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Social Exclusion of Older Mossi Women Accused of Witchcraft in Burkina Faso, West Africa

Clarisse Barbier
University of South Florida

Social Exclusion of Older Mossi Women Accused of Witchcraft

in Burkina Faso, West Africa

by

Clarisse Barbier

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Major Professor: Tara F. Deubel, Ph.D.
Fenda Akiwumi, Ph.D.
Daniel Lende, Ph.D.
Dillon Mahoney, Ph.D.
David Rubin, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

À mes enfants qui m'ont encouragée et soutenue inconditionnellement tout au long de mes études et de ma recherche, je vous aime…inconditionnellement.

À toutes ces femmes accusées de sorcellerie,

À Madeleine…

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ABSTRACT

Among the most marginalized populations in the world, one group of women has been persistently ignored, silenced, and forgotten. In Burkina Faso, West Africa, older women in rural villages are often the target of witchcraft accusations; the consequences of these accusations are alarming because these women undergo violent attacks, face exclusion from their villages, and become the most vulnerable and marginalized segment of the Burkinabe population. Between August 2017 and November 2018, I conducted an ethnographic study of Burkinabe women accused of witchcraft living in two shelters in the capital city of Ouagadougou and examined women's experiences of accusation, trauma, and how they have built new forms of identity and solidarity.

Witchcraft has garnered continuous and varying interest in anthropology since the foundation of the discipline and has been analyzed using various and opposing frameworks such as, for instance, functionalism and symbolism. However, little research has been conducted from a Bourdieusian phenomenological anthropological perspective focusing on the social and psychological causes and consequences of witchcraft allegations on women's lives and with a transnational feminist positionality. Accusations of witchcraft are widespread across the Mossi ethnicity in Burkina Faso and primarily target older women who are widows and lived in polygynous households. These women have experienced the worst form of oppression at an age where they are supposed to receive respect and consideration. These accusations exemplify the

multiple forms of symbolic violence that women are suffering with fatalism and resignation in a Mossi society that is highly patriarchal and hierarchical. It is an extreme form of symbolic violence intended to control women and to prevent them from transgressing Mossi social norms. Furthermore, the investigation of a specific event of intense witch craze that took place in 2016 in Pilimpikou (Burkina Faso), along with the interviews of both accused and accusers, has revealed the intricate causalities and processes of witchcraft accusation.

The phenomenon of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft appears to be a profound and traditional practice but is nevertheless a contemporary occurrence that highlights the difficulties of a Mossi society in transition. The number of women in shelters is decreasing as the results of governmental and non-governmental organizations' programs of rehabilitation and prevention of accusation, but more efforts are necessary to eradicate this form of women's oppression, as well as long term efforts such as women's economic development and education to empower women and contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities" (Voltaire 1769).

Anyone who enters a shelter for the first time where women accused of witchcraft (WAoW) live together after having been rejected from their villages in Burkina Faso will experience a feeling of profound injustice and be emotionally stricken by the fragility and vulnerability of these older Mossi women. They have experienced the worst form of oppression at an age in which they are supposed to receive respect and consideration from their relatives. Witchcraft accusations are one example of the multiple forms of symbolic violence aimed at women that are part of the habitus of the highly hierarchical and patriarchal Mossi society in Burkina Faso.

This ethnographic research was conducted between August 2017 and November 2018. An important part of the study was carried out in shelters that welcome women who have been ostracized and marginalized. The interviews with 200 women conducted from a phenomenological standpoint have revealed the extent of the suffering inflicted on these women. It has also uncovered the intricate causalities of witchcraft accusations, the processes of accusations, and the dreadful consequences of such acts of oppression of older Mossi women. The research shows how women have recreated a new way of living while maintaining traditional structures or habitus similar to their previous lives in their villages.

Furthermore, the discussion with key informants from the villages where WAoW came from and the investigation of a specific case of witchcraft hunt in Pilimpikou has revealed new aspects of Mossi beliefs and also allowed having the accusers' perspectives on witchcraft. This research brings new understanding to witchcraft accusations since anthropological research has mainly focused on the phenomenon of witchcraft practice, focusing little on the harmful social consequences of witchcraft accusations aimed at women. Furthermore, little intensive research has been conducted on this subject in Burkina Faso, a country that does not receive much attention from Anglophone scholars in general.

The Burkinabe government is not indifferent to these women's suffering, and, with the support of Catholic organizations, has launched programs to rehabilitate WAoW and prevent social exclusion. However, these programs were impeded by political instability and lack of financial support. This research is an effort to reassess the problem of social exclusion of WAoW from a larger perspective, and to evaluate the programs that have been conducted to prevent the phenomena and to rehabilitate WAoW. Based on the findings, I propose recommendations for future prevention and rehabilitation programs and suggestions to ameliorate women's lives in the shelters.

1.1. Overview of the chapters

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. The first part comprises four chapters, including the research setting, literature review, the theoretical approach, and the research methods. The second part of the dissertation consists of the results, the ethnographic analysis of the phenomenon of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft including a Bourdieusian phenomenological approach of social exclusion, and the analysis of violence among the Mossi.

This chapter is also a review of the programs conducted to reduce the number of WAoW with recommendations.

Chapter 2 provides a global perspective of Burkina Faso, consisting of its history, socioeconomic background, and an overview of the Mossi ethnicity. Studying a phenomenon such as witchcraft accusations in Burkina Faso cannot be accomplished without taking into consideration the specific history of the country marked by prior French colonization (1890-1960), independence, and subsequent development programs and political instabilities. Burkina Faso has had one of the most famous African revolutionaries, Thomas Sankara, referred to as the African Che, who has left an important legacy for the country, starting with its name, Burkina Faso, or the land of people of integrity. He was assassinated, and his successor Blaise Compaoré remained president for almost three decades until his destitution in 2014. After a period of political instability, the country had the first genuine democratic and transparent elections since independence in 2015, and a new political era is now open in Burkina Faso. However, the country is still struggling with endemic poverty and economic development that is slow in coming. The economy is based on agriculture, and 71 percent of the population lives in rural areas (World Bank 2016). The high level of birth rate combined with a low life expectancy result in a very young population, with 65 percent of Burkinabe being under 25 who have limited access to education (UNPD 2018). In Burkina Faso, polygamy is legal and has significant effects in Burkinabe's lives; many WAoW lived in polygamous households before being accused of witchcraft and expelled.

The Mossi represent the largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso (almost half of the population) and has a specific history, political organization, and belief system. Mossi society is characterized by a highly hierarchical and patriarchal structure. The phenomenon of social

exclusion of WAoW occurs mainly among the Mossi. Even though other ethnicities may also believe in witchcraft, the Mossi are the only ethnic group that systematically rejects and excludes alleged witches from their villages.

Even though the research mainly focused on the lived experience of women accused of witchcraft, chapter 3 offers a review of anthropological literature on witchcraft. The topic has received important considerations from anthropologists who have applied various theories to analyze and explain witchcraft over time. However, anthropologists have paid little attention to the social effects of witchcraft accusations that have mostly targeted women all over the world and at different periods; it is noteworthy to compare these various waves of witchcraft accusations to understand better why women have always been the primary targets. Furthermore, it is also essential to understand witchcraft beliefs in Burkina Faso nowadays and how they influence and affect people in the country.

Chapter 4 is a review of the theoretical framework that I refer to as a Bourdieusian phenomenological approach. Studying marginalized and vulnerable women has ethical concerns for the researcher who has the responsibility to describe their lived experience and their suffering in a way that would reduce the power inequity between researcher and research subjects. Therefore, the choice of research methods was based on a theoretical phenomenological approach, including embodiment and intersubjectivity. This chapter also includes the theoretical approach of analysis of the data based on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic violence and a review of the concepts of social exclusion.

Since women are the main victims of witchcraft accusations, it is essential to understand the position of Burkinabe women in society. Chapter 5 starts with an overview of African feminism and the obstacles of the development of specific African feminism that is almost

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inexistent in Burkina Faso. Burkinabe women are exposed to multiple forms of violence and oppression, and chapter 3 explores the cultural norms of gender, marriage, and the practice of female genital cutting from a Bourdieusian approach. Burkinabe women have struggled and fought for access to political positions, but they only represent a small group of educated women. Although there are women who have been able to develop economic independence like, for instance, in the shea butter industry, most of the Burkinabe women are the primary victims of poverty, another form of symbolic violence. The setback of feminism in Burkina Faso has left them with very few means to defend their rights.

Chapter 6 is a summary of the methods used to conduct this research. These methods are traditional anthropological methods such as participant observation, interviews, focus groups, collecting life stories and archives all conducted with a phenomenological approach that also led to a reflection on the limits of the research and the positionality of the researcher.

The second part of the dissertation is the result of the data collected and the ethnographic analysis of these data. Chapter 7 is an overview of the results of the research before the examination. It includes a description of the research settings, a mapping of the locations of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft in Burkina Faso, and the profile of the victims of accusation. It is also a review of the legal issues relative to witchcraft accusations and the various influences of religion in the process. It is an initial analysis of the causes and the physical, psychological, and economic consequences of accusations on women and their families.

The phenomenon of exclusion of women accused of witchcraft exemplifies the problem of violence among the Mossi. In chapter 8, the analysis of the specific case of a witchhunt craze that happened in 2016 in a village called Pilimpikou revealed the intricate problems related to

witchcraft accusations and the struggles of a young population in a society in transition. The village is a mythical Mossi location and has a long-lasting reputation of witchcraft that has isolated the town and accentuated its poverty.

In chapter 9, the concept of social exclusion is developed through the testimony of women who were the victims in a society in which they were supposed to be respected and protected. These women demonstrate a high level of resilience; they have developed new ways of living and new forms of relationships.

Finally, in chapter 10, I examine the various programs conducted in order to decrease the number of women excluded from their villages and reduce the number of women in shelters through rehabilitations. Based on my experience and research, I propose recommendations for further programs of prevention of exclusion and ideas to improve WAoW lives in the centers.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING OF BURKINA FASO

"You cannot carry out fundamental changes without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future" Thomas Sankara, 1985 (Prairie 2007: 232)

Because of its location, and its socio-economic status, Burkina Faso is not very well known in the world in general, and very little research has been conducted by English-speaking scholars in Burkina Faso. The country was called Upper Volta until 1984 was a French colony between 1890 and 1960. After its independence (1960), the country has undergone many waves of political instability that has also contributed to slowing down its development. However, during the Sankara period, the country experienced a short period of prosperity. In this chapter, special attention is given to the Mossi, the predominant ethnic group of the country, and the primary ethnicity concerned with social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft.

2.1. History of Burkina Faso

The area today called Burkina Faso was populated between 14,000 and 5,000 BC by hunter-gatherers. Permanent farmer settlements appeared between 3600 and 2600 BC (Skinner 1989). In the central part of Burkina Faso, several Mossi kingdoms had ruled the country for centuries until 1896, when the French colonized the region.

2.1.1. Colonization and its consequences

As with many African nations, Burkina Faso underwent a long and influential French colonization period between 1890 and 1960. French colonizers invariably conquered all parts of the country but encountered some resistance from the Mossi ethnic group (Englebert 1996).

During the colonial period, many socio-economic, political, and administrative transformations took place. Borders were modified many times throughout the French administration. In 1932 during the global economic crisis, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta then) was dismantled and divided into three parts that were attached to the neighboring colonies Soudan, Niger, and Cote d'Ivoire to provide labor to these colonies. The Mossi authorities, offended by the division of the Mossi Kingdom, asked for the restoration of the Mossi dignity. In 1938, the French government decided to add most of the Mossi regions into the new colony called Haute-Côte-d'Ivoire (Upper Cote d'Ivoire). It was only in 1947 that the educated Mossi elite obtained the restitution of the Upper Volta territory as it was before 1932 (Massa & Madiega 1995).

After the conquest, the colonial authority elaborated a vast program of exploitation and development of the colonies. This program followed a logic that prioritizes the economic, political, and social interests of the colonizers. Roads, railroads, wells, and dams were built, and some industries were developed, such as the cotton industry and agricultural industry, but at the dawn of independence, the results of the colonizer's attempts at development were weak (Massa & Madiega 1995).

The colonial settlement caused many constraints to the population, such as the tax of capitation, compulsory labor, and military recruitment. Thousands of men were sent to other colonies as labor. Many men were enlisted in the army and were deployed during the two world

wars; for instance, during the First World War, about 30,600 men were enlisted (Michel 1973). In 1904, colonizers also imposed the Code de l'Indigénat, a set of laws that kept colonized populations in a legal status inferior to that of citizens.

Among the major social changes brought by colonization, the first one was to bring security in the country by ending the ongoing ethnic wars. The colonizers also developed schools inculcating French culture and language for the colonized population. The first schools opened in 1900. In 1933, there were 3,500 students. Before independence, there were 267 primary schools with 38,000 students and 11 secondary schools with 1554 students. (Massa & Madiega 1995).

Colonization also facilitated the expansion of Islam and Christianity. Even though Islam existed before colonization, the development of roads and commercial exchanges with other colonized countries enhanced its expansion. Christianity appeared in Burkina almost at the same time as the colonial administration and expanded with the development of schools and medical centers (Massa & Madiega 1995).

In November 2017, during a visit to Burkina Faso, the French President Emmanuel Macron said, "Je suis d'une génération de Français pour qui les crimes de la colonisation européenne sont incontestables et font partie de notre histoire." (I am from a generation of French people for whom the crimes of European colonization are indisputable and are part of our history) (Jeune Afrique 2017).

The impact of the French colonization is still present in the country. First of all, the official language has remained French, whereas I have observed that most people in their daily life do not speak French. Although if a larger portion of the population speaks Mooré, it is not

the case in all parts of the country, and therefore French seems to be the language that brings together all Burkinabe as well as other African francophone countries.

Along with architecture and street names, I observed many other remnants of the French colonization. Measuring the impact of the colonization would necessitate a long, thorough, and dispassionate research; yet who is habilitated to conduct such impartial research? France and Burkina Faso have maintained a strong relationship that has had positive and negative consequences, such as the possible implication of France in the assassination of Sankara. Today, even though French people are welcomed in Burkina Faso –mostly because they work in organizations supporting the country- rancor and resentment are still perceptible among the Burkinabe population.

2.1.2. After independence

On August 5th, 1960, Upper Volta (which was to become Burkina Faso later) gained its independence and sovereignty, developing a multiparty political system inspired by the French model (Englebert 1996). In December of 1960, Maurice Yaméogo, a Mossi from the region of Koudougou, became the first elected president. That same year he imposed a one-party (the African Democratic Assembly) system in the country, imprisoning his opponents and eliminating all opposition. The period of euphoria that followed independence was soon impeded by the same economic difficulties in which most African countries have found themselves. In this case, the Yaméogo government almost drove the country into bankruptcy. However, trade unions remained independent, and in 1966 they organized a strike that turned into a coup led by Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana. In January 1966, Yaméogo resigned, and the first military regime was established, with more than half of the ministers comprised of soldiers. The new president

Lamizana, a Muslim of Samo origin, imposed a strict military regime until 1969 when a new constitution was approved, and political activities resumed.

