spiritually 'sit on your money', which means that a spirit is holding back that what is meant for

you. This could be a malicious spirit of a relative that does not want you to prosper. In this sense, witchcraft discourse does indeed breed on the uncertainties of life that come with modernity and human insecurity is then indeed related to spiritual insecurity in society. This is especially visible in a town in which inequalities have recently grown due to the rapid modernization of the state. To take part in the new life Calabar has to offer, one has to have sufficient financial means, either by employment or by 'hustling', but it is also believed that people use spiritual powers to enrich themselves or to keep others from prospering. But physical attacks are feared as much by those who do prosper in society, even though these attacks themselves are again explained by means of spiritual malevolence.

3.3.2. Living behind walls and barbed wire

The Chukwuebuka's were a middle class family in Calabar. They could live a relatively comfortable life, with all the primary necessities in their financial reach. The family ate two to three proper meals a day, they were capable of sending all their children to school and both Rose and Victor had a simple car at their disposal. Rose's shop generated the major part of the family's income, while the rent of the sublet houses on the compound and the profit of Victor's shop contributed smaller amounts to that income. The family lived in an estate that is full of villas of the elite. Professors, doctors, dentists and businessmen were their neighbors, but there were also some other family compounds around of people selling on the market, like Rose and Victor.

To enter the family compound, one first had to pass a high wall with barbed wire on top. The iron gate that formed the entrance to the compound was double locked in the night and could only be opened from the inside. Each of the houses on the compound was separately protected by an individual gate, which in most cases was double locked with padlocks. Likewise the windows had iron bars. Finally, an often double locked front door needed to be opened in order for anyone to enter one of the houses on the compound. The protection of the Chukwuebuka family compound was nothing compared to the security measurements of their neighbors. Opposite the street, an academic couple was living in a large villa that was protected by a wall and a security guard that lived in a small house on the compound. A little further down the road lived a psychologist with her husband and children. Their house and property were protected by walls and two security dogs.

These very protected houses are nothing special to this neighborhood or to Calabar. Almost all the houses and compounds in Nigeria are externally protected in one way or the other. Most compounds are protected by high walls, which have either barbed wire or pieces of glass on top of them and some compounds or villas of the upper classes are additionally protected by security guards or guard dogs. Those in the lower classes have their houses protected by an iron gate and an extra padlock. I've barely seen houses that did not have

external security in one way or another. In a country like Nigeria, that has high crime rates and where there's much insecurity, inhabitants are forced to take these measurements in order to protect their houses from (armed) robbers. So far national and regional governments have not been able to address this security situation in the country to full extent and these measurements are therefore an absolute necessity in order to keep one's property secured.

Being a middle class family made the Chukwuebuka's more financially secure than many of the other people in Calabar. But those that have more are also of higher risk when it comes to (armed) robberies and other forms of stealing and fraud, since there is more to gain from stealing from those in the middle and upper classes. The Chukwuebuka's were very much aware of this risk position they were in and therefore closed their compound gate at around 7.30 pm. They explained to me that they were afraid of 'an army of armed robbers' that could enter their compound in the night and were not afraid to kill in order to get what they wanted. On Sunday mornings Nkiruka would return to the compound two to three times during mass of the nearby church to check their house, since she was afraid that robbers would enter their compound when everyone was in church.

The story of the Chukwuebuka's is unique, but helps to illustrate the fear of many people in society that have the means to live a relatively comfortable life. It is a daily uncertainty whether your property and prosperity will be threatened by malicious people. The security measurements that are being taken all over the country show the material ways in which people try to protect themselves from misfortunate events that threaten their wealth. But the uncertainty of the threats in the physical world are in this case also attributed to powers in the spiritual realm. Offiong argues that 'witchcraft is feared by those who fail but even more so by the successful' (Offiong, 1983: 80). Witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence are said to be used by people that are envious of other people's richness or success, and it often comes from someone closely related. Envy and malice are two keywords in the understanding of witchcraft discourse in Calabar, as it is often for these two reasons that people feel they've been attacked by malevolent spirits. In the context of an urban setting, people often point at their respective villages as the source of the spiritual malevolence and consequential misfortune in their lives. Those relatives that live in the rural areas do not enjoy the modern life and success they can enjoy in the urban environment Calabar is. Offiong found that many of his respondents in the urban areas of Nigeria's south-south, including those in Calabar, were not eager to visit their villages regularly, because they were afraid to be bewitched by envious relatives at home (Offiong, 1983: 81). Those in the middle and upper classes of Calabar society, that are financially secure are thus not only at higher risk of physical violence, but also of spiritual violence.

3.4. Social uncertainty

A less obvious uncertainty, but nevertheless omnipresent in Calabar society, is of a social nature. This has little to do with physical violence, which is the misfortune feared with regard to some forms of political and economic uncertainty, i.e. kidnappings and armed robberies due to political and economic inequality. Social uncertainty rather entails the fear of the misfortune that comes forth out of social interaction and relationships and is not of a physical, but of an emotional kind. The fear of meeting up with social expectations is not visible, but through conversations with people in Calabar, I got an idea of what many people feared. Although social uncertainty affects both men and women, I argue that it is primarily the female inhabitants of Calabar that suffer under the social pressure to meet up with life's expectations. Reynolds Whyte calls this form of gender specific uncertainty 'failure of gender', which includes problems of marriage, reproduction and sexuality (Reynolds Whyte, 1997: 17). But although I agree with her that reproductive problems are almost exclusively concerning the lives of women and are therefore gender specific, I believe that issues of marriage and sexuality in Calabar are also faced by the young men in society. This paragraph will illustrate some of the social issues that inflict higher levels of spiritual insecurity in Calabar society. As social uncertainty is about interpersonal relationships, which are in themselves the basis for witchcraft (Offiong, 1983; Ter Haar, 2007), it is not surprising that spiritual insecurity is much concerned with this form of uncertainty. Marriage and reproduction are the two forms I will briefly describe in this paragraph, because these are phases in people's life that bring about fears of misfortunate events, like miscarriage, divorce and adultery. In chapter 5, when speaking about the role of Pentecostal churches, I will elaborate more on the issue of social uncertainty, as it is a main theme in their discourse on witchcraft.

3.4.1. *Ready for marriage*

One evening in December 2010, Onyii was sitting at the borehole opposite the compound. He held his head in his hands and looked miserable. I asked him what was going on, as I'd never seen him like this before. 'I'm getting old', was his answer and he elaborated on the hardships of his medical studies and the little spare time he had. Besides that, he complained that he could not spend as much time as he wanted on writing papers and reports because he also needed to look for a wife. 'At my age, a man is supposed to get married', he said, explaining that he felt the pressure from his relatives and friends. Onyii was not in a relationship yet and his busy schedule left him with little time to find a proper girl to marry and besides that, he did not know where to find her. 'May God help me', he ended his complaint.

His neighbor Nkiruka was also ready for marriage. Like most girls her age she was interested in male attention and most of our conversations were on love and sexuality. Nkiruka found that at 21 she should soon marry the right man and her prayers were therefore always concerning marriage. Her elder sister was married at the age of 23, which according to her was the right age to tie the knot. On the occasional arguments about this topic on the compound, Nkiruka would always tell her skeptical sisters and curious neighbor Patience that they should expect an invitation for her wedding in 2011, even though she was not in any relationship yet. Her two elder sisters were less occupied with finding the right man, as they had given their life to Christ and were rest assured that he would grant them a good husband, without them having to look for him. When Nkiruka left the compound they often gossiped about her dressing too loosely and being too occupied with finding herself a man. One of the reasons Nkiruka left the church her mother and siblings attended, was that she was told by the pastor that she was too concerned about her appearance. Her dressing and the amount of accessories she wore, were thought to be inappropriate. She was supposed to dress modest, like her sisters, but in her search for the right man Nkiruka refused to look 'unattractive'. Instead, she became a member of the Pentecostal church next to the family's compound. In this church, many young men and women were dressed quite modern and had many accessories. The importance of marriage among youngsters became clear to me when I joined Nkiruka in a conference for married and single youth of that same church.