When new union protests and political conflicts erupted inside the government, Lamizana dismissed the government and founded the "Renouveau National" (National Renewal), and banned all political activities. After 14 years under the Lamizana regime, another military coup was formed in November of 1980 by Colonel Saye Zerbo, a former foreign minister also from the Samo ethnic group. Once again, the new leader tried to impose a unique political party: le Comité Militaire pour le Redressement et le Progrès National (Committee for Reform and National Progress). Ethnic rivalry persisted. The Mossi leaders and a new generation of young Marxist soldiers conspired against the new government, and two years later, Colonel Gabriel Somé Yorian--supported by the Mossi chief--seized power and installed Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo as president. The younger generation of soldiers, however, were not satisfied with Ouédraogo's politics and wanted to get rid of the conservatives who supported the Mossi chiefs. Subsequently, a young captain named Thomas Noel Sankara was nominated prime minister to appease the tension between the different parties. However, Sankara resigned in May of 1983 and was promptly arrested. Ouédraogo reinstated freedom of the press and the unions, allowing Sankara to build his political agenda. On August 4th, 1983, Captain Blaise Compaoré, a close friend of Sankara, organized a *coup* and liberated Sankara, who then became the leader of the National Revolution (Williamson 2013). A new political leader was born, a new era starting for the beleaguered country.

2.1.3. Sankara: a charismatic national hero, the African "Che"

It is virtually impossible to discuss the history of Burkina Faso without bringing up the long-lasting national and international influences of former President Thomas Sankara. Without

a doubt, one of the most illustrious Burkinabè whose politics were unique and had an immediate

effect on the country and its people, even though he governed the country for only four years.

Born in 1948, Sankara went to military school in his country but also in Madagascar, where he

was exposed to Marxism by students who participated in the French protest of May 1968

(Sankara 1990). Sankara is regarded as a splendid orator as attested by the translation and

publication of his speeches in many countries. Elected president of Upper Volta at 33 years-of-

age, he writes, "on the first anniversary of the revolution, the Republic of Upper Volta was

renamed Burkina Faso, a combination of words in the Jula and Mooré languages meaning, 'Land

of Upright Men'" (Sankara 1988: 72). "I gave our people a name and our country new horizons"

(Sankara 1990: 21).

2.1.4. A period of hope in Burkina Faso

Sankara's politics had some significant positive effects on the country (Guissou 1995).

The government imposed "*un effort populaire d'investissement*" (a popular investment effort)

during which all workers and employees accepted a reduction of 1/12 of their salaries, the money

being used to equip hospitals and medical centers and purchase ambulances for people living far

from health centers. The funds were also used to support social actions across the board. An

interesting aspect of Sankara's politics was its transparency; the government systematically

published all their expenses. As a result, traditional solidarity was restored. The *Programme*

Populaire de Development (PPD), or popular development program, was designed and

implemented by communities and villages to respond directly to their needs, creating

unprecedented empowerment of the lower Burkinabè classes; the peasants were given hope and

vitality to accomplish the difficult task of helping the country become self-sufficient and

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overcome adversities such as the terrible drought of 1983-1984. The slogan was "produce and consume Burkinabè" (Guissou 1995: 126).

With subsequent agricultural growth of 6.4 percent in 1990, the World Bank classified Burkina Faso as second in the ranking of African countries for its agrarian growth, and the country could nearly achieve self-sufficiency. Under the revolutionary government, two hydroelectric dams were built, and if the third dam could have been completed as planned, the country could have become electrically auto-sufficient. It was during this period that the government also developed the first public transportation system, setting up a bus system and extending existing railroads (Guissou 1995). In the 1990s, Ouagadougou was the only African capital with more than one million inhabitants that had no shantytowns. Between 1983 and 1993, there were more houses built than during the previous century. The government constructed 3500 social housing units rented to Burkinabè based on their salaries. Unfortunately, the structural adjustment imposed later by international organizations would compromise all these efforts.

The revolutionary government also put forth an effort to develop access to school and education. With the support of villagers who helped with the construction of schools with material provided by the government, 700 to 900 classes were built in 10 years, doubling the initial school capacity. Adult literacy campaigns were promoted, and specific women's programs implemented (Guissou 1995). However, according to Guissou, if the revolution succeeded in democratizing schools, it nonetheless failed to improve the quality of education.

Furthermore, the Sankara government conducted an aggressive battle against corruption. The President forced every high official (including himself) to declare their assets; some officials, like Compaoré, were not happy with this disposition (Harsch 2013). He also obligated them to reduce the level of their opulent lifestyles. Leading by example, Sankara only drove

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modest cars and even rode a bicycle on occasion. He was close to the people and widely beloved as a leader.

2.1.5. The broken dream

Everything was not perfect during the Sankara revolution. Abuses were committed by members of the CDR (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution), and Sankara did not approve of them (Harsch 2013). Invariably, the CDR became a repressive structure (Englebert 1996). Tensions grew feverish between the unions and the CDR, with union leaders subsequently arrested. Conflicts ended with a coup and the assassination of Sankara in October of 1987 that may have been instigated by military officers, with the support of France and Cote d'Ivoire upset by Sankara's anti-imperialist movement (Harsh 3013). Burkinabè people still mourn the death of their charismatic leader and stand vigilant at his gravesite every year. After his death, public mention of his name was deemed taboo until 2000 when he was redeemed and designated a national hero (Harsch 2013: 359). Only recently has the investigation into his assassination been resumed.

2.1.6. The Compaoré ruling decades

Blaise Compaoré, "one of the continent's longest-serving rulers" (Harsh 2016: 231), seized political power in a military coup in 1987, after the assassination of Thomas Sankara. But as underlined by Harsh, the resulting government presented many of the same political weaknesses common to other sub-Saharan countries such as ineffectual state structures influenced by social, ethnic, and familial pressures. Even though at first Compaoré used repressive methods to impose his authority, the regime eventually became semi-authoritarian.

Since the early 1990s, political pluralism, freedom of the media, and regular elections "gave at least an appearance of constitutional democracy" (Harsh 2016: 232).

2.1.7. Recent historical events: from Compaoré to democracy

From February of 2011 through 2014, Burkinabè citizens engaged in a variety of protests, mostly against the Blaise Compaoré government (Harsh 2016). Students were the first to participate in demonstrations that focused on police brutality following the death of Justin Zongo, a student beaten to death by police in Koudougou. These initial protests were followed by a number of other uncoordinated student demonstrations of resistance all over the country. The movement evolved and broadened, including additional claims on various social, economic, and local issues. According to Harsh, student protests were followed by "labor marches, merchants' protests, a judges' strike, army and police mutinies, a farmers' boycott, attacks on mining sites, and other forms of struggles" (Harsh 2016: 231). In 2013, demonstrations became more significant and better organized, and the opponents adopted a common goal: preventing Compaoré from changing the constitution in order to be reelected. The effectiveness of these protests went beyond everyone's expectation; not only was the constitutional revision impeded, but protesters also forced the resignation of Blaise Compaoré, who consequently fled the country in October of 2014 (Harsh 2016).

2.1.7.1. The transitional government

The transitional government was formed with the purpose of organizing new elections because the populace was in favor of a civilian transition (Chouli 2015). The new government was formed by interim president Michel Kafando, a former diplomat in the service of the Compaoré military regime, and Prime Minister Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Zida, a militarist who

had led the insurrection, and the army remains a major political actor during the transition (Chouli 2015). Kafando and Zida decided to satisfy the cry of the people by reopening the unresolved murder cases of Thomas Sankara and journalist Norbert Zongo[1].

2.1.7.2. Military coup and recent elections

On September 16th, 2015, Burkina Faso underwent yet another military *coup* fomented by the Regiment de Securite Presidentielle (RSP), a private army of 1200 men created during the Blaise Compaoré government. The leader of the *coup*, Gilbert Diendere, sought to restore order, and suspend the elections the transitional government had tried to organize (Zelig 2016). The dissatisfaction of the Diendere faction resulted from the decision of the transitional government to prevent some members of the Compaoré regime from running in the elections. Resistance was rapidly organized by trade unions; major strikes were coordinated, and barricades were erected all across the capital city. In some towns such as Bobo-Dioulasso, the police and army supported the protests. According to Zelig, "no coup has been so shocking, or so short-lived. By September 25th, the coup had been defeated, and the RSP dissolved by the government of transition, which has taken its place again" (2016: 2).

On November 29, 2015, an election took place without major incident and with a roster of candidates. Roch Marc Kaboré won this election with 53.49 percent of the vote in the first round (Zelig 2016). But as Zelig calls into question, after such an incredibly popular revolt against the Compaoré regime, why did half of the Burkinabè choose a president who was a former minister of the Compaoré government before becoming a prominent opponent?

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[1] Norbert Zongo was a journalist who exposed corruption under the Compaoré regime. He was assassinated in December 1998.

According to Zelig, some of the answers can be found in the economic structures of the country (see section 2.4).

Today, Burkina Faso is facing critical difficulties with the ongoing terrorist attacks in the north of the country and the three attacks in the capital. These terrorist attacks have significant consequences on the country that cannot yet be measured. On the 31st of December 2018, the President of Faso decided to declare a state of emergency in seven of the 13 provinces of Burkina Faso. He also gave instructions for specific security arrangements throughout the territory.

Based on my observations, it appears that the country's development has slowed down, the population is unhappy with the government, which struggles to contain the spread of extremists in the country, and tourism has almost disappeared. International organizations hesitate to undertake initiatives and support programs in unsecured regions. For example, in September 2017, all the U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers in the country were withdrawn, and in November 2019, the American Embassy decided to evacuate all families with children.

2.2 Burkinabe Population

Since 2006, Burkina Faso has not had a new census, which is most likely due to political turmoil and readjustment. The government planned a census for 2018, but I did not hear it mentioned throughout my time spent there, and since almost everything is delayed and slow to put in motion, it is not surprising. Based on UNDP human development indices and indicators for 2018, the estimated population of Burkina Faso is 19.2 million people with a population growth rate of 3% and a ratio of .99 male per female. Seventy-one percent of the population lives

in rural areas. Life expectancy is still low: 60 years for men and 61.4 years for women. The total fertility rate is 5.71 children per woman. For each of the ethnic groups, religion reported does not appear to bring any change in the fertility level of women. However, the level of education and residing in urban areas seem to influence negatively the fertility of each of the ethnic groups (Younoussi 2007).

More than 65 percent of the total population is under the age of 25 due to high fertility and decreased mortality, such as infant mortality, which dropped from 91.7 in 2016 (INSD) to 52.7 in 2017 (UNPD). Urban residence and school attendance sharply reduce the mortality of children under five (Younoussi 2007).

2.2.1. Education

Another major problem in Burkina Faso is access to education. The education index (0.285) has insignificantly progressed during the last three years and is among the lowest in the world. The literacy rate is extremely low; 34.6 percent of the population age 15 and over can read and write, which places the country at the 157th position out of 162 countries for literacy rate. There is a significant gender gap in literacy; 43 percent of men and only 29.3 percent of women can read and write. In the 2006 census, there was also a significant difference between the literacy rate in urban (67.1) and rural (18.6) areas. Although the expected year of schooling has increased and is now at 8.5 years with smaller differences between male (8.8) and female (8.3), the mean years of schooling for males is twice that of women.

Having witnessed the enrollment process for the granddaughter of a woman who lived in a shelter, I understood many of the difficulties encountered by low-income families in Burkina Faso. To get enrolled in school, children must have a birth certificate. Not all parents understand

the need for their children to be declared at birth since they have no birth certificate themselves. Parents might not be able to read and write. Even though public schools are free until middle school, families are required to pay for the parents' association, which is quite powerful and can withhold the school entrance for those children who have not paid the fees. Furthermore, there is no obligation to enroll children at school. Even though there had been attempts to coerce families to enroll children by sending letters with threats of prosecutions, the state has never followed up with their threats, and families would ignore these letters (Swawadogo 2006:115). In families with a large number of children, the head of the household has to make some choices when it comes to sending children to secondary schools since it is not free, and they choose to enroll boys rather than girls. Sometimes, in a polygamist family, the husband will give his wives the responsibility to enroll children in school, which means women are left to find their own solutions to enable their children's education.

2.2.2. Ethnic groups

Burkina Faso comprises around sixty different ethnicities. The Mossi, who dominate the central region of the country known as the Mossi Plateau, are the largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso, representing 49 percent of the population (Younoussi 2008). All other ethnic groups each represent less than 10 percent with Peul (Fulani) (7.8%) in the North, Gourmantché (7%) in the East, Gourounsi (6%) and Bissa (3%) in the South, Samo (2%), Marka (1.7%), Bobo (1.6%), Senofo (2.2%), Dagara (3.7%), and Lobi (2.5%) in the South-West (Younoussi 2008). There are more ethnic groups that are sub-groups of larger ones, but what is important to highlight is the domination of the Mossi ethnicity in the country.

According to Younoussi, ethnicity can influence marriage and fertility through cultural models (social organization, environment, etc.), norms, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. Yet, almost

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all ethnic groups favor the marriage by alliance. Burkinabè have a preference for early marriages, especially for girls. Matrimonial strategies are generally based on the ability to have several women, to have numerous descendants, or to further extend alliance networks (2008).

Until very recently, all these ethnic groups lived relatively peacefully together. Sadly, in January 2019, the first ethnic massacre happened in Burkina Faso. After armed men (maybe Islamists) attacked the village of Yirgou located at 200 km northwest of Ouagadougou and killed the chief as well as six other people in the village, the villagers sought revenge by killing 70 Peuls from different herding communities in the region and forcing 6000 people to migrate to other regions (RFI Afrique 2019).

2.3. Religion

According to the 2006 general census, Islam is the most widespread religion in Burkina Faso (60.5% of the population). It is followed by the Catholic religion (19.0%), the animist religion (15.3%), and the Protestant religion (4.2%). There are, however, very few people without religion (0.4%). The larger Muslim population resides in the North and East of the country. Religious distribution is about the same among the Mossi (Younoussi 2008).

The animist religions that include all other forms of traditional beliefs in Burkina Faso have fewer followers in urban areas. They are mostly represented in rural areas (19.3% against 2% in urban areas) and most prevalent in the South West, with 64.9% of the population in 2006 (INSD 2006). Yet animism has slowly declined, and since 1960, the proportion of animists has gone from 68.7% to 15.3% in 2006. A new census is necessary to obtain more accurate data.

2.4. Socio-economic and political facts

The economic stability of Burkina Faso is a major challenge for the Burkinabe government. Among the poorest African countries (ranked 183 out of 187 in 2018, according to a UNDP report), the economy is primarily based on agriculture. Burkina Faso also produces gold that accounts for three-quarters of the total export revenues (Central Intelligence Agency 2020).

After independence in 1960, "the GDP per capita declined on average by -3.7% per year. The economy started to recover in 1966, but not before 1980 did the GDP per capita reach again its level of 1960" (Grimm and Günther 2004: 6). Two years after the first military *coup* in 1981, Thomas Sankara seized power and tried to restore social justice and direct more attention to the poor population. His government tried to fix agriculture prices in order to ensure more equitable revenues to producers, but these measures were not sufficient. The government also invested significantly in education, health, land reforms, and infrastructure projects (Grimm and Günther 2004). As a result, the GDP per capita grew by 2.9 percent per year during the Sankara regime. When Blaise Compaoré seized power in 1987, however, the new president abandoned the Sankara policy and undertook reforms following the IMF and World Bank advice of structural adjustment by starting the liberalization and privatization of the economy. Between 1991 and 1993, the GDP decreased by -3.8 percent per year. The deviation of the franc CFA in 1994 also had a significant impact on the economy. However, after the devaluation, the GDP started to grow again, increasing by 3.3 percent by 1998; this growth was partly due to the result of the favorable price of cotton on the world market. Between 2000 and 2010, the country enjoyed a continuous growth rate of 5.7 percent per year, but paradoxically, this strong growth had little impact on reducing poverty, which by 2010 affected 43.9 percent of the population (mostly rural) (Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales 2010).

The reasons for the so-called "Burkinabé Paradox" are complex but can be explained by various factors. The demographic growth (3.1 percent between 1996 and 2006 with 52.1 percent of the population being under 18 years of age), few new jobs created, and a food crop agriculture that barely subsidizes the population's needs explain that despite the economic growth, poverty remained (Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales 2010). The Burkinabè economy is also inherently vulnerable to external factors such as financial and economic world crises, as well as climatic factors (particularly rainfall). The political crisis of 2014—2015 and the Ebola epidemic in neighboring countries had a significant impact on the economy of the country, causing a stunt in growth at only 4 percent due to a diminution of private investments (World Bank 2016). In 2015, Burkina Faso's economic situation improved, and the forecast over the foreseeable future was favorable (World Bank 2016).

According to Chouli:

> If Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world - despite mostly positive macroeconomic indicators from a neoliberal perspective – this is primarily due to its status as a neocolonial state and is accentuated by the neoliberal, macroeconomic reforms taken by the regime from the early 1990s. The accumulation by dispossession (especially in the mining boom and development of agribusiness) has been undertaken by transnational and local companies with an unquenchable thirst, which has aggravated social vulnerability (2015: 330).

Chouli affirms that the spontaneous popular mobilization that led to the resignation of Compaoré was also a fight against social marginalization. During the uprising of 2015, people involved in gold mining demonstrated and expressed their dissatisfaction with doing all the hard work, yet while being left out during the gold boom (Chouli 2015).

2.4.1. Polygamy (polygyny)

Although some countries have banned "official" polygamy as Tunisia did in 1957, polygamy is still allowed in Burkina Faso. In most cases, polygamy refers to polygyny, the union of one man with many women, which is the most frequent form of polygamy; the two words are often used interchangeably in the literature. Supporters of polygamy would explain that it is necessary given that there are more women than men in the Burkinabe population (Sawadogo 2006). Since there are 51% of women for 49% of men, the difference does not justify polygamy.

As we will see later, polygamy may also be one of the factors causing the social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. It is then necessary to look closer at the phenomenon of polygamy and its consequences from the perspective of a male Burkinabe sociologist. According to A. Sawadogo, a man who has many wives spends more time in settling conflicts between his wives, and he is a hidden slave driver who creates a climate of servile submission by terror (2006).

Finding recent data on polygamy in Burkina Faso is difficult; most articles use the data collected during the 2006 census. Polygamy is more represented in rural areas than in urban areas. It affects many more women than men. Six percent of men, compared to 11.6 percent of women are polygamous in urban areas. In rural areas, 17.6 percent of men and 33.1 percent of women adhere to polygamy. Although it is against the principles of Christianity, polygamy is also practiced by Christians, but the phenomenon is less important than in other religions. Polygamous men represent 21.5% among animists, 15.2% among Muslims, 7.6% among Catholics, and 5.7% among Protestants. Among women, polygamous unions account for 36.8% of animists, 29% of Muslims, 16% of Catholics, and 14.4% of Protestants (INSD Census 2006).

Traditionally, men bring together several wives in the same family concession, yet each wife has her own separate house; more recently, men have also chosen geographical polygamy with several wives housed in different concessions and different neighborhoods or localities (Sawadogo 2006). Other forms of polygamy have developed in cities, also called "*deuxieme bureau*" (second office), which are not legal marriages, but men have to provide for their "mistresses" and their children. Sometimes, wives, mistresses, and children will find out about each other only on the day of the husband's funeral (Sawadogo 2006).

After independence, the first draft of the code had instituted monogamy as the only legal form of marriage. The Council of Ministers was cautious and refused to adopt the article before having the opinions and suggestions of people from all social strata. A survey was conducted, and the results indicated that rural populations were not ready for the suppression of polygamy. Indeed, even women themselves wanted it to be maintained for a variety of reasons. City women feared that they would not have a husband, while rural women wanted co-wives to relieve them of farm work and housework (Sombugma 2016). Thus the legislators of Burkina Faso, although aware of the disadvantages of polygamy, understood that the Burkinabe population was not prepared for the adoption of monogamy as the only form of marriage. The trick has been to assert that monogamy remains the ideal form of marriage; however, polygamy is allowed under certain conditions.

When a couple decides to get a civil marriage, they must decide between a monogamous or polygamous marriage, and both the man and the woman have to give their consent. However, in some cases, women may not have given their consent, but their husband may find ways to circumvent the law with the support of (corrupted) civil servants who would accept that the consent is signed by proxy through the husband. So even though women may seem to accept

polygamy in Muslim and non-Christian marriages (more research needs to be conducted on the subject), it is not evident that they do have the choice, and once the decision is made, it is impossible to change it (Sombugma 2016). Additionally, when it is the man's second marriage, the bride has no choice but to accept polygamy. However, the first wife may oppose the marriage of her husband by proving that she was abandoned with her children, but many women may not know their rights. As emphasized by Sawadogo, "some women may wake up one morning and find out that their husband has married another woman" (Sawadogo 2006: 125). It can be a great shock for these women who may react differently: some may develop depression, others may start to fight for their rights and those of their children, and others may be resigned (Sawadogo 2006).

I have met a soon-to-be-married woman who explained that she would agree to have a co-wife so that the chores could be divided but under the condition that she and her co-wife would get along. However, she had not had the experience of living in a polygamist household. In another case, a Catholic woman who married a Muslim man found herself in a difficult situation because they did not contract a civil marriage, but instead, they got married in a mosque. When the woman requested to have a civil marriage, the couple could not agree on the subject; the wife wanted monogamy, and the husband preferred polygamy. The couple never obtained a civil union, and the husband married another woman without the consent of his first wife.

A woman would seldom praise polygamy and would rather express resignation about its existence (Sawadogo 2006). In a polygamist household, there are often conflicts, not only between women but also between children. According to Sawadogo, in most of these families, children may not live in a peaceful and beneficial atmosphere. I met people who have grown up

in such a deleterious atmosphere where their mother may have been ostracized by the other wives and consequently her children too. When a mother dies, her children will never have the same chances in their family. Co-wives may accept to raise the children of a wife who died, but they would always favor their own children. In some situations, a large number of people in a household also creates problems in space, particularly in cities.

For Sawadogo, polygamy slows down economic development for different reasons. First, because there are more children in polygamist households, and they have fewer chances to get an education because of the cost of schools. In families with a large number of children, the head of the household has to make some choices when it comes to sending children to secondary schools. Since it is not free, he often chooses to enroll boys rather than girls. Sometimes in polygamist families, the husband will give his wives the responsibility to enroll children in school, and women have to manage on their own to find the money for education. In turn, this causes differences in opportunities for children in families and creates more conflicts.

The second reason why polygamy is slowing down the economy is related to quality food access for large families. The economic capacity of the household may not be able to take care of a large number of persons, and they will only have access to low-quality food that increases the likelihood for children and other members of the family to get sick. Sometimes, members of the extended family have to step in to help raise children. (Sawadogo 2006:116)

A large family in a polygamist marriage is also a result of competition between women for being the ones who will have the most children and preferably boys to support their mother and give them more power in the household. A sterile woman will be in a very difficult position in a household where other women have children. Other women would restlessly remind her of her "infirmity" in a very cruel way (Sawadogo 2006:119). A sterile woman has fewer chances to

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be repudiated in a polygamist household than in a monogamist household. A man needs to have descendants regardless of the mother. Sawadogo emphasizes that the concept of African marriage is procreation to fill the earth as in the first days of humanity (2006:120).

According to Sawadogo, it is girls' education that will little by little help reduce polygamy because politicians are not ready yet to vote laws against polygamy; some of the members of government might be polygamists themselves, or they do not want to lose an important electorate of "traditionalists." According to Sawadogo, even international non-governmental organizations do not tackle the subject head-on even though they might agree that polygamy is an obstacle in the fight against poverty.

It is likely that the number of polygamous households has decreased, but it is still prevalent in the country. Traore (2012) declares that the abolition of polygamy would trigger a kind of conjugal war that would cause victims among men and women in Burkina Faso. On the other hand, Sombugma, who is a member of the Burkinabe Association of Women Jurists, thinks that polygamy cannot be maintained and legalized by a republican code because it contradicts the principle of equality between men and women (2016).

2.5. The Mossi

2.5.1. History of the Mossi

The Moogo is the Sahelo-Sudanese political space in central West Africa, roughly corresponding to the White Volta Basin, which at the end of the 19th century, was dominated by the aristocratic order of the Mossi (Izard 2003:10). The origin of the Mossi has not yet been established with certainty and is still the subject of controversy. According to Pacere (1981), the

earlier history of the Mossi before 1890 is best known from the oral chronicles; "the story of the Mossi is not based on a chronology of events, but on a certain logic of them, making the phenomenon of time unnecessary" (1981:10). Other authors such as Zahan (1961) also suggested that the difficulties in establishing the history of the Mossi are related to the complexity of the conception of time, and Zahan affirms that Africans have more of a philosophy of history than an objective and positivist history (1961). Skinner underlines, "The origin of the Mossi society lies buried in myths that not only sanction the power of the ruling families but support the political system with rich traditions of migrations and conquest" (Skinner 1989:7).

Pacéré narrates the story of Nédéga, a chief who reigned over a region populated by Dagomba, Mossi, Mamproussi, and Nankans people at the end of the 10th century (1981). The capital of the area was Gambaga, located in actual Ghana. Nédéga's daughter, an amazon called Yenninga (or Yenenga), found herself in the forest of Bitou after a battle during which her horse would have been frightened. She met Riaré, an elephant hunter who was the only inhabitant of the region, and she married him. They had a child called Ouedraogo. Following the overcrowding of Gambaga, Ouédraogo and a group of horsemen decided to leave the country and to conquest Northern regions. Many decades later, different kingdoms were formed. Ouédraogo established the kingdom of Na-Tinkoudgo today called Tenkodogo, and Rawa and Oubri founded the kingdoms of Zandoma and Ouagadougou. According to Pacéré (1981), the geography of the Mogho (Mossi Kingdom) would not change much between the 12th and the 19th centuries until colonization.

Other scholars have proposed different versions of the history of the Mossi. According to Iliasu,

The ethnically - Mossi-Dagomba states were founded by small bands of strangers who migrated from the east or northeast of Lake Chad to the lands south of the Niger bend. The strangers were acquainted with the idea of chieftainship as opposed to the politico-ritual organization of the acephalous people they encountered. Because of their political and military superiority, they consequently overran those scattered and independent peoples and revolutionized their political or tribal patterns by welding them into kingdoms (1971: 95).

The Dagomba and Mapruisi oral traditions both relate the exploits of Kpogonumbo, the son of Tohazie, the red hunter. Kpogonumbo married Abdul Rahamani's daughter Sohlyini; their son Gbewa is recognized as being the great ancestor of the Mossi (Iliasu 1971).

However, Izard (2009) would situate the beginnings of Moogo's history at the end of the 15th century, during a movement of centralization of the Moogo that started in the southeast of Mossi's region. "From this initial niche, which was able to constitute itself through the action of warriors from the east or northeast, the model of a new form of power spread gradually towards the south as well as towards the northwest." (Izard 2009: 10)

The Moogo population was formed by the alliance of two different people (Bazie 2011); the Nioniose (sometimes called Tengdemba) are the indigenous people who maintained the power to communicate with the occult forces and occupied the position of earth priests, and the Nakomse, people who hold the military and political power. The Nakomse were the invaders, and the Nioniose were the native inhabitants of the region. It is the political organization in chiefdom that allowed the Nakomse to dominate the Nioniose. The two populations have merged into one Mossi population (Deverin, 1998).

2.5.2. Political organization

The power of the Moogo (Mossi kingdom) is centralized. Each village has a chief called the *naaba*. These chiefs belong to the same lineage as the Mogho Naaba, the emperor of all the Mossi who resides in Ouagadougou, and he is acknowledged to be the direct descendant of

Ouédraogo, the son of the Princess Yenenga and Riare. The Mossi Kingdom is a monarchy where the emperor has a divine character and a universal and legitimate power. The Mogho Naaba is a military leader and an absolute judge who, as a last resort, makes decisions for the cases that fall within his areas of expertise. Succession to the throne is typically done in order of primogeniture. But if the eldest son of the deceased king is not old enough to succeed him, then it is one of the brothers of the *naaba* who is elected.

All the ceremonies that take place in the Mogho Naaba palace have a sacred character and refer to a strict order established by the customs. The life of the court is regulated by a rigorous ceremonial in which all the acts of daily life are ritualized. Etiquette and precedence are part of a pre-established act and are followed to the letter. The first appearance of the king in front of his yard at sunrise is called *windg pousguyan* which means the sun is showing (Damiba 2011).

The regime is tempered by a series of customs whose precision, rigor, permanence, and cohesion achieve a true fundamental rule, an unwritten constitution that has been maintained for many centuries. Mossi's life is structured by an important number of interdictions and prohibitions that have the function to eliminate violence and to create a moral unity necessary to the development of the society but also to maintain the order and integrity of the cosmos (Damiba 2011).

The Mossi kingdom was challenged many times during the last two centuries. In 1896, the Mogho Naaba was first defeated in Ouagadougou by the French army led by the Captain Voulet. The same year, the French repressed a second attack by the Mogho Naaba. Eventually, Voulet reinstalled the Mogho Naaba on his throne and arrested and executed the opponents of the Mogho (Damiba 2011). The colonizers relied on the kingdoms and chieftaincy to install their

power. After independence, the new government had to face the dilemma of eliminating the chieftaincy that was contrary to a modern state, or maintaining these ancient political forms because of their strong and direct influence on the population and jeopardizing the government authority (Hien 2009). During the Sankara revolution, the chieftaincies and the Mossi kingdom were weakened, but in 1991 power was restored under Compaoré.

During my last visit to the Laarle Naaba Tigre, I was able to understand the relationship between the government and the traditional chieftaincy. The Laarle Naaba is the second most important figure in the Mossi hierarchy and known as the guardian of royal burials and the guardian of tradition; he is an expert in customs and traditions. At 58 years old, he is a Catholic yet explains that he practices a form of syncretism since he also follows Mossi traditions based on animism. The Laarle Naaba also occupies a function of Representative (Deputé) at the National Assembly; he cumulates two forms of power. I had the opportunity to visit the Laarle Naaba farm, a new concept of organic farming that has impressive results and serves as an example in Burkina Faso. During my time at the farm, the Minister of Agriculture visited to receive agricultural advice and to offer governmental support to the Laarle. It is essential to underline that most of the Laarle Naaba's accomplishments did not receive financial support from the government. The Ministry of health elected the Laarle Naaba as the champion of nutrition.

The ministers and president maintain a courteous relationship with the Mogho Naaba, knowing that their actions would have more impact on the population with the support of the traditional chieftaincy. Furthermore, as the Laarle Naaba underlined, the government is not represented in every 9000 villages of the country, and in many small and remote villages, the power is detained by the chief or Naaba who imposes more traditional forms of ruling. The

Mossi learn early in their life to submit to a highly hierarchized authority (Damiba 2011). We will see later that there is sometimes resistance as it was the case in Pilimpikou in 2016 (chapter 8).