The conference already commenced when I arrived in the large hall in the center of Calabar. When Nkiruka invited me I had thought it would be a small gathering, but instead, hundreds of young men and women were carefully listening to the first speech of the church's female pastor. After paying a small entrance fee of 200 naira, a small book was given to me, as well as several leaflets on which I could find information on how to find the right partner. Additionally I found some paper and a pen on my chair, on which I could write any question concerning relationships and marriage. The questions would later be answered by one of the female pastors. After several general speeches on married life, the audience was divided in three groups: one group of married youth, one group of engaged youth and a large group of singles.

In this workshop for singles, the audience was informed about several issues, which were illustrated by biblical texts. Topics like homosexuality and premarital sex were briefly discussed, as the speakers assumed their audience to know that this was not in line with God's will. After that, a long discussion followed on how to choose the right partner. It was said that first and foremost, the right partner should be a righteous Christian. Other advices were also provided. For example, men were advised to choose a partner who is not hot-tempered and knows how to serve a man. Women were told to be subservient to their men and not to chase men who are financially endowed: 'Marriage is not about money'. Likewise were both men and

women given the advice not to look for beauty, but for character, as 'beauty deceives and vanishes'.

From the stories of Onyii and Nkiruka, the conference I attended and all the conversations I had with friends and students about love and marriage, it became clear that the search for the right partner is occupying the minds of many young people. The social pressure to marry early and to be and to find the perfect partner is felt by many. No marriage means failure, which equals misfortune. The fear of not being able to find the right partner is a form of social uncertainty, which is especially noticeable through the discourse of Pentecostal churches. I will elaborate on this in chapter 4, in which will become clear that this importance of marriage and the search for the right partner, is one of the main topics within Pentecostal discourse on witchcraft and spiritual malevolence. Spiritual insecurity in Calabar society is very much breeding on this the social uncertainty surrounding marriage, as it can again be malicious spirits that keep people from their destiny to marry or to be fortunate within marriage.

3.4.2. Reproduction

On the 'Married and Single' conference I attended with Nkiruka the evening was ended with a ritual for women only. All women in the audience who wanted to have the pastors pray for fertility and safe pregnancies should come forward. Both pregnant women and single girls went up to the stage where the attending pastors laid their hands on the women's bellies. All the other women in the room were asked to put their hands on their left breasts and on their wombs. In the fifteen minutes that followed the pastors were praying for fertility for all women in the room, and especially for those on stage that were ready to have children. They also prayed for safe pregnancies and deliveries for the women that were already pregnant.

Having children is, like getting married, one of the social pressures that are felt by many couples, especially by the women. It is not only socially expected that they should give birth, but it is also necessary for their future, because children in Nigeria can support their parents financially after they've retired. Many families in Calabar therefore exist of three, four, five or even more children. But a childless marriage is also rather misfortunate for another reason. When a woman cannot get pregnant, this is often regarded a flaw of her side. Likewise a woman can easily be blamed for premature death of the unborn baby as she is the one carrying the child for nine months and is held responsible. Since Nigeria still has high rates of maternal deaths, there's also a lot of risk for the women involved, around the delivery of their babies. Being fertile, conceiving and safe delivery are social uncertainties that influence the lives of mainly women in Nigeria. The fear of not living up to these social expectations is a major contributing factor to spiritual insecurity in Calabar. To understand premature deaths and infertility, people again attribute agency to malevolent spirits. It is believed, for example, that a witch can tie the

womb of a woman, causing her to be infertile. Jealousy of a mistress or an envious co-wife can be behind these witchcraft attacks, likewise children who do not want their parents or other relatives to have more children can be the cause of infertility. In regard to this, Ubong (32) from Akwa Ibom, told me the story of his former landlord's wife and sister:

'The landlord's daughter confessed that she tied the womb of both her mother and her paternal aunt with whom she spent one full holiday in the past, the last one being a mother of only one child.'⁵⁰

Premature deaths are also attributed to the agency of witchcraft powers, so illustrates the following testimony from Madam Obi of in the Demonstration Chapel, where I did most of my fieldwork:

'I've been pregnant for four conspicuous times and lost the pregnancy. One blessed day as I was about passing by with my husband, we heard people praying so we decided to branch. The man of God marked me out and prophesied that no witchcraft powers will be able to destroy this one. Now I've put to birth a bouncing baby boy.'⁵¹

As fertility and pregnancy are recurring themes in the discourse on witchcraft and malevolent spirits in the Pentecostal churches, I will elaborate on this form of social uncertainty in chapter 4. From the examples given in this section it has already become clear that the themes weigh heavily on people's sense of spiritual security.

3.5. Conclusion: uncertainty and spiritual insecurity

Political, economic and social uncertainty in Calabar is much more complex than the six examples that illustrated my argument in the preceding paragraphs. To truly understand the perceived uncertainties one must spend a longer period in the field, so to grasp the many layers of uncertainty that make up Calabar society. It is also not true that political, economic and social uncertainty are separate entities in society, even though I discussed them individually in the preceding paragraphs. The different forms of uncertainty discussed reinforce each other's strength in society and are together to be defined by what Roitman and Mbembe call 'the crisis'. The complexities of this crisis in Calabar are the result of the interconnections of socioeconomic and political tensions, as well as tensions in interpersonal relations. The fear of misfortune and

⁵⁰ Interview on child witchcraft with Ubong (1 September 2010)

⁵¹ Testimony by 'Madam Obi' on the leaflet of the Calabar Ebenezer Night on 26 November 2011 – Demonstration Chapel

the mutual mistrust in society, that breeds on these daily uncertainties, have their effect on people's sense of spiritual security, as they are the source on which the discourse on spiritual malevolence breeds. The lack of human security in Calabar society and the atmosphere of fear due to instability in Nigeria and the Niger Delta, in the form of (political) violence, socioeconomic pressure and new inequalities due to rapid modernization, has been instigating a lack of spiritual security. As misfortune of all kinds in the physical world are often explained by malevolence in the spiritual world, one can argue that spiritual insecurity and the discourse of *witchcraftcy* in Calabar thrives on the fear and tension that comes forth out of the complexities of political, social and economic uncertainties, or 'the crisis,' of society. In this sense, uncertainty forms the breeding ground for spiritual insecurity and its discourse of witchcraft, as well as for the religious solutions of all kinds that form the response to this spiritual crisis. I will elaborate on the latter in the following chapter.

4. Managing Spiritual Insecurity: the ambiguous role of Pentecostalism

Many Nigerians in this part of the country are poor, the money of oil production is unequally divided and sickness, death, kidnappings and robberies are everywhere around. To attract people for your church, it seems that you have to explain both the origin as well as a solution to these problems. One girl on my compound is suffering from typhoid and was prescribed drugs. One of the side effects of these medicines is that she suffers from nightmares, which she explains in terms of witchcraft. Now the girl no longer believes she's physically sick, but spiritually. Although she keeps on taking the prescribed drugs, her pastor told her to fast and pray. She literally spends all of her days in church as she believes that only there she will be healed of this spiritual illness.