2.5.3. Beliefs and prohibitions

The Mossi have a binary representation of space that has a direct influence on the social organization (Deverin 1998). There is the "civilized" world comprised of villages and cities that is controlled by humans, and there is the wild and occult world of the bush. Villages are the physical and political creations of humans. They consist of concessions of huts. In each village, majestic baobabs occupy a preponderant place and are the symbol of human implantation. Yet these trees are the sanctuary of supra-natural forces, and one can never step on its roots without the risk of catching elephantiasis disease or sleeping sickness (Damiba 2011). There are three other symbolic magical places in a village: a marsh, a hill, and a bush (generally an acacia tree) where humans can communicate with the *Kinkirse* or other spirits. Mooré is the official language of the Mossi; according to Deverin, Mooré is not only the language spoken but also a way of being. (Deverin, 1998)

In contrast, the bush or *weoogo* consists of two different areas: the *puogo* or the cultivated area, and the *weraogo* (the male bush), the wild bush that is the most distant place and home of the *kinkirga* (sort of evil gnomes) and the *buninda* (man-eater monsters with one arm, one leg, and one nostril). The latter is the wild world, the world of all dangers, yet also a world that can be conquered by humans to extend the "civilized" world (Deverin, 1998).

Villages are a safe world where people know each other and everyone's lineage. In opposition, when you are a stranger in a village, you are much more vulnerable, and you have to

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identify yourself. Deverin does not specify the status of women who move in their husbands'

village and are strangers there (see chapter 2.5). In her article, Deverin asserts that it is when

people are out of their courtyard or neighborhood that they are in danger of witchcraft, yet during

my research, many of the accusations have occurred inside the same courtyard, and the accused

and accusers are often from the same family (see chapter 3.2). Therefore, the village is not

necessarily a safe place where you have nothing to fear from your neighbors, as stated by

Deverin (1998). However, the estimated danger might be greater outside in the bush; therefore, it

is dangerous to have to leave the village when you are banished. According to Deverin, the

distressing world is not only the unknown world but also the world where you become a stranger

without status.

Another essential aspect of Mossi's culture is the importance of ancestors. They come

just after the earth goddess in order of importance; they are fathers, the forefathers, and all the

deceased persons – except children- and are called *kiimse*. Mossi invoke them according to a

hierarchical order during sacrificial rituals (Bazie 2011). For the Mossi, burials and funerals are

important rituals that will enable the deceased to join the pantheon of the ancestors.

Finally, there are also good and evil spirits called the *kinkirsi*. They are present in

people's daily life. The good *kinkirsi* are called *esprit* (spirit), whereas the bad ones are called

génies in French (sort of gnome or goblin). The legend tells that the *kinkirsi* used to live among

the humans. They had the faculty of seeing in the future, and people sought to consult them. The

Kinkirsi would divulge all the information. Yet, bad people would use the information to harm

good people, so the humans decided to expel the *kinkirsi*. They disappeared in the bush.

Dissension arose among the *kinkirsi*. One group of *kinkirsi* approved human decisions, whereas

the other group was angry about them. The two groups of *kinkirsi* split; the angry became the *génies* living on a hill, and the good one stayed in the lowland living in wood glade (Bazie 2011).

A woman soothsayer is a sterile woman inhabited by a genie who does not allow another occupant in the woman's body; she is possessed. It is the *génie* who gives the woman the faculty of seeing the future. She uses a stick called the *silsaka* when she predicts the future. Sacrifices must happen in the direction of an anthill. Ants are the humans and the *génies* ' friends and serve as protection. The legend says that when the *génies* were pursued by humans, the *génies* were protected by a line of ants.

In addition to these beliefs, the Mossi have to follow many rules of decency and safety. Among these rules, many of them concern women. For instance, a girl cannot get married before her older sisters. She should not get married at an even age. A man should not marry a woman who has no pubic hair (this appears to be a way to control the age of marriage for girls) because a woman without pubic hair is not normal and is believed to be bad luck; she will never have children or the child might be abnormal (Damiba 2016: 70).

After her wedding, a woman should not go back to visit her parents before she gives birth to her first child. Furthermore, a woman should never talk when she is preparing the *sagbo* (millet dough) because a person who has the power to make remedies may lose that power when eating that food. Men should not prepare the *sagbo* because it is a woman's activity, which could cause men to lose their virility and cause their wives to feel offended. When a man gets married, it is said that he "got a *sagbo* maker" (Damiba 2016:45). When a woman decides to notify the community that she is pregnant generally at the third month of pregnancy, she has to go through the ritual called "*pvvg-puusgu*" (spitting on the stomach). A cousin of the husband chosen by a soothsayer will come during the night in the couple's home after the second rooster crowing, and

she will spread the water contained in a new calabash while pronouncing these words, "Take the water because you are pregnant. The baby that will be born is mine!" (Damiba 2016: 37-37). After the ritual, the pregnant woman is not allowed to wear any jewelry. These are protective measures for the child. A pregnant woman cannot have sexual intercourse in order to avoid miscarriage. Furthermore, a mother should not have sex before her child is weaned because it would spoil the milk and disrupt the child's growth.

A woman who had a miscarriage should not hold a baby in her hands before one month after her miscarriage or the baby may become sick. A woman should not cook during her menstruation or the person who would eat the food may catch abscesses on his/her mouth. Neither should she make shea butter or soap because she would not succeed. She is not allowed to kill a chicken or any other gallinaceous; she should never shed blood because she risks miscarriage, endless menstruation, or infertility (Damiba 2016).

Women should not touch any remedies because they would lose their effects, and the husband would not be able to protect the family from illness or witchcraft (Damiba 2016: 43). This list of prohibitions is not exhaustive, but it highlights the heavy burden put on women in Mossi's tradition.

2.6. Structural violence and the impact of colonization on Mossi culture

Paul Farmer urges anthropologists to go beyond what they observe and question the origin of structural violence through history (2001). He demonstrates how Haiti has been profoundly marked by colonialism. Colonialism also had and still has a terrible impact on Burkina Faso, but the history is different. Furthermore, the Mossi kingdom, more or less,

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survived both colonialism and the successive governments that followed independence. On the

contrary, Pacéré is radical when he considers the influence of colonialism on the Mossi culture;

he talks about ethnocide, and he claims that the Mossi have been assassinated,

> La colonisation et ses croyances ont imprimé le sceau de leur existence, par-delà les mers; des tribulations et des exactions du moment ont détruit une œuvre élaborée depuis près d'un millénaire et renforcée au cours de l'histoire; d'autres concepts jetés çà et là après le labour des canons, sont les lois du jour, à la place de ce qui a été grand et qui a fait ses preuves (1981 :14,15).

> (Colonization and its beliefs have left indelible marks of their passage beyond the seas; the tribulations and exactions of the moment have destroyed a work elaborated for nearly a millennium and reinforced during the course of history; other concepts imposed by force of arms are nowadays the laws in place of what has been great, and that has proven itself.)

Pacéré affirms that the previous equilibrium that existed in the Mossi kingdom no longer exists.

The equilibrium that Pacéré calls "stabilisme," includes three elements: equilibrium at the

general level of existence, equilibrium at the transcendental level of existence, equilibrium at the

earthly level of existence (1981:17). If only one of these elements is destroyed, all the

equilibriums are devastated. It is the foundation of the Mossi culture that has been destroyed by

colonialism, and, for Pacéré, the eradication of the Mossi culture will be inevitable in the

following century. After more than sixty years of colonization, and almost sixty more years post-

independence, the question remains the same; what aspects of the Mossi culture survived? One

mistake Pacéré makes is that culture is not stable, no matter the history of the country. Another

contradiction in Pacéré's arguments comes from his narrative of the creation of the Mossi

kingdom. He explains that the Mossi invaded the land of the Gnougnosse, and the two cultures

merged. He pretends that they are almost no difference between the "Mosse dit pure" (pure

Mossi) and the Gnougnosse. He recognizes thereby that these cultures have merged, and it

contradicts his argument of "stabilisme." He also demonstrates how another culture can impose

its customs and tradition, and given the warrior character of the Mossi, the acculturation process may not have been entirely peaceful.

Nevertheless, the Mossi culture is continuously changing, contested by new generations, and is subjected to globalization; therefore, it is almost impossible to discern what aspect of that culture has survived colonialism and the successive governments. Another element of Pacéré's arguments that is questionable is his idea of the "happy old-time" during which "stabilisme" ensured happiness because all the aspect of human existence was governed by strict customs (1981:26); from birth to death and even after death, Mossi lives were regulated according to the custom. There were no written laws; everyone knew the rules and followed them. Indirectly, Pacéré explains precisely how symbolic violence functioned. He never questions the soundness of the custom. Women and men had to submit themselves to the system and be happy.

While criticizing Pacéré's arguments, I want to make sure that I do not contradict his assertions about the crimes of colonization. What I try to demonstrate is that everything is much more complex. Changes are inevitable in any culture, and the Mossi are not excluded from the process. However, these changes are sometimes accompanied by clashes such as the Pilimpikou witch craze (Chapter 7).

The presence of the French colonization is still evident in the capital and the larger cities, but it is less apparent in the countryside. However, if there are any connections between colonialism and structural violence against women such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, obstacles to girls' education, and witchcraft belief and accusation, it is because of the opposition to the Western model. Keeping traditions alive is a way to oppose the Western model that the colonizers tried to impose and a way to resist globalization. One example is that

feminism has not developed to a large extent in Burkina Faso, partly because it was compared to Western models and rejected for this reason (chapter 5).

My research, rather than a providing broad conceptualization of the Mossi culture, investigated the lived experience of people who are enduring practices such as witchcraft accusations that have strong and permanent detrimental effects on their lives.

2.7. Conclusion

Burkina Faso is confronted with many socio-economic and political challenges with manifold origins, starting with its history marked by French colonialism, which had long-lasting consequences. Since independence in 1960, the country struggles to find political stability and to achieve sustainable development. Nonetheless, Burkina Faso is also the birthplace of an important Pan-African leader, Thomas Sankara, who has left a significant legacy for Burkina Faso.

The Burkinabe population is characterized by the pervasive influence of the Mossi ethnicity. The Mossi, a highly hierarchical and patriarchal society, have maintained some traditional customs and beliefs despite the opposition the population encountered during colonization and after independence.

CHAPTER 3: WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS: LITERATURE REVIEW

"La sorcellerie: ça existe!" (witchcraft, it exists); this repeated exclamation many times heard from Burkinabe during the research reveals the importance and the contemporaneity of the phenomena. Witchcraft has received ample attention from anthropologists and scholars as a large number of works focusing on this subject would attest. Various theoretical frameworks have been used to explain witchcraft beliefs, but research has not paid much attention to witchcraft accusations affecting women despite their recurrence over time and all over the world; this chapter offers a review of the history and explanations on the gender-specific aspects of witchcraft accusations. The contemporary phenomenon of witchcraft accusations in Burkina Faso has to take into consideration the Mossi belief system and present-day practices.

3.1 Witchcraft literature review
3.1.1. Early research on witchcraft

Throughout witchcraft literature, two major themes are recurrent: first, the relationship between power and witchcraft; second, the interpretation of misfortune through witchcraft. Witchcraft has been analyzed from different perspectives that emphasize the social and political process of witchcraft accusations. There is also a persistent amalgam between magic and witchcraft as interrelated phenomena that "form an inseparable couple, one being the reverse of the other . . . as the Azande say, they are the sons of the same mother" (Bonhomme 2010:7). According to Bonhomme (2010), magic and witchcraft have always been unique behaviors that

anthropologists have continuously tried to explain; the question of the rationality of these beliefs was at the heart of early debates. The first significant research on magic and witchcraft in the social sciences began with Edward B. Taylor and Lévy-Bruhl, who contrasted magic beliefs and scientific principles of causality, judging such views "primitive" and "prélogique" [prelogical] and therefore scientifically impossible. By default, all these beliefs have been classified into the same category, the "supernatural" from the observer perspective (Bonhomme 2010:2). In *Totem and Taboo,* Freud compared magic beliefs to childish thoughts (Bonhomme 2010). Later, the neo-intellectualist trend in anthropology, as represented by the work of Robin Horton (Bonhomme 2010), demonstrated how science and magic have common features including hidden forces that influence the world-but can nevertheless be manipulated, or as Mauss stated, "gigantic variations on the theme of causality principles" (Bonhomme 2010:2).

According to Stoller, Evans-Pritchard was the first scholar to consider that belief in witchcraft is more than "a jumble of irrational superstitions" (2009:22). It is almost impossible to study witchcraft from the anthropological perspective without considering the structural functionalist approach used by Evans-Pritchard, who was, according to Hutton (2004), the pioneer of witchcraft research. Even though Evans-Pritchard emphasized a more sophisticated African way of thinking, he still maintained a rational approach and critique of logical and philosophical African thought (Stoller 2009). For Evans-Prichard, "the concept of witchcraft provides them [the Azande] with a natural philosophy by which the relations between men and unfortunate events are explained and a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events" (1976:18). The author acknowledged that he had many arguments with the Azande about the irrationality of such thoughts, yet came to understand their perspective, noting that "after a while, I learned the idiom of their thoughts and applied notions of witchcraft as spontaneously as

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themselves in situations where the concept was relevant" (1976:19). He came to realize that their beliefs in witchcraft causation of misfortune did not contradict the laws of cause-and-effect since they were aware of the direct (material or biological) reasons for misfortune such as death, but also attribute social causes to the event that could lead to the death of an individual. More to the point: things do not happen by chance, according to Azande's sensibilities.

In *la Pensée Sauvage* (*The Savage Mind*), Claude Lévi-Strauss asserts that magic beliefs give purpose to life by building symbolic links between things (Bonhomme 2010). Lévi-Strauss (1958) was also interested in the psychophysiological mechanisms of bewitchment. As he discovered, an individual convinced of being the victim of witchcraft believes that he/she is condemned; he/she will feel an extreme terror and will lose all his/her cultural references. His/her physical health will not resist the "dissolution of the social personality" (Lévi-Strauss 1958:184 - Translated by the author). Lévi-Strauss also provides a biological explanation of the phenomenon:

> but if an individual has no instinctive or acquired response to an extraordinary situation or that he represents as such, the activity of the sympathetic [nervous system] is amplified and disorganized, and may, in a few hours sometimes, determine a diminution of the blood volume, a concomitant fall in of blood pressure that will result in irreparable damages to the organs of the circulation [symptoms termed *homeostatic*.] (Lévi-Strauss 1958:184 - translated by the author)

According to Lévi-Strauss, there is no reason to doubt the efficiency of magic practices that also implies a belief in these practices. There are three conditions to these beliefs: first, the sorcerer or witch has to believe in his/her own techniques; second, the patient/victim has to trust the sorcerer or believe in the witch's power; finally, there must be a collective consensus within the community in which these events transpire. In *Anthropologie Structurale* (*Structural Anthropology*), author Lévi-Strauss asks these poignant questions:

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How can an innocent exculpate himself of a witchcraft accusation if the allegation is unanimous because witchcraft is a phenomenon of consensus? What part of credulity and what part of skepticism interfere in the attitude of a group that acknowledges exceptional powers to people to whom they grant privileges and from which they expect adequate satisfaction?"(Lévi-Strauss 1958:185 - translated by author).

Using the example of a shaman, Lévi-Strauss explains how the "shamanistic complex" is based on the experience of the shaman, the psychosomatic effects on the patient, and the satisfaction of the community (the collective consensus) that participate in the cure. Lévi-Strauss contends that contrary to scientific explanation, the emotions, and behaviors related to witchcraft have no objective causes, but they belong to a holistic system that allows these emotions and behaviors to happen together. For the community, the patient/sorcerer represents an antagonism peculiar to all thoughts, but that cannot be clearly expressed. The magic "cure" puts together opposite poles, facilitates the passage from one to the other, and expresses the coherence of the psychic universe (Lévi-Strauss 1958). Individuals expect to obtain a new system of references from the magic beliefs that could allow for the integration of contradictory factors. We may still wonder if there are psychophysiological effects of witchcraft accusations on accused individuals - such as old Burkinabe women, a question which has been further investigated using a phenomenological approach (see chapter 6).