I wrote this in my fieldwork diary on 13 October 2010. After having been in the field for two months I tried to make sense of the world around me. Mercy, the sister of Onyii, had been on our compound for a week. She studied in Anambra state, but had fallen so sick that her mother sent her to her brother in Calabar. As Onyii was a doctor, his family believed him to be the last hope for Mercy's health. They all feared for her life. When I saw Mercy for the first time I was shocked by her appearance. She was very skinny and pale, and looked like she was not going to survive the day. After she had gone to the hospital with her brother, she felt better. They'd put her on a drip and sent her home after a night in the ward. Onyii took care of his sister whenever he was at home, but most of the time Mercy had to take care of herself. She spent a lot of time in a Pentecostal church, which provided her with the sense of security she needed. They promised her healing and deliverance from the evil spirits that caused her sickness. The nightmares that came with the drugs and the fact that she felt weak after taking the prescribed drugs for weeks, made her to believe that there was no other explanation for her illness than witchcraft. She thought someone was jealous of her academic achievements: 'Just as I was doing good in school, this sickness happened'. Mercy no longer believed that she was suffering from typhoid, but instead she was convinced someone was jealous of her and therefore decided to attack her spiritually. The only solution to this spiritual sickness was fasting, praying, attending church services and church counseling. Mercy's misfortune immersed her into the discourse of spiritual malevolence that is prevalent in many of the Pentecostal churches in Calabar. The churches often explain the misfortune of everyday life in Nigeria, like that of Mercy, in terms of spiritualism and provide their congregations with the means to deal with this (worship and counseling for example), but at the same time these churches are often contradicting in their messages. Mercy's church did not only give her ways of dealing with the typhoid she was suffering from, but also

reinterpreted her illness by attributing it to spiritual malevolence. By putting this emphasis on spiritual malevolence, which is mostly referred to as witchcraft, they generate a new form of uncertainty in society that presses heavily on the people of Calabar: mistrust. Misfortune is literally all around people as anyone can be a witch or wizard and anyone can fall victim of their crimes. Against the Christian norm to 'love your neighbor like yourself', many Pentecostal churches rather promote a sense of societal mistrust. And likewise, while they promise people of all classes success, wealth and equality, they have created new inequalities as the church itself has become a hierarchical society, in which pastors and other leaders drive around in large cars, while their congregations are left in poverty. As Smith (2001) argues:

'Pentecostalism helps Nigerians negotiate their society's changing political, economic and moral terrain, while at the same time contributing to those changes' (Smith, 2001: 590)

The Pentecostal churches have in this sense become part of the uncertainties that political, economic and social changes have brought to society. It is therefore no surprise that they are often accused of witchcraft practices themselves. Because as witchcraft accusations exist on the greed and selfishness of some people in society (Smith, 2001: 592), it is expected that pastors that earn excessive amounts of money and live luxurious lives become target of the witchcraft rumors and gossip as well. The Demonstration Chapel I will present in my case study (4.2.) is therefore also part of witchcraft discourse in town. Many people go to this church to find solutions to their spiritual problems, but on the other hand it is believed by many others that the church itself is involved in malevolent practices. The role of the Pentecostal church in spiritual insecurity in Calabar society is therefore extremely ambiguous. On the one hand they are the platform to address to gain solutions for societal spiritual insecurity, but on the other hand they encourage the level of spiritual insecurity both by their extensive witchcraft discourse as well as with the new inequalities and consequential uncertainties they bring to society. Pentecostalism therefore seems to manoeuvre on the edges of spiritual security and insecurity, by managing spiritual insecurity, and more specifically the societal belief in witchcraft, with which they've gained a level of control over their congregations and with which they have a large influence on society as a whole. I therefore argue like Smith that 'the proximity of the occult that it rejects and its reproduction of social structures of inequality it stands against, [...] place Pentecostalism in a potentially precarious position' (Smith, 2001: 602). In this chapter I will further elaborate on this precarious and ambiguous role of the Pentecostal church and the ways in which they manage spiritual insecurity in Calabar society. After discussing Pentecostalism and its ideas in general and the place of the Pentecostal church within Calabar society, I will discuss the case of

the Demonstration Chapel in Satellite Town to give an insight into the discourse of witchcraft and the ambiguous role of one of the most controversial Pentecostal churches in Calabar society.

4.2. Introducing the Demonstration Chapel

‘My Father! My Father!! That witch must die.’ The bright yellow banner with large red letters on an unfinished church behind my house in Satellite Town had been shouting at me ever since my arrival in this part of Calabar. It belonged to the Demonstration Chapel that held services in this large building almost every night in this remote part of town. People generally referred to this church as ‘My Father, My Father’ after the sentence they would start their prayers with. I somehow felt reluctant to enter the church, even though I had no problem visiting any of the other churches in town. The leading prophet always seemed aggressive whenever I would pass the church in the night and it seemed like there were no services on Sundays. The direct neighbor of the church always complained about the Demonstration Chapel, as she said they were too loud and did not respect neighbors that wanted to sleep or work. Apart from that, she doubted the intentions of the church leader, as she felt he was a charlatan that prophesied falsely in return for large sums of money. ‘If not for fear, these type of churches would have no means of existence’, she claimed, referring to the fact that a lot of money was involved in what she called the ‘church business’. When I told another friend in the neighborhood that I wanted to visit the church for my research, she tried to convince me not to go. ‘That church is built on human skulls and that man is a witch himself’, she told me, visibly being concerned about my wellbeing. She elaborated some more, claiming that the church leader was involved in the decapitation of two girls in the poorer neighborhood of Edim Otop, just outside Satellite Town, a few weeks before. Discussing my interest in the church, which was mainly based on their banner, would attract similar responses from all over Satellite Town and among those that knew the church in other parts of Calabar. The rumors and gossip around this church made me even more interested in finding out what was going on. One evening in October as I was about to go into town to meet some friends, Timothy approached me. He introduced himself as an usher of the Demonstration Chapel and said he had been wanting to talk to me before. He asked me whether I could come inside the church as the service was in full session. Unfortunately I had already made plans for the night, but we agreed on my presence the following day. It was the beginning of two and a half months of extensive participation in this church, which led to a better understanding of witchcraft discourse and spiritual insecurity in Calabar. Although the church was perceived controversial and might not be regarded representative for the majority of Pentecostal churches in town, I do find its relevance striking as it grew exponentially with over

50 new members a week from all layers of society. Although the church was highly popular among students, the variety of the church members was large. Men and women from all ages and all classes of society attended services with their children or parents. This chapter is the result of a total of about 120 hours of services of the Demonstration Chapel that I spent from October 2010 until February 2011, mainly in the evening hours. This time includes about 10 hours of (night) crusades in different parts of Calabar.

4.2.1. Background

The Demonstration Chapel is a church with its headquarters in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Currently, it has branches in Calabar, Port Harcourt and Abuja. The Chapel is popularly referred to as My Father My Father Church, after the beginning of every prayer during service. The church in Calabar came into existence at the end of 2009 in a small hall along IBB Way. Leader of the church is Valentine (Val) Aloysius ('papa') from Akwa Ibom State (photo 10), who previously worked in the Uyo branch, but started building his own congregation in Calabar as he claimed to have had a call from God to prophesy in this town. He declares himself to be a 'prophet of signs and wonders' and centers his services therefore around prophecies and miracles. Soon after the church had commenced service in Calabar, its congregation grew too big for the limited space along IBB Way. One of the church workers then found the church a plot of land in Satellite Town, where they started building in March 2010. Within a few months the foundation of the church was visible. The church currently exists of some walls, an altar and hundreds of white plastic chairs. No floor has been laid so far, and the services are therefore held in the sand. The funding of the building of the church comes from offerings and tithes of the members and prophet Aloysius promised them to finish the building process in the beginning of 2011. As Satellite Town is not easily reached by public transport, the church has two buses and a car to pick and drop their members throughout town. The church grew remarkably fast in its first year in Calabar, with over two hundred visitors on average during an evening service (Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday). During the weekly fasting program on Saturday mornings, about the same amount of people would show up. As of November 2010 the church finally commenced Sunday service in Calabar from 6 to 9 in the morning. Before, they only held Sunday service in the church' headquarters by taking the whole of the Calabar congregation to their Uyo branch about 2 hours away.

The evening services that are held three times a week commence at 5 pm and continue until 9 or 10 in the evening, but officially the masses are scheduled from 6 to 8. At around six o'clock one of the church members will pray extensively from the altar, after which the choir full of young talents takes the floor until about 8 o'clock. It is usually around this time that prophet Aloysius is appearing on his seat in church, listening to the music and the members' prayers.

After one of the church workers has done announcements, a female pastor usually enters the altar to preach from the Bible to the congregation, but this is usually a very brief part of the service. Prophet Aloysius always enters the altar soon after and as of then, the service exists solely of prophesying. Although some attempts to read of the Bible are made, they never really come into existence. The motto of Aloysius is to prophesy for as many people as possible on an evening and it is therefore that he often continues until 10 pm.



Photo 10: Prophet Aloysius on the altar of 'My father, my father!'

Once every three months Demonstration Chapel is having its Calabar Ebenezer Night. They claim it to be 'a prophetic night of signs and wonders', which is held in the main hall of the Cultural Centre in town. The theme of this night is always 'My Father, my father, that witch must die' as their yellow banners throughout town make clear to the people. Even though I have not been at any of these nights, I did participate in the preparations for the Ebenezer Night in November 2010 due to already made appointments elsewhere, which made clear to me the activities on that night. In the weeks before the event, the congregation would start praying for prophecies, deliverances and healings during the Ebenezer Night. They organized daily get-togethers to fast and pray in order to make sure the evening would become a success. The large audience in the Cultural Centre was attracted in the weeks before by aggressive promotion of the night in different parts of Calabar. I joined the church members on one of their promotional activities at Etta Agbor street, where they made loud noise and stopped all cars to make sure as many people as possible would get flyers on which not only the date, venue and theme of the night was printed, but also testimonies of healings and deliverances. About thirty church members were

actively involved in attracting as many people as possible for the night. Even those that actually had to work, had taken afternoons off to spread the word. Frances, a psychologist and church worker, explained to me that this work was more important than her work in the hospital, where she taught students. According to her the Ebenezer Night was so special that she willingly took off many days lately to pray, fast and promote.

Even though I did not have the opportunity to attend the Ebenezer Night in November due to earlier made appointments, I do believe that during regular church services similar activities went on. In the following paragraph I will discuss in detail the main part of many of these services: prophecies.

4.2.2. Prophecies and promises

One of the core elements of many of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is prophesying. Although many researchers on Pentecostalism in Africa have indicated it to be insignificant or negligible, there is a large number of churches in which this element is constitutive (Gifford 200: 108). The Demonstration Chapel in Calabar is one of those, which becomes even clear from reading their promotional flyers on which testimonies can be found. These testimonies tell the reader that the prophecies of prophet Aloysius have come to pass. He would often prophesy 'miracle jobs' or 'miracle cars', i.e. those material wishes that are not to be expected due to lack of financial means or knowledge, but that will surprisingly happen as through a miracle.

'Papa told me prophetically what will happen to me miraculously before I left for my N.Y.S.C. (Youth Service). He told me that after four months of finishing with my youth service I'm going to have a miracle job. To God be the glory, that word has come to pass.' (Olande Ibe)

'The man of God mentioned my bank and my account number and gave me a prophetic pronouncement that a helper will pay money into my account from abroad, he even mentioned the name and the phone number of that helper. It came to pass the next day, that the same person demanded for my account number and credited my account.' (Miss Lawretta)

Other prophecies of less material value were rather concerned with the family or the relational bonds of a person. Often, Aloysius would prophesy marriages and pregnancies to his young audience.

'I've been having a series of disappointment in marriage. Early this year I met the man of God in counseling and during that he prophesied that four men will ask my hand in marriage. The word came to pass exactly as it was prophesied. Now my marriage has been fixed on the 22nd of November.' (Esther)

Finally prophet Aloysius would prophesy miraculous healings of diseases, like HIV/AIDS.

'Me and my son were dying of HIV, my husband even died last year of that same sickness, but somehow I overheard a woman talking about Pastor Val, so I had to make findings and travel all the way from Abuja to see him. He asked me to stay in Calabar for one month as he offered prayer for me and my son. At the end of April he sent me to go back and do another test that proved me and my son HIV negative from three different medical laboratories.' (Beatrice)

But not only the flyer has provided me with interesting information on prophecies and promises within the Demonstration Chapel. In the hours I spent in services and crusades of the church, I gathered many instances of prophecies that seem to attract the predominantly young congregation.

During the morning service on the 25th of December 2010 the Demonstration Chapel was beautifully decorated for the Christmas celebration. The choir sang for over an hour before prophet Val Aloysius entered the altar. After he had made some references to the biblical story of the birth of Jesus Christ, he soon asked a lady in the church to come forward. The woman eagerly left her chair and approached the church leader. She was ordered to stand on a specific point in church after which the prophet asked her to take her mobile phone. This was one of the ways in which the prophet was prophesying. A church member would type in the phone number the prophet was shown by the Holy Spirit, he then had to dial that number to see a name appear in the screen (from the contact list). The prophet was usually capable of prophesying the name that would appear, and he would elaborate on relationships, problems and other issues that concerned this person with regard to the life of the person that he was prophesying to. The woman he asked to come forward during the Christmas celebration was asked to dial some numbers in her phone and was told that some of the persons that came up during the session were better to be avoided as they were 'stealing her destiny'. Prophet Aloysius then asked the woman whether she was married. She started crying and told the congregation that at her age (she was in her mid-thirties) she had not yet married and felt awful about that. Immediately the woman was comforted by the prophet as he said that she would soon get married. He prophesied that a man, who was now a Catholic priest, would leave his position and ask for her hand soon. He explained that she did not know the man yet, but that he could provide her with his phone number so that she could call him after service. The woman was extremely happy with this news as she had completely given up hope of marriage.

She was not the only woman in church that was prophesied a marriage in the near future. There were many other young women in the Demonstration Chapel that received similar prophetic messages by prophet Aloysius, including the author of this thesis. One girl that

attended church with both of her parents was picked out of the congregation one night in November. Prophet Aloysius provided her with some phone numbers and male names, like usual, and told her parents that these were the three men that wanted to marry their daughter. Although the girl was clearly embarrassed to have to see her parents being confronted with her relationships, she was relieved by the fact that the church leader had given her a prophecy about which man to marry. Her father was happy as well, and told the congregation that he could not wait for his daughter to get married to this particular man, even though he had never met him. A testimony of Amaka illustrates the happiness of a marriage prophecy coming to pass:

‘The first time I attended this church the man of God called me out and mentioned some phone numbers in my phone and mentioned a particular number and told me that the person will be my husband, this was in April. To God be the glory, the same person and number got married to me on 31st of July, 2010. Papa, I thanked your God for his mercy and goodness.’

But not only prophecies on marriage were given by the church leader. He would also regularly prophesy financial ‘miracles’, jobs and healings. During one service, a church member was asked to come forward and dial some prophesied phone numbers. Prophet Aloysius then told him that the legal problems with property he was facing and the court case that was coming up the next day would disappear ‘by fire’. The next day the man testified in service that indeed the case against him was dropped and the issues between him and his landlord had been solved. On yet another occasion a man was not prophesied a phone number, but his bank account number, after which the prophet told him that soon someone from his past would send him money so that he could go to college. According to his testimony a few weeks later, this also came to pass.

In a society with a high level of socio-economic uncertainty it is not surprising to observe prophecies at the center of the church services of the Demonstration Chapel. People rely on Pentecostal churches in general in search for some kind of existential constancy or for certitude and certainty (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 15), especially in a society that is uncertain in so many aspects. Prophecies of church leaders provide people in Calabar society with a level of certainty that they cannot find in the material world around them. By claiming prophecies there are certain feelings of misfortune that need no further questioning. For example, those who are feeling the pressure of early marriage and fear a single future are reassured to find the right marital partner by these prophecies. They, therefore, no longer have to doubt and can be rest assured that they will not be misfortunate in that sense. It is the general fears and uncertainties of daily life that make prophecies so popular among the people in Calabar. And it is these prophecies that make these churches to grow exponentially in town, as more and more people

come to find reassurance while they bring their offerings and tithes, which make them and their leaders to prosper.