3.1.2. Witchcraft and modernity

Hutton (2004) asserts that in the 1960s, considerable research was conducted on witchcraft, but that by the 1970s, the topic fell "out of fashion" (2004:413). The discussion that began in the 1970s was based on the theoretical interpretation of witchcraft based either on positivist or symbolic approaches (Hutton 2004). In the 1990s, a renewed interest in witchcraft studies in anthropology and history began, but the notion of witchcraft was obscured (Geschiere 2013). As explained by Geschiere (2013), in the 1970s, there was a modernization movement in

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the young African states, and witchcraft was not a subject of interest because it was associated with traditional beliefs; even scholars avoided the topic. Geschiere's assistant said, "where there is electricity, witchcraft will disappear" (2013:2). However, development and modernization were uneven and did not reach the level expected by the African population; people became disappointed and frustrated, and as a result, witchcraft not only did not disappear, it intensified as is the case in Cameroon where Geschiere conducted his research. He describes how witchcraft discourse has integrated "the money economy, new power relations, and consumer goods associated with modernity . . ." (1997:8). During the twenty years Geshiere visited Cameroon, he observed aggravation of the fear of witchcraft that had deleterious effects on the daily life of people whose families were torn apart and set against each other.

Comaroff and Comaroff contend that in the late twentieth century,

> witchcraft is a finely calibrated gauge of the impact of global cultural and economic forces on local relations, on perception of money and markets, and on the abstraction and alienation of 'indigenous' values and meanings. Witches are modernity's prototypical malcontents. . . . They embody all the contradictions, its self-consuming passions, its discriminatory tactics, its devastating social costs" (1993: xxix). Apter states that Yoruba witchcraft (practiced primarily in southwestern Nigeria) endures because development has failed, saying, "witchcraft and development have converged" (1993:125).

More recently, Smith has argued that "witchcraft beliefs have a productive dimension. Witchcraft and development emerged as opposite potentials of the same moment, the same act, and the same idea and notions of witchcraft gave meaning to a utopian vision of development" (2008:20).

According to Roxburgh, the discourse on the implication of modernity in the witchcraft phenomena is not sufficient to explain the complexity of witchcraft in Africa:

> Embedded in many witchcraft discourses is a moral critique of power that greatly complicates and challenges the assertions made within discourses of modernity. Contrary to modern ideals, witchcraft demonstrates the dangers of individual power and underlines

the importance of collective responsibility, while undermining secular forms of power. Therefore, witchcraft fundamentally challenges modernity by rejecting modern notions of what is known, and what can be known, about our world (2018:133)

Shaw (1997) offers a unique perspective on witchcraft among the Temne of Sierra Leone, providing the association between witchcraft and modernity-mostly regarding the representations the Temne are making of witches' spaces: "prosperous city where skyscrapers adjoin houses of gold and diamonds; where Mercedes-Benzes are driven down fine roads; where street vendors roast 'beefsticks' of human meat . . . " (1997:857). Shaw suggests an intricate link between Western technology and witchcraft. On the one hand, people crave the benefits of Western technology, while on the other, they see what they consider the immoral values of such technology because of the antisocial European way of living underlined by selfishness and greed, which are also witches' features. According to the author, the relation between witchcraft and the West can be traced back to the Atlantic slave trade, long before colonization. Austen (1993) also makes analogies between witchcraft and slavery by comparing the distant universe where victims of witchcraft or slavery are taken. Shaw insists on the importance of historical production of witchcraft in Africa, asking to what extent slave trade produced a new understanding of witchcraft and was thus incorporated in traditional beliefs?

The earliest account of Sierra Leone trade with Europeans is attributed to a Portuguese explorer in the fifteenth century. He noted that individuals accused of witchcraft were sold into slavery; sometimes, all the alleged witches' family members were sold as well. Later during the British colonialization period, witchcraft accusations were prosecuted "in accordance with rationalist British conceptions of 'proof': instead of the invisible 'eating' of victims, which had been so prominent in witchcraft conviction during the slave trade, the emphasis was now placed on 'physical evidence' such as the possession of harmful ritual substances" (Shaw 1997:866). The

same phenomenon occurred in French colonies where the French penal code was imposed after the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, during which the "*code de l'indigénat*" (Indigenous Code) was abolished in the name of the principle of universality (Martinelli 2011:49). According to Martinelli, however, a specific article that did not exist in the original French code was added and applied solely to the colonies, stating that anyone who practices witchcraft, magic, or quackery likely to disturb public order or harm people or property can be punished. Even so, the language of the added article was too vague, and European judges' interpretations during the final years of colonization were arbitrary. These laws were maintained in many post-colonial countries such as Central Africa.

According to the Cote d'Ivoire Penal Code, an individual condemned of practicing witchcraft can be sentenced to a prison term between one and five years and forced to pay a fine between one hundred thousand and one million francs CFA [$160-$1,600] (Ilbouto 2006). In Burkina Faso, an earlier penal code also included an identical law, but during the 1990s reform was suppressed (Ilbouto 2006). While Ilbouto suggests that there are legal dispositions that could repress individuals guilty of false accusations (defamation), it is not clear how justice handles such cases, and, according to Martinelli (2011), there can be conflicts between various authorities such as law enforcement, judges, and the churches. Additionally, we should not underestimate the power of local authorities such as village chiefs, who are the first power-possessing actors to intervene in cases of witchcraft accusations.

A closer examination of the historical construction of witchcraft in Burkina Faso is both prudent and insightful; establishing first a clear understanding of the relationship between slavery and witchcraft. This project focuses on Mossi ethnicity because most of the cases of witchcraft accusations have been observed among this particular ethnic group. Before

colonization, the Mossi kept slaves representing a variety of ethnicities, including the Gurunsi, Samo, and Peul, which they would sell (Engelbert 1996), but the Mossi were not slaves themselves. According to Engelbert, while domestic slavery was officially banned in 1901, and slave trade criminalized in 1903, slavery persisted in different forms. Though the Mossi offered strong resistance to French colonization, they were nonetheless eventually defeated. Heavy taxes were imposed, males were drafted into the French army, as well as recruited to build the railroad in Cote d'Ivoire. It comes as no surprise that the history of Burkina Faso is marked by revolts against the French. It should be noted that the Mossi may not have the same analogies between witchcraft and slavery, and we do not know how the French Penal Code influenced witchcraft accusations (another research direction!). Furthermore, since many scholars have associated witchcraft with modernity and development, it is necessary to investigate these aspects of witchcraft accusation in Burkina Faso, and even though first impressions seem to indicate that the phenomenon is deeply rooted in tradition, it is nevertheless a contemporary phenomenon.

An important aspect of witchcraft accusation, persistent in literature, is its link with family and relatives, or what Geshiere calls "witchcraft and intimacy" (2013). According to the author, the primary danger comes from within: from within families or a circle of acquaintances. Geshiere uses a Freudian psychoanalytical explanation of the phenomena, asserting that family relationships are tainted by jealousy and anxiety. And while defining intimacy remains a complex matter in terms of the various African kinship systems, Apter affirms that among the Yoruba, "witchcraft is the cultural and psychological expression of contradictions generated by affinity. Witches are wives and mothers, and hence both strangers and members of the husbands' compound and patrilineage" (1993:115). Per tradition, women are accepted into the family when they give birth to sons. Accordingly, Austen (1993) proposes to analyze the nature of "social

relationship in witchcraft accusation and the role of reproduction, sexuality, and gender in these beliefs" (1993:90). According to Austen, women accused of witchcraft are often more stigmatized than men who may have political and ritual authority. Yet, such "authority" is most commonly accepted due to the mystical power they are rumored to possess, and "many Africans take the existence of witchcraft to be inevitable and ubiquitous" (1993:91). In that the same phenomenon is observed among the Mossi, it is plausible that women who do not bear children, or only daughters, may remain strangers in their husband's families, thus making them easy targets of witchcraft accusation.

In his study of witchcraft in South Africa, Isak Niehaus had three particular concerns: "to capture the dynamics of witchcraft, to focus on witchcraft as mystical power, and to explore the connections between the social and symbolic dimensions of witchcraft" (2001:7). Niehaus observes and describes the diverse historical and social influences that have transformed witchcraft at the local level. He describes the "complex interplay of different forces of witchcraft accusations" including wars, Christianization, labor migration, and elections. Furthermore, he demonstrates how villagers react to, accommodate, respond, and interpret these external forces in terms of their beliefs. Still, these approaches do not reflect the choices individuals make regarding their beliefs when social change occurs, so why would they choose to believe in witchcraft rather than some other phenomenon? For Niehaus, these approaches are "at best, partial and can never adequately account for witchcraft beliefs and practices" (2001:10). Witchcraft is not a broad and static reproduction of sociopolitical structures; it is the result of complex and independent beliefs.

3.1.3. More recent witchcraft literature

According to Geschiere (2015), today, there is a proliferation of new forms of witchcraft and anti-witchcraft actions in Africa. The extreme severity of violence (such as lynching) resulting from witchcraft accusation, has prompted researchers to change their methods of research, and widen their research parameters to include justice institutions, churches, media, and politics.

In *Penser la Sorcellerie en Afrique* (*Thinking about Witchcraft in Africa*), edited by Sandra Fancello (2015), several researchers choose a situational approach to their work, analyzing events in their social contexts in order to understand the modern dynamic of witchcraft in the daily lives of Africans. Martinelli (2015), for one, focuses his ethnographic research on the legal aspects of witchcraft in the Republic of Central Africa. Examining the political events of 2013 and 2014, when the justice system had failed in that country, local groups took control and unilaterally organized witchcraft trials, resulting in condemnation equitable with rebellion. In that same country, Ngouflo (2015) observes the emergence of witchcraft from within the power company of the country: because of the obsolescence of the equipment, power failures often occur, and witchcraft doctors are requested to "unwitch" the machines. Ngouflo, a Central African anthropologist, describes the difficulties he encountered as a native researcher; he had to first deconstruct his personal cultural representation before being permitted to question his compatriots who, in return, did not accept his position and were reticent to answer his questions.

Providing a complementary perspective, Julien Bonhomme (2015) analyzed several articles published in different African countries to demonstrate how the media has added a new dimension to witchcraft and witchcraft accusation, thus showing how witchcraft has become a public debate today - whereas it had been much more secretive in the past. A specific example is

provided by Mary and Mebiam-Zomo (2015), who investigated rumors of witchcraft accusations of a senator in Gabon. In the same book, Mayreni (2015) describes the terrible fate of street children accused of witchcraft in Nigeria, while Fancello (2015) denounces the involvement of Pentecostal churches in the upsurge of witchcraft in Cameroon. According to the author, the success of these churches is directly related to the accentuation of discourse on evil and demons that comes in accordance with local beliefs in witchcraft. These churches even offer "powerful" anti-witch ceremonies - which are growing in popularity. These examples serve to underline the omnipresent and renewed belief in witchcraft throughout Africa.

According to Bonhomme, who recently conducted considerable research into African witchcraft, by considering magic a scientific mistake, we miss the real issues at stake, making it necessary to view witchcraft and magic beliefs in the context in which they make sense. While the observer may consider the symbolic effectiveness of magic, for the practitioner, magic has an instrumental efficacy. There is an interesting paradox concerning anti-witchcraft rituals because, on the one hand, they have the comforting effect of protecting from witches, while, on the other hand, they reinforce the conviction of an omnipresent threat. In Africa, magic is used for both good and evil purposes—depending on intent and desired result (Bonhomme 2010). In his 2009 work, *Les Voleurs de Sexe* (*Sex Thieves*), Bonhomme investigates a new form of witchcraft, which serves a different purpose and operates quite differently from other known types. Contrary to traditional familial witchcraft, sex thieves are strangers who work in urban spaces during the day, by physical contact, leaving victims (always men) believing that their *sexes* (genitals) have been stolen. Once apprehended, these "sex thieves" are typically lynched. A phenomenon observed in many African countries, these occurrences are interpreted as a consequence of the emancipation of women, calling into question male domination, and causing castration anxiety.

Bonhomme emphasizes the importance of rumor in witchcraft accusations (2009), noting that gossip is a strategy to promote the interests of various groups and/or manage reputation in order to highlight power issues. Stories of witchcraft are often rooted in gossip that spreads in families or villages, implicitly accusing some individuals of indulging in occult practices. The witch then becomes the ultimate transgressor of collective values, with rumors concerning the alleged witch serving to indirectly express tensions and conflicts within the community. According to Bonhomme, it is necessary to suspend the pejorative scientific attitude concerning rumors and adopt a "positive characterization" (2009:21-translated by the author). Interpreting rumors as a social disease, a pathology of communication, as mental regression of a hysterical crowd, or irrational collective violence, is too simplistic. Whether true or false, a rumor spreads in the same way, with a specific dynamic of propagation within a specific environment: it is intense, fast-moving, by word of mouth, and transmitted by individuals deemed trustworthy. It can disappear as suddenly as it appeared.

For Bonhomme, a rumor is a common element of normal human communication. Therefore, all aspects of witchcraft stories should be considered "normal" in many African countries where it is omnipresent. And while most literature devoted to witchcraft in African has given the continent an image of "exotic alterity" (Bonhomme 2009:18), it would be a mistake to avoid the subject, considering that witchcraft is a daily aspect for many Africans. Just like Bonhomme, the challenge of my topic is to reduce its exotic character and highlight the ordinary preoccupations on which witchcraft rumors are based.

3.1.4. Witchcraft vocabulary

It is essential to this study to point out the complexity of witchcraft vocabulary. Geschiere states that the term "witchcraft" has become vague and should be reviewed (Geschiere

2013). Fancello suggests that "the anthropological language of the invisible, the occult, the spiritual and the mystic generates much controversy and misconception by assuming mysterious or marvelous aspects of witchcraft" (2015:32-translated by the author). Evans-Pritchard (Evans-Pritchard 1935) proposes to make a distinction between sorcery (bad or evil magic) and witchcraft (as related to witch doctors vs. the positive aspects of witchcraft). The difference between the two forms is not necessarily clear; the translation in different languages makes the concept of "witchcraft" even more complicated. In French, for instance, there is only one word for witch and sorcerer– "sorcier" or "sorcière" - which has the female/male distinction but is often used indiscriminately. In Burkina Faso, we may choose other terminology to specifically designate women accused of witchcraft, such as *les mangeuses d'âmes* (the soul eaters), which is also used in other countries such as Togo (Lallemand 1988). The word "mangeuse," however, is feminine, having no masculine counterpart, and this nuance is not easily translated into English. In Mooré, the term "sõeya" is used to designate a witch. Yet, even though Mooré language has distinctive names for feminine and masculine occupations (such as for instance a female nurse "logto-poaka" and a male nurse "logtore"), there is only one word to designate a witch; it is not directly translated from the words "mangeuse d'âme" (soul eater) since the translation of eating "rï" and soul "siigà" have nothing in common with the word "sõeya". So how has "sõeya" become "mangeuse d'âme" (soul eater) in French? The best explanation would be that rather choosing a generic word such as witch that is too broad, using soul eater was more precise and would better describe the witchcraft phenomena (see below).

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3.2 Women accused of witchcraft

Before conducting my research, I did not question my prior representation of witch women. In our western cultural productions, witches are characters with extraordinary power that have filled many generations of children's imagination. Every year, new books and articles on women and witchcraft are written. The most recent books published in 2018 by Sylvia Frederici *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Woman*, and *Sorcières la Puissance Invaincue des Femmes* (Witches: Undefeated Women's Power) by Mona Chollet testifies that the subject remains a fascinating topic that still receives new analysis, and that covers contemporary issues.