4.2.3 Offer so you won't suffer

Another important aspect in the services of the Demonstration Chapel that is closely related to the practice of prophesying is offering and tithing. With the motto 'offer so you won't suffer', the church leader would ask his congregation for offerings, claiming them that without giving there would be no brighter future. It was therefore that many of the members would give large parts of their little money to the church. They would even give one tenth of their predominantly small incomes (tithe), because they believe they will be paid back in abundance through the intervention of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Timothy, for example, had no job or any other income and spent his days and nights in the church, because he had no place to live. Sometimes he was given money by other members of the church, but he would always use this money for offering. Food and drinks were given to him by people that lived in the neighborhood. He was convinced that the money he spent on the church would be given back to him and always claimed that he would be a 'big man' one day in the future, especially since 'papa' promised him.

Apart from the money that was given to the church during the regular offering time that took place once every service, people were encouraged to bring money to the altar to claim certain prophecies (photo 11). During a service late October 2010, prophet Aloysius for example promised his congregation that by the end of the year they would receive money in their bank account from someone they know. The first 11 people that would bring money to the altar would claim that prophecy. Sometimes the prophet would even mention a minimum amount of money that should be offered in order for the prophecy to come pass. During the first of November service he asked the congregation for 1000 naira each in order to 'let some real miracles happen' and by the end of the year all the members were expected to give the same amount of money for the Suya Night, that would be held on the 31st of December.

Offerings and tithes are highly connected to the central theme of prophecy in the Demonstration Chapel. Also, they are an important part of Pentecostal discourse in general. In the other churches I attended it would be regarded just as important to offer and pay your tithes. In some Pentecostal churches it is expected that the congregation offers up to twice or thrice each service and although they do not have the same system as the Demonstration Chapel when it comes to bringing money to claim prophecies directly, they also regard the offering money as a means for creating space for prosperity in someone's life. Offering and tithing is thus what is given by the congregations in order for the Pentecostal churches to fulfill their hopes and needs of success and prosperity that comes forth from the uncertainties and the fear of misfortune they experience on a daily basis.



Photo 11: Money on the altar of the Demonstration Chapel after prophet Aloysius promised his congregation prosperity if they would give 1000 naira each (1 November 2010)

4.3. 'Illegal Structures': a church discourse

A young lady of about 30 years old was asked to come forward towards the altar by prophet Aloysius during a service in November 2010. After he had mentioned some of the phone numbers in her mobile phone, he asked her whether she had been unfortunate in recent months. The woman started crying and gave an affirmative answer. She had suffered from relationship problems as well as from sickness, but she never understood why her life was so unstable at this particular moment of time. The prophet then told her that witches from her village, including her mother, were oppressing her life and that in order to set herself free from these witchcraft powers, she needed to migrate out of Africa. To achieve this, prophet Aloysius told her to write the names of three countries on a piece of paper, after which the woman was asked to chew the paper and spit it out. Prophet Aloysius then prophesied that the lady would migrate to Italy in 2011, where she would find peace of mind. The witches would no longer be able to harm her. The woman was instantly relieved and started celebrating her prophecy by praying out loud. The congregation joined her in prayers against witches and wizards in their lives. 'Expire by

fire!', they yelled, praying against all demons and evil oppressing their prosperity. Prophet Aloysius added to that, that 'no *illegal structures* will ever again oppress the congregation'.

When it comes to the discourse of evil in the Demonstration Chapel, the leader and the congregation would often speak of witchcraft, but this term was variable as it did not only entail the actions of witches and wizards, but also those of ancestors, idols and other spiritual malicious forces. Although witchcraft was the term with which they attracted people through, for example, their yellow banners around town, the congregation would regularly speak of *illegal structures* to define all the spiritual evil. It is an interesting comparison with the widespread problem of illegal structures in Nigeria's physical world, that becomes clearly visible from the many houses, shops and buildings that have black crosses on their walls. These are buildings that are titled illegal by the local government and they are therefore demolished by the region's urban development agency. The use of this metaphor in regard to witchcraft is interesting. In the Demonstration Chapel all evil malevolence is seen as an illegal building in one's life that needs to be demolished. The discourse around witchcraft in this church therefore is highly interrelated with a discourse on deliverance and spiritual destruction of evil forces, which is often of a violent tone. Witches should for example 'expire by fire' according to the church and once in a while the leader would even speak about spiritual killing (see 4.2.3).

Illegal structures were a central theme in the Demonstration Chapel and although the terminology is very specific for this church, the focus on spiritual malevolence is present in the discourse of many of the other Pentecostal churches in Calabar.⁵⁴ Nearly all of the prophecies in the church and many of the testimonies had to do with spiritual malevolence or *illegal structures* and they all seem to cover the uncertainties I discussed in chapter four. Issues of sickness and health, related to social and economic uncertainty, were often explained in terms of spiritual malevolence. Due to the high level of uncertainty and insecurity in Calabar society, there is a need for a platform that can explain the misfortune in people's life. Pentecostal churches, like the Demonstration Chapel, are using spiritual malevolence to attribute people's misfortune to. By finding ways of preventing and counteracting this (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 14), whether it is in forms of prayer or through more violent deliverance services, the Pentecostal church seems to deal with the uncertainty that is present in society. The forms of evil that are being dealt with in

⁵⁴ In a conversation with Father Len Ojurgu, editor of the local catholic newspaper Fides et Veritas and leader of the Sacred Heart cathedral in Calabar, it became clear that the belief in spiritual malevolence is also present in the catholic church, but that the focus during the services is not on this theme. Pentecostal churches all did seem to incorporate spiritual malevolence as a central theme in their services. During my stay I attended services at Bible Faith Ministries (Calabar South), Channel of Blessings Ministries (Calabar Municipality), Noble Classic Ministries (Calabar South), Charismatic Renewal Ministries (Satellite Town) and Assemblies of God (Calabar South). I have also attended service in two catholic churches (Sacred Heart Cathedral (Calabar South) and Holy Trinity (Police Barracks). Finally I have attended services at a Baptist church.

these churches vary. As was explained in the introduction to this thesis, witchcraft is a concept that is hard to define and is often used as an umbrella term (Ter Haar, 2007: 4) for this variety of evil that comes from a spiritual source. But although the Demonstration Chapel seems to use witchcraft as the term to explain all sorts of spiritual attacks, they do seem to categorize the agents of the evil. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on two different forms of this malevolence, which are both indicated by terms of witchcraft or *illegal structures* in the church, but of which the agents are more or less defined more specifically, namely witches and wizards and ancestors and altars. It were these two forms of evil that was mostly referred to when the church spoke of witchcraft. But although I make a clear distinction between the two forms of agents of spiritual malevolence in this chapter, I have to add that often the two were used in the same context. It would for example be very possible for the leader of the church to speak of the altar that was built by a family member of a person oppressed, but he would still sometimes refer to this family member as a witch or a wizard. So even though the different stories in the following paragraphs describe specific cases of agents of spiritual malevolence, I do not claim that the use of the terms witch, wizard, ancestor or altar were used consistently by the leading prophet, nor the church members. In the last section I will conclude by explaining the solutions to the society's spiritual insecurity that the church provides its congregation with and the ways in which they are managing it in a way it is comprehensible and consolidating, but also profitable for the church itself.

4.3.1. *Witches and wizards*

On the promotion material for their Ebenezer night, one member of the Demonstration Chapel's congregation states:

'I was afflicted with stroke by witchcraft powers. I could not walk nor stand by myself for some years now. During the prophetic service the prophet of God laid his hand upon me and prayed for my healing. Now I am healed from the stroke paralyses and I can walk on my own. I give God the glory for restoring me back to life.' (Anonymous testimony)

Interestingly, I was able to witness a similar case of witchcraft oppression and healing during a crusade in Edim Otop, a less privileged area in Calabar referred to by the church as 'under the influence of witches and wizards'. The crusade took place late in the evening on a crossing in the neighborhood, where an open space in the middle of hundreds of plastic chairs served as the altar. An old man was called forward during the service, but as he was not capable of walking, prophet Aloysius asked him to remain seated and explain why he could not walk. The man appeared to have had a small wound about 20 years ago that grew bigger and bigger and could

not be cured. Eventually the wound caused infections that led to the man being incapable of moving his left foot. He said that he never knew how the wound came into existence, since it was just there one morning, but that when he heard of the crusade of the church he believed it might bring a solution to his long-lasting incapability to walk. Prophet Aloysius explained to him that a witch had taken a knife one night to cut the man's leg, which caused the small wound he discovered that morning 20 years ago. Since the wound was caused by spiritual powers, no regular hospital had been able to help him. His children had left him over the years since they could not provide him with the (financial) support he needed. The prophet then decided to take his time to heal the man, with help of the congregation that was asked to use their own prophetic powers and prayers to enforce the healing. In a session that lasted for about thirty minutes the people gathered around the crossing in Edim Otop started praying for this man's healing, while the prophet was putting his hands on the man's head and leg. After the prayers the man was asked to stand up, walk towards the altar and show himself to the people. The man who could not stand for more than a few seconds before, was now indeed walking towards the altar. People started applauding and praising God for the miracle, while the choir sang a praise song. 'You are no longer oppressed by witchcraft powers', was the message prophet Aloysius gave to the man. He was told that from now on he could walk freely, be it with some practice. At the end of the healing session, the church leader gave the man 20.000 naira to start over his life and make sure that his children would come back to him. He was also told that in order to remain safe from witchcraft powers, he should visit the Demonstration Chapel regularly and come for counseling.

During a regular evening service in January 2011, a lady was asked to come forward. A microphone was given to her, so that the congregation of over 200 people was able to hear her speak. After prophet Aloysius had informed her about some of the people in her mobile phone, he started asking her about the relationship with her husband. He prophesied that the man was cheating on his wife with a much younger lady. The woman confirmed this, and explained that she found out her husband was seeing another girl for some time now, but that she did not know what to do about it, since she was afraid that she would lose respect from the people around her if she would admit her husband's acts and leave him. The prophet started laughing, while the woman seemed severely distressed about the fact that people were now aware of her personal life. Prophet Aloysius continued his prophecy, explaining to the woman that her husband was manipulated by witchcraft powers, since his girlfriend was a witch, and that she should not be afraid. Her husband was a victim of witchcraft, but was blamed by the prophet of not having enough faith in God to resist it. Soon, he said to the woman, her husband and his girlfriend would travel by road from Uyo to Calabar, during which they would get involved in a serious accident. One of them would lose their life in that. He did not tell the woman whether it would be her

husband or the girlfriend, but assured her that either way her problem would be solved after it. The woman seemed disturbed, while the congregation was happy to have heard the prophecy of Aloysius. Loud prayers in which *illegal structures* were told to be demolished in their lives filled the late evening service.

As already elaborated on in chapter four, witches are also said to be an important cause of a woman's inability to conceive or of the premature deaths of babies. The testimony of Madam Obi (chapter 4) in which she claims that witchcraft powers made her lose her pregnancy four times is a clear example. Likewise was the story of Ubong, who explained that his landlord's daughter confessed tying the womb of her mother to make sure she would not conceive any longer. In the Demonstration Chapel the issue of the tying of the womb by witches was a recurrent theme. During an evening service in November 2010, a man and a woman were asked to come forward to the altar. Prophet Aloysius explained, without asking them any questions, how the woman had had trouble conceiving. The couple had been married for some time now, but so far had not had any children. This made the mother of the man doubt the wife and led her even to tell her son that he should leave the woman and find himself another wife who would be able to bear him children. The pressure had become too much for the couple and even though the husband had consistently supported his wife in conversations with his family, he did feel like it was necessary to reproduce and therefore secretly started to doubt their marriage. During the service, prophet Aloysius prophesied that it was not a physical problem his wife was suffering from, but that she was oppressed by a witch. The man's former fiancée had tied the woman's womb in order for her not to conceive, thereby trying to destroy their marriage. She was envious of their relationship and wanted the man she regarded as being her husband back in her life. Prophet Aloysius then promised the couple that they did not have to be afraid. He prophesied that through counseling, fasting and praying the witch would no longer be able to harm the woman and that she would conceive in the very near future. They were asked to come for counseling the next morning, where he promised to give them a fasting program with which they could eliminate this evil from their lives.

4.3.2. Village evil: ancestors and altars

The opposition between the town and the village was made clear in many churches I attended. I remember that in one Pentecostal church they would often make fun of people in the village, for example by imitating them by jokingly speaking incomprehensible English. But the opposition would even be made more explicit when they would speak of those in the villages as the 'pagans' embracing sinful acts like worshipping idols and building altars in their compounds to keep the ancestors satisfied. Most of the Pentecostal churches I attended would make this strict distinction between the village and the town, claiming that no such sinful acts took place in a

‘modern town’ like Calabar, except in certain neighborhoods⁵⁵. This was a discourse in line with what many people outside of the church setting would tell me when I asked them about witchcraft in Calabar: ‘There is no such thing as witchcraft in Calabar!’ But during my visit in Amainyi, a village in Imo State where some of my respondents came from, a villager who had stayed in different towns for an extensive period of time, told me that ‘everything that is in the village, is in the town and everything that is in the town, is in the village’. He went on saying that ‘all those people in the towns come from the villages and they take their beliefs with them’, thus claiming that there was not a clear distinction between what is believed in towns and in villages. According to him witchcraft exists in Calabar as much as Christianity exist in Amainyi. But in the Demonstration Chapel, like in the other Pentecostal churches I visited, they seem not to agree with this statement. The villages and villagers are often seen as the source of spiritual malevolence and misfortune in the lives of people in Calabar. This can easily be explained by the Pentecostal churches, as they claim that those in the villages are jealous of the modern life the urban dwellers enjoy and therefore feel the need to spiritually destroy them. There is a certain level of fear that is being distributed among their congregations towards their relatives in the villages. One should be careful with their interaction with them. This means for example, that people in the Demonstration Chapel were advised not to eat food prepared by others in their villages, as it could be bewitched, but they were also informed to be very careful about entering family compounds, since idolatry altars were built there from which they should stay far away.

An example of such a warning for relatives in the villages comes from an interaction between prophet Aloysius and a middle aged man in church during a Wednesday night service in November. The man, who had come to church with his wife, was picked out by the prophet and after some introduction he had explained his drinking problem to the congregation. The man had no job and his family was suffering heavily under his alcoholism. His wife stood by him, crying her eyes out and confirming the details prophet Aloysius revealed about her husband’s state, village and family. It was then that they were told that the man’s father had built a ‘pagan altar’ on his compound in the village in Delta State that kept him from prospering. Besides that, his family members had buried a bottle of wine on the same compound, which spiritually represented the drinking problem of the man. The prophet told them that the man’s father was the evil force behind this plan to withhold his son from prospering in Calabar and that action needed to be undertaken for the man to overcome his alcoholism. His addiction was a spiritual problem rather than a physical one. Prophet Aloysius claimed that in order to truly help his family, he had to visit the village in Delta State, but he added he did not have time to accompany them. He then suggested that by heavy fire prayer of the congregation it would be possible to

⁵⁵ Like Edim Otop, see chapter two and 4.3.1.

break the spell from Calabar that evening, but he also said that that would create severe problems to the father of the man that might even lead to his death. He asked the man whether he wanted to solve his drinking problems and destroy the altar built in his father's compound. The man answered him that he was ready for that. It was then that the congregation started praying fire prayers, while prophet Aloysius asked the man and his wife: 'Your father might die tonight because of these prayers. Are you ready for that?' The man answered, with a heavy voice and no doubt in his mind: 'Let the man die!'. The congregation prayed against the father of the man, the altar in his compound and the bottle that was buried in the village for about twenty minutes, after which prophet Aloysius took on another case, claiming that the man would no longer be oppressed by evil forces from his relatives in the village.