Can the analysis of past witch hunts in Western countries contribute to the analysis of actual witch hunts in Africa? What can we learn from past witch hunts and trials in Europe? One major question that has been the center of many analyses is why have women, and mostly older women, been the principal victims of witchcraft accusations? The review of research and analysis of past witch hunts and witch trials is noteworthy materials for the analysis of present witchcraft accusations in Africa and helps to avoid pitfalls and redundancy.

3.2.1. Witch Hunts in Europe

Being a witch in Western countries was the worst infamy that has brought the death of thousands of women based on false accusations. According to Chollet,

> By sometimes crushing entire families, imposing terror, and reluctantly repressing certain knowledge and practices that were intolerable, witch hunts have helped to shape our world. If they did not take place, we would probably live in very different societies (2018:13 translated by the author)

Although very hypothetical, Chollet's argument emphasizes the idea that we still have to learn from that obscure part of Western history. Frederici agrees by asking that question:

Why should we speak of the witch hunts again? Given that in recent years feminists scholars have lifted the witch hunt from the historical limbo to which it was confined and assigned it a proper place in the history of women in modern Europe and Americas… A reason for doing so is that there are important structural aspects of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century witch hunts that still need to be analyzed and placed in the sociohistorical context (2018:11)

It might first be important to remember that witch hunts in Europe did not happen during a Middle-Aged obscurantist epoch and was not the mark of inquisition that was more preoccupied with heretics than witches. Witch hunts in Europe took place during the Renaissance, between the 14th and the 17th centuries supposed to be a period of "rebirth" and transition to modernity. According to Chollet, most of the witchcraft condemnations were conducted in civil law courts by secular judges who were crueler and more fanatic than Catholic priests (2018). However, in England, many trials were conducted in church courts (Jones and Zell 2005).

With the decree of December 5, 1484 (Summis desiderantas affectibus), Pope Innocent VIII ordered an investigation on witches and witchcraft, in order to define the signs to which we can recognize the pact of an individual with the demon…The first trials and pyres appear at the end of the thirteenth century in the Languedoc (France), in connection with the hunt for Cathar heretics by the Inquisition. Everything changed in the sixteenth century when trials were conducted by civil justice in France and the Germanic countries. Witchcraft trials began around 1430, and most of them took place between 1560 and 1630. They resulted in the pyre of about 30,000 to 60,000 persons (for double the number of trials). The "great witch hunt," as it is usually called, is rife mainly in Germany where half of the pyres are recorded. But it is in Switzerland that their frequency reported to the population is the highest. In the region of Vaud alone, there is a total of 1,700 pyres (up to 25 in a single year). The last witch, Anna Göldi, was decapitated on June 18th, 1782, in the Swiss canton of Gladis (Herodote 2017).

The number of victims of European witchcraft hunts is debated today, but it might vary

between fifty and one hundred thousand, not including those who have been lynched, who died

in prison after being tortured, or who committed suicide (Chollet 2018). For Chollet, witchcraft

accusations constituted a war against women, and for other feminists such as Barstow, they

represented an explosion of misogyny; all women, even those who were not accused, have

suffered the effects of witch hunts by the public torture of women that instigated terror and

forced them to be submissive and docile (2018). However, according to Jones and Zell (2005),

scholars have not been unanimous about the reasons why it was mostly women who have been

accused in Europe in the late 1716th and 17th centuries; some of the "witch hunts were attributed

to religion, economic, demographic, social, and political changes" (45).

Furthermore, women have not always been the primary victims of accusations; in

England in the 14th century, there were more men prosecuted, whereas, in the 15th century, there

were a slightly larger number of women accused. In France, in the same period (15th century) the

number of men and women was equal. In Europe in general, during the 14th and 15th centuries,

the number of women was twice that of men. It is during the late 15th century that witchcraft has

been more associated with women (Jones and Zell 2005). For the authors,

> Universal explanation for why the 'witch craze' happened when it did, for there are too
> many unknowable variables…the tendency for those suspected of black magic to be
> female is most likely to be rooted in the stereotype of the evil female witch, which
> developed during the 15th century and became more marked in the early modern
> period…The fully gendered stereotype of witchcraft was by then so much a part of
> conventional wisdom in England that its comparatively recent origins had been forgotten
> (63).

Many explanations have been given on the reasons why women were the principal targets of

accusation:

Both early modern and contemporary writers have attributed the preponderance of older women as alleged witches to forms of mental instability supposedly connected particularly with female old age. In his 1563 work *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, for example, witchcraft sceptic and physician Johann Weyer argued that older women were 'by reason of their sex inconstant and uncertain in faith, and by their age not sufficiently settled in their minds', and were thus 'much more subject to the devil's deceits, who, insinuating himself into their imagination . . . introduces all sorts of shapes, cleverly stirring up the humours and the spirits in this trickery" (Rowland 2001:52).

Later, in the 1950s, scholars linked witchcraft accusations with senile antisocial behaviors of older women, a theory that was then rejected because of the accused women's age were almost evenly distributed between forty and eighty, and not all women may have presented with symptoms of senility (Rowland 2001). Other historians have associated witchcraft accusations of older women with menopause and the changes of status into one of non-fertile women that may have changed their behaviors and made them more resentful, but the causality between menopause and witchcraft accusations is challenging to determine, and other factors may have been more relevant (Rowland 2001). Physical appearance was another argument that could have explained the reasons why older women were the target of witchcraft accusations such as grey hair, wrinkled face, missing teeth, sagging breast, or/and hunched posture, but physical details was barely mentioned in European witch trials, however, in most cases, it was their behaviors that caused the accusations. Furthermore, scholars have also insisted on the marital status of alleged witches, yet, if the hypothesis was that most of them might have been widowed, research in different European localities showed that the differences between the numbers of married and widowed women were not always significant; however, there were very few unmarried women. Widowhood was not a significant factor that caused witchcraft accusations, but it was nevertheless not insignificant. In the cases of witchcraft trials that occurred in Germany, it appeared that husbands were somewhat supportive of their wives when they were accused (Rowland 2001). Therefore, it is possible that widows were more vulnerable. Widowhood may

have worsened women's economic status and poverty. Accused widows may have been more reliant on others for material assistance and may have displayed anger and aggression rather than humility. Since many of the accusers being wealthier than the accused, they might have sometimes felt guilty for not having been more supportive and would then attribute their misfortune to poor older women (Rowland 2001).

In other cases, when the social and economic status of the accusers and the accused was the same, competition and influence within the society could explain the accusations. If accusers were younger than the accused women, generational conflicts could explain the accusation in communities where younger people were supposed to show deference to older members; witchcraft accusation was meant to legitimately oppose older people (Rowland 2001). She suggests that,

> So while old, poor women were numbered amongst the accused, to suggest that this was primarily because they were old and poor is to oversimplify massively the complex relationship between age, gender, social and economic status and the relative vulnerability of different individuals to suspicions of witchcraft (2001: 78)

If there are many interpretations and analysis of the reasons why women were the principal target of witchcraft accusation, one point of agreement between all scholars and particularly among feminists is that it always occurred within patriarchal societies.

3.2.2. Salem witch trials

After examining some of the analyses done on witch hunts in Europe, the Salem witch trials in the Massachusetts Bay Colony might also provide interesting information about the patterns that led to it. The Salem witch trials took place between 1692 and 1693, whereas the European witch hunt was slowly declining. It is in January 1692 that Reverend Parrish's daughter and niece started having convulsion resembling epileptic episodes but were blamed for

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being supernatural by a local doctor (Blumberg 2007). Many explanations have been given on these seizures, such as "stress, asthma, guilt, boredom, child abuse, epilepsy, and delusional psychosis. The symptoms also could have been caused by a disease called "convulsive ergotism" brought on by ingesting rye eaten as a cereal and as a common ingredient of bread--infected with ergot" (Linder 2007).

Latner underlines the ongoing debate among scholars about the reasons for the Salem events:

> An outpouring of scholarship has illuminated many aspects of this event, it has not resulted in a consensus about what happened in 1692. Rather, a variety of interpretations vie for attention, most of them, happily, not incompatible with others. In the world of Salem scholarship, arguments do not close off discussion so much as add explanatory ingredients to the mix. In recent years, scholars have variously emphasized intra-community group conflict, religious tension, demographic competition, failures of leadership, gender concerns, psychological relationships, and frontier Indian clashes as central to the Salem outbreak. But the pursuit of Salem's elusive meaning continues (2008:137).

As for most witchcraft accusations around the world at various epochs, the victims were mainly women; among those who were accused, 78 percent were female, and there were 80 percent women among those who were executed (28 women, seven men) (Goss 2008). The review of the Salem witch trials analysis could be further expanded, but for the present project, one important feature that again received the agreement of many scholars it the fact that the phenomenon of witchcraft hunt concerned a traditional puritan patriarchal society where women were expected to be obedient and submissive.

3.2.3. Witchcraft accusation in contemporary Africa: Ghana

Examples of witchcraft accusations in Africa are numerous, and I decided to limit this discussion to cases that are more similar to my research in Burkina Faso. Therefore, I have chosen to review articles about witchcraft accusations in Ghana. The two countries have a

common border, and some of the ethnic groups from each country have interestingly common history. We have seen in chapter 2 the myth of Yennenga, the princess who founded the Mossi dynasty and who came from Ghana and may have had some connection with the Mamprusi ethnicity. Most of the Ghanaian women accused of witchcraft and excluded from their villages are from the Mamprusi ethnicity (Crampton 2013). It would be interesting to compare and contrast Mamprusi and Mossi cultures. As for the Mossi, witchcraft explains misfortune and deaths. In Ghana, women accused of witchcraft live in camps, mostly located in the north of the country (close from the Burkinabe borders). Approximately 1,000 women are living in six different camps (Crampton 2013). The Gambaga camp was founded by an imam who offered refuge to accused witches and who was able to "deliver" women from their witchcraft power, the only condition for them to stay in the camp and eventually leave it (Crampton 2013) (Roxburgh 2017).

There are other similar features between Burkinabe and Ghanaian witchcraft accusations. One of them is the closeness or intimacy, as underlined by Geshiere (2013), between the alleged witches and their victims (Crampton 2013) (Drucker-Brown 1993). Cramton uses a local proverb to illustrate the fact: "it is the insect in the cloth that bites you" (2013:201). Accusations mostly target older women who are forced to leave their village and will find refuge in camps with other accused women; they form groups of poor, ostracized, and marginalized women, yet they also feel safe in these camps (Drucker-Brown 1993). The hierarchy among the Mamprusi, households' polygamous configurations, and patriarchal organizations are common features of Mossi and Mamprusi.

Drucker-Brown argues that the causes for the increase of witchcraft accusations of women are related to the increased autonomy of women and the threat it represents for men who

struggle to maintain the power over women, and the control of senior woman of their juniors co-wives in polygamous households (1993).

In research based on newspaper articles, Mensah Adinkrah reviews the cases of women killed after being accused of witchcraft. He noticed that victims were mostly poor and older women from rural areas. Among the two main reasons why women are the principal target of witchcraft, Adinkrah refers to the male domination and female subordination in patriarchal societies, but he also supports the idea that a witchcraft accusation is a form of scapegoating:

> In Ghana, the old, widowed, poor, or physically handicapped women who were more vulnerable to witchcraft accusations and physical attacks, are a socially marginalized, politically impotent, and economically disadvantaged group. With their marginalization, it is easy for them as individuals or as a group, to be scapegoated for all manner of problems: epidemic outbreaks, physical maladies, and the failures. (2004: 348)

The different cases presented in this chapter show some similar patterns in the accusation of witchcraft of older women in Ghana and Burkina Faso.

3.3. Witchcraft in Burkina Faso

According to Dr. Adamou Kantagba, professor at the University Nazi-Boni of Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), witchcraft is part of the intangible cultural heritage of Africa. It has its positive and negative aspects (Nana 2019). Kantagba believes that,

> It is up to us to find that positive side and exploit it. I'm not saying that a witch is a good person. But when he does something, we must first try to understand why he did it...And if we allow traditional healers, witch hunters, soothsayers or seers to develop their medicinal knowledge or their power? Do you think we would still depend on the big pharmaceutical companies, or would we remain underdeveloped countries? These are, among others, this positive side of magic or witchcraft that can allow us to develop (Nana 2019).

Kantagba did not address the fate of older women wrongly accused of witchcraft, but he emphasized the significance of witchcraft beliefs in Burkina Faso.

3.3.1. "La sorcellerie: ça existe!"

"*La sorcellerie: ça existe*!" (Witchcraft, it exists) is the exclamation I heard so many times in Burkina Faso that I became very curious about the subject. I started to talk about witchcraft with people as different as university professors and college students, police chiefs, social workers, *naaba* (Chiefs of villages), representatives, civil servants working in ministries, and nurses. I also had the opportunity to visit villages where forms of witchcraft are practiced.

Invariably, and with few exceptions, all these people have agreed that witchcraft is a reality in Burkina Faso. All of them have either witnessed some metaphysical phenomena or (for most of them) have heard about them. According to Ouedraogo, 70 percent of Burkinabe believe in witchcraft (2006). When reading older books or articles about Burkinabe traditions and culture, the question that comes in mind is always the same; do these customs and beliefs still exist? I have then tried to look at the most recent writing, to find some responses, yet I did not expect to find out, in the field, that witchcraft and phenomena related to witchcraft could still be so similar to those described by Dim Delobsom in 1934.

Today, Dim Dolobson[2] is considered by Burkinabe intellectuals as the first Burkinabe historian (Piriou 1995). There had been some controversy about his position during colonial time as underlined by Kavane:

> Dim Delobsom was one of the first indigenous colonial clerks in the French administration of Upper Volta. He also was apparently the first indigenous ethnographer to publish in French West Africa. Delobsom fell afoul of the colonial administration; however when in 1934 he became enmeshed in a major

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[2] The name is also written as Dim Dolobsom by some scholars.

dispute over policy towards the Catholic Mission. Shortly after that, he tried to assume the chieftaincy of his natal region upon his father's death. Some French colonial officials thought he had intrigued against the Mission and would be compromised as a bureaucrat-chief, and sought to block his investiture. Delobsom died under mysterious circumstances in 1940, several months after finally being named chief. A sad fact of Burkina Faso today is that few people have heard of Dim Delobsom, especially young people (2006:12)

And

Delobsom illustrates in sharp detail how a 'native' worked in the interstices of the colonial state. He had one foot firmly planted in pre-colonial institutions of authority-- the traditional chieftaincy of the Mossi empire; one foot planted in new non-state institutions authoring new discourses of legitimation-- the Catholic Church and possibly the Free-Masons and certainly the world of books and other mass produced, globalized cultural output; and a third foot planted in the colonial state itself-- as a high-ranking clerk and widely-praised ethnographer, he was very close to the top administrators of Upper Volta. (Kavane 2006: 13)

Kavane's arguments highlight the particular and sensitive position occupied by Delobsom during the colonial period. Delobsom wrote two notable books that represent – no matter the debate about Delobsom's status in the colonial state- a significant heritage for the Mossi: *L'Empire du Mogho-Naba* and *Secrets des Sorciers Noirs*, published in the early 1930s. "These books are characterized by a lively and intelligent style, with a friendly mix of personal anecdotes and serious questioning of Mossi society... They seem to be the first well-known books by an African author in French West Africa". (Kavane 2006:14)

Among all the Mossi literature, Delobsom's books are unavoidable for anyone who wants to learn about the Mossi ethnicity. In Delobsom's book, I read about a phenomenon that I was able to observe firsthand in Burkina Faso: the *tinsé* of Fingla.

3.3.2. The *Tinsé* of Fingla

In the Mossi Plateau, a traditional custom creates terror and controversy. Commonly known as the *tinsé*, this ritual, long practiced in villages, is nowadays a subject of dispute

between governmental institutions, human rights movements, and the people who practice and worship the *tinsé* ritual. The *tinsé* was described in Dim Delobsom's book "*Le Secret des Sorciers Noirs*" (1934). For Delobsom, the *tinsé* is a form of traditional justice:

> People who feel like they have been wrongly accused of various crimes such as being a witch, resorts to the Kambogo: they can swear in front of the *tinsé* that they are innocent. The *tinsé* is a fetish belonging to a *tingsoba* (the chief of the earth) and is symbolized by a large decorated clay jar smeared with the blood of sacrificed animals. The *tinsé* has the power to give death to anyone who claims to be innocent, but is guilty of witchcraft". (1934: 126-127 translated by the author)

It is almost comparable to swearing on the Quran or the Bible. A person who swears in front of the *tinsé* will ask to be killed if he/she is guilty. In different cases and even for minor problems, a Mossi can ask for the justice of the *tinsé* if he/she is accused. The accuser will also be called, and both parties may be reconciled. Yet for the "spell" of the *tinsé* to be canceled, a chicken has to be offered and sacrificed by the *tingsoba*. If the chicken fell on its back, it means that the suspect is not guilty, and both the accuser and the accused have to shake hands, and they should not hold a grudge. If there is no reconciliation, the justice of the *tinsé* will apply, and one person will die within a period of 2 to 3 years. If one of the people dies, the parents will make a chicken sacrifice, and again, if the chicken fell on its back, it means that the tinsé caused the death. Nobody is supposed to mourn the dead person, and all his/her belongings have to be given to the *tingsoba* because if anyone would touch these objects, he or she might also die.

According to Delobsom, the *tinsé* can also be used by the chief of a village to debunk witches. Some of the women at the centers were accused this way. In that case, the "priest" will mix water with a mixture taken from the jar and will give this potion to drink to the person who is suspected of witchcraft (Delobsom 1934).

3.3.2.1.The *tinsé* today: my journey to Fingla

According to Congo (2012), there are many *tinsé* sanctuaries such as Fingla's Boultogo, Walma *Tinsé* de Walma, Zaamponré de Kourian, and *Tinsé* de Pensalga in the province of Kourwéogo, Guéré de Bokin in the Passoré, the Gaoua de kaya and the Napamboumbou of Boussouma in the Sanmatenga, and the Gorko in the province of Bam. However, it is in The Kourwéogo, Oubritenga, and Passoré provinces, a few kilometers from the capital Ouagadougou that these practices are the most frequent. In Boussé, no week goes by without the military police, Social Services, or local police registering complaints related to that practice. According to these services, they had to handle more than a hundred cases in 2011. The gendarmerie alone reportedly recorded 50 cases of complaints related to the *tinsé* (Congo 2012).

According to Congo (2012), there are several ways that the *tinsé* manifests itself. People can go to the place of the fetish to make incantations or drink a decoction. The most common form is the verbal form. People invoke the *tinsé* for cases involving the "theft of women" (in some cases the woman has left her husband to go with another man, yet that man is accused of having stolen the woman), theft of property, land disputes, slander, witchcraft, and many other reasons. For Naaba Kango, Chief of Sao, it is "a relentless, unstoppable justice that often escapes the control of those who are responsible for making the sacrifices, because they cannot change the consequences generated by a *tinsé* ritual. According to Congo:

> At Fingla, the fetish reputations go beyond the borders of Burkina Faso; the realities are edifying, even frightening. Fingla is the combination of 33 fetishes, embodied by a well located in a pond in the bush. People like to come here because the action and the answers are fast. In clear terms, your request is quickly answered, and it kills quickly no matter where you are. According to local wise men, fetishes never lie. They indicate the culprits by the positions of the slaughtered chicken during the sacrifice. For them, no manipulation is possible in such cases. The incantations and words of the protagonists are said loudly and intelligibly, before pouring water and slaughtering the chicken. If your chicken falls on your back, you are exonerated. If it's the opposite, you have to blame

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yourself a lot. In this case, if nothing is done, your days are counted. It can range from a few weeks to several years. Imagine someone stealing your wife and refusing to recognize it, or a witch "catching" one of your children. You only have the "Tinsé" to make him listen to reason. If he is guilty, he will quickly tell the truth for fear of dying. At this moment, everything is settled amicably, and the protagonists smoke the pipe of peace by drinking water from the same calabash…(2012 translated by the author)

This traditional justice has its rules which must be scrupulously respected. According to those who are practicing the *tinsé*, one cannot put the *tinsé* to someone without letting him/her know. The defendant must be informed directly or indirectly. The name or names of the fetishes must be served, and they must not greet and make any exchanges. In their logic, the objective is not the death of the culprit, but it is just to confuse the culprit. (Congo 2012).

I had some incredible experiences during my fieldwork in Burkina Faso; my visit to Fingla was one of them; it was unexpected and staggering. Fingla is a place where many people would come for the *tinsé*. The village is located at about 2 hours from the capital. It is a small remote village in the Bush. I could not have found it without my guide who lives in Boussé, a town close to Fingla. Even if my guide had been many times in Fingla, we still had to ask for direction, and we had the chance to come across the son of Fingla's chief, who showed us the direction. When we arrived in the village, we had first to wait until the son asked permission to his father for an audience. After about fifteen minutes of waiting, we were invited to sit on a bench and first started with the traditional greeting to the chief. He was the *tingsoba*, the earth chief who did generally perform the *tinsé* sacrifices. However, the chief was very old and blind; it was now his two sons who were making the sacrifices in his name. We had a long interview, and after that, the sons took us to the sanctuary.

While there is generally little vegetation in the bush in that region, we arrived in front of very green and thick wood. They told us that no one was allowed to cut trees in that sacred place. We entered the forest and followed a path of about 30 m bending under foliage and branches. We

arrived in an area littered with various objects such as piles of clothes (shoes, scarves, loincloths, pants, bags, and shirts), mats, kitchen utensils, ox horns, bicycles, and many others heteroclite items. I first thought it was a garbage dump, but they told me that all the objects I could see were the remains of the victims of the *tinsé*. There was also dead chicken hanging on trees. The two sons of the *tingsoba* showed a well where they performed all the chicken sacrifices. We were sitting in that place – we could not stand because of the branches, and I was surprised by the quietness of the site. I felt so estranged that I could barely ask questions; I did not feel insecure, thanks to my guide, yet, the atmosphere was strange and bizarre; looking at all these objects that belonged to dead people was odd and somewhat uncomfortable. How did all these people die? It was like being in a cemetery of persons who had died mysteriously; these persons did not have a grave. Nobody wants (is supposed to) to remember them, but yet their belongings make them more alive than a grave would.

If the idea of getting justice seems right; however, there are other practices that are very shocking and dreadful. My guide told the terrible story of a woman who was a victim of the *tinsé*. The same story is also related in Congo's article. A woman forced to marry, decided to flee with her lover to Cote d'Ivoire and stayed there 16 years and had four children. Her mistake was to come back to Burkina, where her parents forced her to go to Fingla so that her husband (the first husband) could obtain justice. Once in Fingla, they tortured her; her whole body was slashed, including her breast and private parts, and they poured the *tinsé* decoction on the wounds. That practice left her with terrible scars all over her body like an indelible imprint of her curse that will condemn her to exclusion and marginalization; no man would ever accept to have sex with a woman carrying the stigma of the *tinsé* because he would be afraid of dying. Since then, the woman has been wandering alone, none of her parents or in-laws wanted her to come

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close in fear of bringing bad luck and death to the family. She lives now in Boussé, in a small house surrounded by other women who have been accused of witchcraft and excluded.

One of the women I met in Boussé told me her story related to the *tinsé*. When she was accused of witchcraft, she went there to ask for justice. She went through the ritual, and she was found innocent. However, the villagers never let her come back, and she went to Ouagadougou to ask for help in the Delwendé shelter. If we would follow the logic of the *tinsé*, the people who wrongly accused her of witchcraft should then be punished.

For a renowned place like Fingla where many people would come every day for *tinsé* purposes -- I have seen people with cars and motorcycles waiting their turn close to the sanctuary, I was expecting to see a wealthy place, but it was a very humble place with no electricity or running water. I thought that the *tingsoba* would be a rich man, but the *tingsoba* was wearing old, torn up clothes. With all the clothes I have seen at the sanctuary, I realized that the *tingsoba* and his family would never take any of these objects that belonged to a dead person.

According to Congo (2012), it is because people do not have much faith in modern justice that they think they need to appeal to the *tinsé* to maintain the social order. This form of rendering judgment is not at all the taste of the police, gendarmerie, and social services. These structures see it as a channel for severe violations of the rights of women and girls. There are many examples of these inhuman treatments. According to the Director of Social Action interviewed by Congo: "these practices are deeply rooted in their culture. They are a formidable weapon for enforcing forced marriage and social exclusion. The majority of the unfortunate women in Boussé cannot go to their husbands, let alone their parents. They will wander thus until their death" (Congo 2012).

It is alarming that in 2018, such practices are still happening and that the government has not been able to stop some of the most evident harmful effects of the ritual. I came to an understanding of why the laws are not reinforced (we will see later in chapter 6 that the Burkina legal apparatus provides such laws) when I met with the chief of the Police in Boussé. He clearly and defensively said that they never rejected any person who had come to complain about witchcraft accusations. However, prosecuting people for false accusations is a long process that few people would engage in. The police would send the accused women to the social services who would investigate the case and, most of the time will find a home for the women who would seldom get justice. The other reason is that policemen themselves believe in witchcraft. The chief explained that he had seen cases where some people who were arrested had been able to get rid of their handcuff magically; that some reports had suddenly and strangely disappeared from his office. For him, it is difficult to fight against powerful occult forces. That was not an isolated case: I also talked with a police officer in the capital who also confirmed that he believed in witchcraft.

3.3.3. Laarle Naaba Tigré: interview

Laarle Naaba is the second most important figure in the Mossi hierarchy. Victor Tiendrebeogo inherited the title of Larlé Naaba in 1990. He then changed his name to "Tigré" and abandoned his civilian name. Laarle Naba Tigré is an expert in customs and traditions, the guardian of royal burials, and the guardian of Mossi tradition. He is 58 years old; he is Catholic, yet he practices a form of syncretism since he also follows some Mossi traditions based on animism. He argued that even before Muslims and Christians entered the country, Mossi already believe in one God as it is highlighted by many of their blessings starting with "wend" meaning god. God's wife is the earth. Mossi also believe that God can be present in many features of their

life, like a tree, a stone, a hill, etc. Laarle strongly believes in witchcraft. Even though he is catholic, he believes that there are many things that we cannot rationally explain. He said that we also have some sort of witches in France because when he went to France in 1987, he went to see a numerologist who predicted that he would be elected to the National Assembly four times and that at the fifth one he would have to decide if he would continue, and this is what happened.

Yet, according to the Laarle, "the white sorcerers are not like the African sorcerers who think that you have to be graceful and wear a thousand rings, the white sorcerers are not like that, they master the occult science in a more or less rational way and express it differently; otherwise, white sorcerers also have mystical powers." The Laarle Naaba believes that he needs to protect himself from witchcraft in his own country. He showed his numerous silver rings he was wearing and told that they were "gris-gris" that protected him. He said: "I gave up many things not to get crushed by my enemies." He noted that many witches (men) tried to bewitch him, but they were never able to do so because his right actions protect him. He told us about some incredible things that happened. He saw a shoemaker in a village that could walk through the rain without having one drop touching him. He also told us about a sorcerer who could make rain in localized areas. He had witnessed that phenomenon.

The fear of witchcraft and the fear that somebody would put a spell on them could make Burkinabe act in erratic ways based on an occidental perspective. A French entrepreneur explained that during a visit to an important Mossi chief, he found him picking up one by one his hair on the floor after he had a haircut. Knowing that there were always servants in chief's houses, the entrepreneur found it bizarre and asked why he was doing that. The leader answered that he did not want anybody to take his hair and use it to throw him an evil spell. As the Laarle Naaba said, "when you are wealthy and when you have a high position in the hierarchy, there are

always jealous people who want you to fall; they may wish your death or the death of members of your family."

Based on my experience in Burkina Faso, I agree with Stanley Tambiah's ideas about relativism; he argues that uncritical relativism and absolute (Western) rationalism cannot explain witchcraft. There is a necessity to be able to formulate critical judgments on cultural phenomena without reducing them to "verifiable propositional format of logicians" (2009:23). I recognize that by staying long enough in the country, my approach and my positionality has evolved. Even with the best intention to conduct my research with an open mind, I started my journey in Burkina Faso with a substantial cultural and scholar background; I would use the French word "baggage," like something heavy you are carrying when you are traveling. It is difficult, though, to get rid of what I believed was a scientific approach and finally lose control of "my" rationality. I also agree with Stoller that an anthropologist must accept and recognize that he/she will only access partial truths. Even after conducting more than a year of research, I realized that it takes not only time but also surrendering to attain "between things" position: "between two or more languages, between two or more cultural traditions, between two or more apprehension of realities" (2009:4). I had experienced that precise moment when I decided to stop questioning Burkinabe beliefs in witchcraft from my Occidental point of view and accepted that their realities might be different from mine. It is only at that point that I was able to move forward in my research, and it has opened new avenues for me.

3.4. Conclusion

Witchcraft is a potent reality for many Africans. New forms of witchcraft have appeared with globalization, technology, and failed development. Traditional forms have also survived with dreadful consequences for alleged witches. My research focusing on the lived experience of accused women could not be completed without firsthand insights into the world of witchcraft. The subject of witchcraft will not conclude in this chapter, but highlighting and understanding contemporary Burkinabe beliefs in witchcraft is essential to the analysis of witchcraft accusations in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The complexity and diversity of the various forms of witchcraft require us to look closer at the details of the lived experience of the individuals who either are practicing witchcraft, targets of such practices, or victims of accusations. These three categories are significantly different in scope. And while phenomenology can offer an interesting approach to the study of witchcraft accusations, there are many different phenomenological theories and methodological approaches. However, the lived experience of individuals accused of witchcraft is affected by their cultural habitus. Therefore, I suggest a Bourdieusian phenomenological approach to the study of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft.

4.1. Phenomenological approach to witchcraft

According to Moran, phenomenology developed as a new "way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system" (2000:4). Phenomenologists reject psychological theories about human existence and behavior and aim to portray life as it is lived (Moran 2000). Not all phenomenologists agree with one another; Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, for example, did not have the same interpretations of Husserl's work, the man regarded as the father of phenomenology (Moran 2000). According to Merleau-Ponty (1956), there is no consensus on the definition of phenomenology. For him,

> Phenomenology is the study of essences and accordingly its treatment of every problem is an attempt to define an essence, the essence of perception, or the essence of

consciousness, for example...It is a transcendental philosophy which suspends our spontaneous natural affirmations in order to understand them, but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' as an inalienable presence which precedes reflection. The whole effort of phenomenology is to recover this naïve contact with the world... It is an attempt to describe our experience as it is and to describe it directly, without considering its psychological genesis or the causal explanations which the scientist, historian, or sociologist may give. (1956:59).

Likewise, Merleau-Ponty rejected behaviorist explanations of human comportment and adopted a more holistic approach based on the Gestalt psychological tradition, arguing that human experience cannot be reduced to a sum of behaviors induced by stimuli, but is a complex set of interactions between consciousness, body, and environment (Moran 2000). Merleau-Ponty did not adopt Sartre's essentialist approach, postulating that humans are ineluctably free, but maintains that the concept of freedom is historically conditioned (Moran 2000). For instance, Merleau-Ponty affirms that "to be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world" (Moran 2000:190).