4.4. Conclusion: Managing Spiritual Insecurity

The *illegal structures* in people's lives that the Demonstration Chapel attacks in its discourse, can be demolished by following two steps. First, the one oppressed by spiritual malevolence needs to attend church regularly and subsequently bring his offerings and tithes, as discussed above (see 4.2.3). Secondly, the oppressed person needs to come for counseling with prophet Aloysius at least once, but preferably more frequently. Counseling comes with a fasting program that is explained to the person during the counseling sessions. Through the discourse of the church people are made to understand that everyone can be or become a victim of witchcraft oppression and in order to prevent oneself from becoming a victim, one should undergo the same steps as someone that is already attacked by evil spirits. The fear the discourse of the church brings to the people attending and their desperate search for an explanation and solution to the misfortune in their lives and the lives of the people around them, makes church attendance, offering, tithing, counseling and fasting into regular activities for members of the Demonstration Chapel, as in other Pentecostal churches. All these activities involve money, not only the offerings and tithes, but also the counseling sessions. People are expected to bring a large part of their incomes to the church in order for them to be delivered from witchcraft oppression or as a spiritual investment which will be increase abundantly in the future. Many people in Calabar feel the need to find consolation and solutions for life's uncertainties and the fear of misfortune in a place that offers them security. The Demonstration Chapel, like other Pentecostal churches, offers these people a sense of security they long for, and in return their members provide them with the necessary money to build the church and keep the church services going. With thousands of naira being brought to the altar during every service in the

Demonstration Chapel, it is no surprise that they have been able to create an almost finished church building in a period of less than a year. My neighbor's comment that if there had not been so much fear in the society, these churches would not survive in this society, is therefore not just a random comment. It is the societal uncertainty, the fear of misfortune, that forms the context of the discourse of the Demonstration Chapel and other churches. And although Pentecostal churches provide their congregation with a sense of security, they also contribute to the fear in society. Emphasizing mistrust towards their relatives in the villages and other people close to them, because they might be out to harm them through spiritual powers, adds another dimension to the already existing fears and uncertainties in society. In this way, the church is not only providing solutions to spiritual insecurity, but they also contribute to it in order for them to maintain their congregations, who will through this fear always feel the pressure to participate in the different, costly aspects of the church programs. Many of the Pentecostal churches in Calabar seem to manage the existing spiritual insecurity in town in a way that it is both beneficial for their congregations as well as for themselves. It is therefore, as I have argued that the Pentecostal church plays an ambiguous role within Calabar society when it comes to the maintenance of spiritual insecurity and the belief in witchcraft and other spiritual malevolence that comes with that, by having created the society with a seemingly false sense of security. 'Fear is the opposite of Faith,' one of my friends in Satellite Town summarized it, 'but it is Fear that keeps the Faith alive in many churches in Africa nowadays.'

5. Conclusion

When I arrived in the field I had prepared to do research on witchcraft. It was my aim to find an answer to how witchcraft is perceived in Calabar society nowadays. I was not only determined to find out what witches or wizards looked like or how they are recognized, but I also wanted to find out how they operate and what it is they do that makes people so afraid of them. In brief, I went into the field believing I could find people's stories of witchcraft in their lives or the lives of the people around them. I knew that gaining trust among a small group of people would be necessary to get that type of information, but I always believed that it was possible. It was a few weeks after my arrival in Calabar that I realized how difficult it was going to be to find detailed stories of witches and wizards in society. I was discouraged by the people around me who repeatedly told me that there was nothing like witchcraft in town and that I needed to continue my research in the villages surrounding Calabar. And although they would tell me about witchcraft when I asked them about it, their information and descriptions were always rather brief and superficial and they always seemed to avoid the topic when I would get too deep into it. I soon realized that in informal conversations about everyday life, people would often refer to witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence, without ever explaining what witchcraft actually entailed. The longer I was in the field, the more I became convinced that finding personal stories of witchcraft attacks or related experiences among the people in Calabar by literally asking people after it was going to be a mission impossible. Instead, I needed to dive into the everyday lives of people and the world of Pentecostalism, in which witchcraft discourse was thriving. This thesis is the result of the methodological challenge that followed me during my six months of fieldwork. It led me from informal conversations and experiencing daily life in Calabar with friends to the services of the Pentecostal Demonstration Chapel where I gathered most stories on witchcraft in society. The methods I used were not structured in the sense that I did not do in depth interviews or focus group discussions, but I believe that in researching the ontological side of insecurity in society and the highly controversial discourse of witchcraft, it's impossible to gain the necessary trust from the people while at the same time recording or noting down everything. Participating in the daily lives of the people on the compound and a group of students at the University of Calabar gave me the insight in a much broader field than just witchcraft. Eventually this immersion in daily life has led to this thesis, in which I am discussing the context of people's daily experiences that are part of the spiritual insecurity in town. With interviews and focus group discussions I would not have been able to grasp the complex dynamics of uncertainty, fear and witchcraft discourse in Calabar society. Besides that, I believe that participating in everyday activities and experiencing life as any other human being

in Calabar, rather than looking at it from a distance (by interviewing people for example), has made me to understand better how people in society feel and reason. I was challenged myself with spiritual questions and expressions on several occasions and was, through that, able to perceive on a more personal level the ways in which spiritual discourse can influence one's life. I believe that through the methods I eventually used, I have been able to write an integer thesis that takes the reality of daily life in Nigeria and Calabar to explain the psychological and spiritual effect on people in that society.

Instead of researching the entity of witchcraft, I eventually studied the context of the discourse of the witchcraft phenomenon within society, which Ashforth calls the 'general domain of spiritual insecurity' (Ashforth, 2005: 215). This gave me the opportunity to broaden my perspective and explain the way in which the belief in witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence are nourished by the physical insecurity that thrives on different forms of uncertainty in Calabar society, rather than ethnographically describing witchcraft per se. I took Ashforth's explanation of spiritual insecurity as the chore of this research, as the literature on vulnerability and human insecurity did not enough explain the complexity of the ontological side of insecurity. Ashforth's work does focus on the psychological effect of insecurity on society, which I believe has so far been understudied in the social sciences. And although Geschiere, the Comaroffs and other authors on witchcraft touch upon this effect in their work, I believe that to truly understand witchcraft and other forms of spiritual malevolence in Africa, one must take into consideration the effect of human insecurity and different forms of uncertainty on the psyche and daily spiritual experience of people in society.

To complete the picture of the context of spiritual insecurity in Calabar, I focused on the Pentecostal church, that have, to many, become the center of that daily spiritual experience in Calabar society. It is therefore that Pentecostalism that is an important factor in the understanding of witchcraft and other evil. These churches have, in many cases, put spiritual malevolence at the core of their discourse, providing their congregations with a sense of security by offering solutions and consolation to the harm that can be done by witches, wizards and other spiritual malevolence. But as these churches thrive on the societal fear of uncertainty and misfortune, they also need to keep the fear in society alive and therefore tactfully manage spiritual insecurity within society to their benefit.

This research has looked at witchcraft from a different angle than most research that has been done so far. This thesis is the result of fieldwork in which I have been able to understand the issues surrounding witchcraft discourse on a more psychological level, rather than on the level of power and politics that is the focus of most of the other work that has been done. I believe that to truly understand the complexity of witchcraft one needs to focus on the context of

it - spiritual insecurity - to understand the current-day situation in the light of history, tradition, physical insecurity and modernity.

5.1. Witchcraft, spiritual insecurity and uncertainty

Witchcraft is a term loosely defined by most people in Calabar. The variety of the practice and the different appearances in which it is said to come, is exhaustive in the sense that there cannot be found a clear definition. Witchcraft has thus indeed become the umbrella term for all spiritual malevolence that is attributed to evil (Ter Haar, 2007), but it is not solely a term to cover this. I argue that witchcraft is also a way to explain much of the misfortune that is experienced in people's everyday lives. It has become a means to comprehend for example infertility or adversity in marriage, but also the economic inequalities present in town. To research witchcraft as an entity in itself would limit the comprehension of the phenomenon, since it is nourished by its physical environment, in which economic, political and social uncertainties are embedded. Studying the context of witchcraft, which includes other malevolent practices like idolatry, traditional worship, *mami wata* spirits or rituals attributed to the village, can provide us with a much better understanding of it in Calabar society. The highly valued discourse on witchcraft by Geschiere and the Comaroffs, who argue that witchcraft in Africa is a mechanism to cope with modern life, as it is 'a resource for the powerful and a weapon for the weak against modernity's new inequalities' (Geschiere, 1997: 16), is therefore incomplete. I argue that witchcraft is not only a way of making sense out of new economic inequalities and changed power relations in society, but that it also is the phenomenon with which accidents, health problems and other experiences that cannot be attributed to modernity, are being explained. Apart from that, I believe that social traditions are of great importance in the discourse of witchcraft. I believe that the literature of Geschiere and the Comaroffs does, in some way, overlook the traditional roots of witchcraft in African societies, which I have shown in this thesis to be relevant to the understanding of the phenomenon. I have therefore incorporated the term spiritual insecurity, which covers not only the practice of witchcraft, but also the context of it in the physical environment of people in which not only economic and political changes take place, but also social traditions still play an important role. All appearances of what is called *witchcraftcy* in Calabar can be taken into consideration in this concept, while at the same time the concept covers the physical environment, with political, economic and social dynamics at play, and the religious institutions that are in some way concerned with spiritual malevolence.

In Calabar spiritual insecurity breeds on the different forms of uncertainty that people experience in their daily lives. In line with what Geschiere (1997) writes, people have taken up the discourse of witchcraft to comprehend and cope with the changes in society on a political and economic level, as I showed in chapter 3. But in social relations and with societal

expectations, witchcraft discourse is also often used to explain misfortune on a personal level, for example, in failed marriage. When physical or rational explanations for a certain occurrence, experience or behavior lack, the misfortune in one's life can still be comprehended, as being an evil spiritual force that attacked one's life. When we regard uncertainty as being 'a characteristic of both the experience of misfortune and the process of dealing with it', witchcraft can thus be regarded as a discourse used to control spiritual insecurity, and there minimize levels of uncertainty (Haram and Yamba, 2009) in Calabar society. Responsibility for things happening in people's daily lives is then given to a spiritual world that cannot be physically prevented. It is therefore that preventing and counteracting the negative consequence (misfortune) of uncertainty is mainly done through Christianity in Calabar. Pentecostal churches, but to a lesser extend also the mainline churches, cf. the Catholic Church, in town, attribute negative experiences in people's lives to malevolent spirits. These Pentecostal churches, therefore, are an important player in the management of spiritual insecurity in town.

5.2. Fear and Faith

The uncertainties discussed in chapter 3 and the misfortune it can bring to the lives of the people of Calabar have caused a lot of fear in society. There's a general fear towards the unpredictable future in different aspects of life. Economically people struggle for their daily bread or for participation in the town's development projects. Inequality nourishes both the sentiment of the lower classes, who envy the pleasures of life that are being enjoyed by those in the middle and upper classes and desperately want to achieve these, while in the upper classes there is a fear of becoming a victim of this envious sentiment in the form of robberies, but also witchcraft. Politically, ethnic consciousness still causes a lot of mistrust among different groups in Calabar society. The fear of those in other ethnic groups and the discrimination of certain (groups of) people are, like the societal pressure around marriage and child bearing, part of spiritual insecurity in society. This fear based on the different forms of uncertainty discussed in chapter 3 and misfortune needs to be dealt with, and witchcraft is one of the metaphysical ways to do this (Haram and Yamba, 2009: 14). Pentecostal churches have taken up these uncertainties and, more specifically, the fear of it and made it central to of their church discourse, explaining it as the works of the devil or the consequences of witchcraft. According to Etounga-Manguelle it is most likely to be religion that controls uncertainty in African societies (Etounga-Manguelle, 2000: 69), and Calabar is no exception. By prophesying and healing Pentecostal churches console people, offer them solutions to their problems, and make them trust in their futures again through the word of God, thereby making themselves very popular among Calabar citizens. In chapter 4 it became clear that many of the prophesies and healings within the Demonstration Chapel had to do with witchcraft or other forms of spiritual malevolence and it is thus clear that

spiritual insecurity in Calabar cannot be understood if one does not consider the central role of Pentecostalism in it. It is the fear of misfortune that leads people to churches like the Demonstration Chapel and it is exactly this fear these churches seem to take away during their special deliverance, healing or miracle services, as well as during their regular services. Prayers against witchcraft attacks, mainly those from the village, and fasting programs to protect oneself from spiritual violence are all part of the discourse that attracts people. The fact that the yellow banner 'My Father, My Father! That witch must die!' made the miracle night it advertised immensely popular and the very specific discourse of *illegal structures* can be seen as clear examples of the fact that it is exactly this type of discourse that appeals in a society in which fear thrives. Uncertainty and misfortune in Calabar are attributed and explained in terms of witchcraft and the Pentecostal church offers the means to deal with this. But on the other hand, I've shown that the church does not only provide consolation or solutions. The emphasis they put on spiritual malevolence and the prophecies and words with which they console their congregations also provides them with the necessary incomes they need to survive in the highly competitive religious field in Calabar, in which (Pentecostal) churches can be found on every corner of the street. The offerings and tithes that are given during service and the money these churches receive for counseling sessions are the financial back bone of their existence. Without it, they would have no means to survive. Pentecostal churches therefore, as shown by my case study of the Demonstration Chapel in chapter 4, manage spiritual insecurity in town to both the benefit of their congregations as well as to their own. It is thus, indeed, true that fear keeps the (Pentecostal) faith alive, while faith is also keeping the fear alive.

5.3. Further research

As indicated before, this thesis is the result of six months of methodologically challenging fieldwork. It is therefore necessary to develop this research further, as the thesis only reveals the tip of the iceberg. The uncertainties in Calabar society have only been briefly described here, and it can well be argued that more detailed research should be done on the relation between the specific forms of uncertainty, for example, infertility and spiritual insecurity. The focus of the Pentecostal church on love, relationships, marriage and fertility in reference to the discourse of witchcraft is fascinating and merits further research. Likewise I recommend more research into the Pentecostal churches in Calabar. In this thesis I have only provided one case study, but preferably this case could be compared to other Pentecostal and/or mainline churches in town in order to get a clearer picture. It is also important that enough trust is gained among the members of these churches that are affected by spiritual malevolence, so that more formal interviews can be done with them to understand their different situations better. This is, of course, a challenge in itself.

In this thesis I have hinted at the relation between fear and faith in the context of spiritual insecurity, which is a new approach to the existing academic research on witchcraft and sorcery and in the field of Pentecostalism. More studies are certainly necessary to better understand the dynamics of this relation.

But most importantly I believe that this thesis has opened the way for different research on witchcraft, with a more ontological perspective. The psychology of the phenomenon has too often been overlooked. The focus has so far been on power and politics, which in my view, cannot be seen separately from the minds and the spirits of the people that live in the societies under study. Research on spiritual malevolence in which is focused on the experience of it in everyday life, like this one in Calabar, deserves much more attention in academia.

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