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1956), Merleau-Ponty aims to give an alternative to scientific causality concepts and idealist discourse. He refutes Descartes' assertion that "I think, therefore I am," and claims that the world is the bases of human body, semantic, and interpersonal experience. Besides the natural world, there is also the cultural and social world that needs to be learned as a constitutive experience of the world. Not only do humans perceive things around them through their senses (working in a concerted, holistic manner), they also perceive people around them. Reflection leads us to understand the perception we have of others as sharing the same world and creating a social world comparable to the concept of intersubjectivity developed by Husserl. But perception is just one of three phenomenological approaches to the study and analysis of witchcraft accusations. Intersubjectivity and embodiment can also prove invaluable.

4.1.2. On intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is an essential feature of phenomenology. While intersubjectivity is often conceived of as shared or mutual interaction, according to Husserl, it actually starts with the perception of bodies; it first means an understanding that is "pre-logical and pre-propositional" before placing it in a broader context of meaning and consciousness (Duranti 2010). Others' behavior may require our response, either by a reaction or just by being attentive. Most of the time, our understanding is automatic and does not require us to interpret behavior.

Intersubjectivity carries varying appellations in various disciplines, such as "social cognition" or "theory of mind," and has also received much attention in the neurosciences (Gallagher 2009). These different approaches offer new understanding, as well as new theories of social cognition. According to Gallagher (2009), there are two significant questions about social cognition: "how do we recognize others as conscious or minded agents/persons, and how do we understand their specific behaviors, actions, intentions, and mental states?" (2009:289). Thus far, most research has focused on the second question, and among the most recognized theories are the simulation theory [ST] and Theory Theory [TT] (Gallagher 2009). Simulation TT proposes that we have the ability to project our mental minds into others to predict and understand their way of thinking and their comportments. (This theory has been validated by neurological research on mirror neurons.) TT suggests that we make inferences about how people think and act; yet, there is no consensus about how this faculty of mindreading is acquired. Gallagher affirms that these two theories have been recently combined, proposing an alternative theory called, "interaction theory" - adopting ideas from phenomenology and developmental psychology, such as the perception of others' intentions, emotions in their comportment in which individuals do not need to make inferences.

According to Gallagher, we do not observe others, but we always interact with them without having to continually try to read others' minds (Gallagher 2009). We experience an evolution of intersubjectivity during childhood from primary intersubjectivity in infancy (when a child is able to recognize faces and imitate) to secondary intersubjectivity (during which the child starts to engage and interact with others). A child will eventually develop narrative competencies during which he/she will acquire more sophisticated ways of understanding others' intentions and behaviors.

Gallagher acknowledges that a critical aspect of intersubjectivity was missing from interaction theory, namely, "participation sense-making," a theory proposed by De Jaehger and Di Paolo suggesting that "there is a cognitive aspect in intersubjectivity and people engage in active social processes that help them to understand each other" (Gallagher 2009). Without taking "participation sense-making" into account, Gallagher suggests that social cognition will "remain philosophically autistic" (2009:298). The author asserts that the phenomenological perception of objects is different from the perception of people, a concept recently confirmed by research. Participation sense-making is enhanced by language and narratives and gives new meanings to the world other than solely the perceptual environment. According to Gallagher, narratives enhanced by new technologies develop multiple realities in which individuals "extend cognitive accomplishments into cultural institutions, some of which liberate us, and some of which enslave us" (2009:304). Understanding the dimensions of intersubjectivity is essential to conducting meaningful research among the WAoW. Women forced to leave their traditional environment and start a new life in a different setting with unfamiliar women develop new intersubjectivities with the world and the people around them.

According to Duranti, the concept of human sociality has been ignored by anthropologists (2010), yet "when properly understood, intersubjectivity can constitute an overall theoretical frame for thinking about the ways in which humans interpret, organize, and reproduce particular forms of social life and social cognition" (2010:17). It is interesting to note that Husserl did not support an anthropological approach to phenomenology because of the tendency of the anthropology of that time to "naturalize human experience instead of examining its a priori, transcendental foundations . . . Husserl became preoccupied with defining methods that would not be 'limited to anthropological-historical facticities'" (Duranti 2010:18). Of course, Husserl's criticism of anthropology has to be seen within the historical context of his time, considering that many anthropologists have since embraced phenomenological approaches.

As explained by Ram and Houston, phenomenological anthropology developed as a reaction to the "focus unduly on questions of meanings, discourse, structural relations, and political economy, to the neglect of the everyday experiences . . . that weigh so heavily on people's lives" (2015:6). In anthropology, the concept of "natural attitude" can be renamed "cultural attitude" (Desjarlais and Throop 2011:88). According to Ram and Houston, perception and experience cannot be separated from "sensorial, corporeal, cultivated, interactional, distributed, collective, political, ethical, and individual" dimensions (Ram and Houston 2015:2).

4.1.3. Understanding intersubjectivity and its methodological implications

Intersubjectivity is an essential theme in phenomenology and represents one of the most complex and exciting approaches to ethnographic methodology. According to Duranti (2010), there is a broad spectrum of interaction between humans, from the most basic one where people are minimally aware of each other, to the most active interaction in which people engage in common tasks, in which language plays an important role. As Duranti underlines, the two

primary questions are: should we, and can we, distinguish different levels of being together? Duranti questions the importance and methodology intended to identify—compare and contrast - these different levels of "being together" (2010:28). He contends that "intersubjectivity, properly understood and differentiated in its related and yet distinguishable existential modes, aspects, and domains, could turn out to be just as important, but hopefully not as vague as the notion of culture. He proposes six different domains of research that can be used by anthropologists interested in intersubjectivity, domains that can serve as the starting point(s) of my research among the WAoW.

The first domain is "the experience of the natural world" shared by a group of humans, which forms the first "form of community" (2010:27). Husserl suggests that we can make conscious the natural world - which we typically take for granted (Duranti 2010). This potentially crucial aspect must be included in my research: how has this natural world changed for the WAoW? Transitioning from a rural/agricultural type of life to an urban life may have changed their perception of their natural world; having to undergo these changes later in life perhaps poses additional challenges.

The second domain of investigation proposed by Duranti involves the senses and how our senses are combined to apprehend the world we share with other human beings. How do women adapt to new environmental sounds (villages being so comparatively calm compared to the capital city), smells, habitats, and other to individuals living in the shelters?

The third domain of analysis concerns the cultural world. How have the cultural worlds of the WAoW changed between their life in traditional villages (with traditional housing, activities, food, and beliefs) and life in urban shelters run by Catholic nuns? In the fourth domain of inquiry, Duranti suggests that we examine "the participation in a world inhabited by others,

also perceived and understood as particular types of beings" (2010:27). Once again, it is a very interesting perspective to investigate how women who used to live in communities composed of villagers from all gender and all ages have reframed their perception of "others" in shelters inhabited mostly by older women.

In the fifth domain, "being with" and "doing together," is an exploration of interactions between people, including past, present, and future pragmatic exchanges and actions (2010:27). The WAoW have different pasts and lived in different environments, yet may share a common traumatic event. How do these women's pasts manifest and interact in the present? Dictated by necessity, these women have learned new "doing together" and "being together" experiences. While evaluating intersubjectivity is a complex endeavor, by collecting women's life histories, some aspects of intersubjectivity may be revealed. Furthermore, organizing focus-groups and then observing the interaction between women during these meetings may expose the relationship between them.

 Lastly, language is the means by which intersubjectivity is brought to a more sophisticated level. In a focus-group setting, it may be possible to investigate women's language interactions, and hopefully reveal the level of intimacy they have developed.

In all these investigative steps, the anthropologist is directly involved; he/she is not a neutral observer. In research conducted in the Mayenne, a region in the West of France, Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980) explains that nobody talks about witchcraft there unless an individual - as the author - is involved in the power relationships of witchcraft. The interaction between the ethnographer and research participants is well described by Favret-Saada,

> Let him [the ethnographer] open his mouth, and his interlocutor immediately tries
> to identify his strategy, estimate his force, guess if he is a friend or foe, or if he is

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to be bought or destroyed. As with any other interlocutor, speaking to the ethnographer one is addressing either a subject supposed to be able (a witch, an unwitcher) or unable (a victim, a bewitched person)" (1980:11).

According to the author, acquiring knowledge about witchcraft is not like a traditional ethnographic investigation because the knowledge confers power that can be a threat to others or to the ethnographer himself/herself. The author was first considered to be a witch by her interlocutors, who had the power of bewitching others; then, she became a victim of witchcraft and had to be unbewitched by another witch. Favret-Saada was thus compelled to question her own personal scientific objectivity and enter the world of witchcraft that would not have been accessible by any other means. For Favret-Saada, these are the conditions sine qua non to be able to analyze a phenomenon like witchcraft, and not just touch the contours.

A few female anthropologists have adopted a phenomenological approach to their research - Van Heekeren being one of them (2015). She suggests that ethnographers "create phenomena that are of the world and thus reveal the world to the reader" (2015:248). Following Husserl's lead, she believes that anthropologists should be creative in describing "lifeworlds" of others (2015:249), and that it involves application of artistic skills; as emphasized by Husserl, we need to "put the world in brackets" and prevent a priori worldviews by focusing on the "reality before us" (Van Heekeren 2015:250). Van Heekeren proposes that anthropologists should use a personal narrative that goes further than Geertz's so-called "thick description," that "anthropology might attend to the ordinariness of people's cultural lives to better understand their experience of the more-than-ordinary" (2015:251). Examining the relationship Vula maintained with dead ancestors, the author poses this question: "by what means do the phenomena of everyday experience become more than what they are? My intuition is that this takes the form of a magnification of sensory experience" (2015:252). Thus, from a

phenomenological standpoint, it is acceptable that individuals may physically perceive phenomena that we may consider supernatural, perhaps something like a placebo effect. Yet, we must describe these phenomena as they are lived. For example, Van Heekeren describes the presence of an invisible sorcerer like "an impression of a breeze, a ripple in the grass, or a rustle in the leaves" (2015:254). The author acknowledges the importance of emotional experience that enables anthropologists to experience the "extraordinary" (2015:255). Furthermore, Van Heekeren argues that it is also through emotions that anthropologists can apprehend the world. Reflecting on Sartre's description of emotions, Van Heekeren draws on her own emotional empathy to explain the intensification of feeling that changes ordinary events into extraordinary moments.

4.1.4. On Embodiment

According to Mascia-Lees, it was in the 1970s that the body became a subject of study in anthropology, with new arguments challenging previous concepts on gender, sex, and race. Mascia-Lee states that "whether understood as text, symbol, or habitus, the body has proved a fertile site from which anthropologists have mounted refutations of abstract, universalizing models and ideologies and interrogated operations of power, systems of oppression, and possibilities for agency and political change" (2011:1). Furthermore, the author asserts that the body cannot be separated from the world and the lived experience in this world. Research on embodiment requires a detailed and original ethnographic description.

Suffering, for instance, is an example of an embodiment. Farmer (1996) suggests that anthropologists should study the individual experience of sufferance and also study the social forces that can cause suffering, asking, "by what mechanisms do social forces ranging from poverty to racism become embodied as individual experience?" (1996:261). The experience of

suffering cannot be quantitatively expressed in numbers; only by the stories of the individuals who experience it, and who are often the most marginalized and silenced.

4.1.5. Embodiment in anthropological research

According to Csordas (2011), "in effect, embodiment is our fundamental existential condition, our corporeality or "bodiliness" in relation to the world and other people (2011:137). Csordas refers to the somewhat different approach to embodiment proposed by Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, and Foucault, suggesting that these approaches also have direct consequences on agency: "the modality in which agency is exercised is for Merleau-Ponty, intention, for Bourdieu, practice, and for Foucault, discourse" (2011:138). For Merleau-Ponty, for instance, there is an intentional disposition of the body toward the world; he makes a distinction between conscious and voluntary intentions, and "operational intentionalities which produce the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and of our life" (Csordas 2011:139). Csordas also considers that "in defining embodiment as a methodological field, sexual difference counts as an elementary structure on its own right, that gender both refracts and complicates the modes and vectors of agency, and that sexuality constitutes a substantive domain of empirical inquiry" (2011:144). Furthermore, he suggests that embodiment needs to have a specific methodological approach, offering ten possible components to define corporality that could be used in various social research fields: body form, sensory experience, movement or motility, orientation, capacity, gender (including sexuality and specific gender experience), metabolism and physiology, copresence, affect, and temporality (2011:148). Csordas argues that the methodological approach to collecting data via interview and participant observation are traditional methods, but the difference lies in the way we "attend to those data, and the questions we ask of them" (2011:148).

4.2 Theoretical methodological approaches

4.2.1. Person-centered ethnography

Phenomenology, as a research method, can take on a variety of forms; the concept of "person-centered ethnography," developed by LeVine (Hollan 1997), is just one of them. Person-centered ethnography focus research on an individual's subjective experiences and how these experiences are affected by and can affect social and cultural processes. Rather than assume abstract constructs of experience, the purpose of this ethnography is to "explore emotional saliency and the motivational force of cultural beliefs and symbols" (Hollan 1997:220). Hollan makes the distinction between "experience-near" (based on the lived experience of the subject) and "experience-distant" (built on abstract metapsychological theories) (1997:220). He suggests that every theory should be based on research conducted on individual subjectivities to be able to understand and analyze them within or among a given culture. As Sapir suggests, "the true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals" (Hollan 1997:221). Sapir also recommends that we should not assume cultural models before first investigating the behaviors and thoughts of individuals in their daily interactions (Hollan 1997). That it is necessary to understand how individuals perceive their world from "inside out," what motivates their actions, and how they satisfy their needs (Hollan 1997:222). Using psychiatry as an example, Hollan contends that "by over privileging and reifying psychiatric illness categories, we risk misunderstanding the subjective experience of pain and suffering that is (or should be) one of the primary defining characteristics of the phenomena we are investigating" (1997:222). For Hollan, it is essential to understand the day-to-day lives of individuals with mental disorders. In keeping with this perspective, there are three primary questions pertinent to person-centered ethnography:

> 1. What do people say about their subjective experience? That is, what can they verbally report to us about their experience? 2. What do people do that enacts or reveals behaviorally their subjective experience? 3. How do people embody their

subjective experience, or conversely, how do the senses of the body, culturally elaborated in different ways, give rise to the sense of oneself and others? (Hollan 1997: 224).

Hollan often draws parallels between person-centered ethnography and psychoanalysis's focus on subjects' contradictions between their desires and moral conscience. The way individuals avoid some subjects in favor of others and take responsibility for their behaviors or attribute them to other unconscious forces beyond their control can be analyzed. The study of narrative structures is an integral aspect of person-centered ethnography, the choice of vocabulary to describe experience "affected by convention of narrating and telling, by the social context of who is telling what to whom and under what circumstances . . ." (Hollan 1997:226). Hollan also emphasizes the differences between psychoanalysis and person-centered ethnography in that the latter is interested in the more holistic aspect of the individual experience, embedded in social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Hollan suggests that we need to follow individuals in their daily lives across time - and consider their social surroundings.

According to Hollan, the mind cannot be studied apart from the body, and another aspect of person-centered ethnography is to study the embodiment of the experience and "how the senses of the body are culturally elaborated into the experience of self and others... Embodiment studies focus our attention on the tacit, visceral, unspeakable aspects of human experience" (1997: 228-230). Suffering, for example, is one such aspect that might be difficult to communicate for individuals, which may invariably cause further distress for them. Thus, giving voice to women's suffering in Africa is another important endeavor of African feminists, as expressed by Lewis (above). The person-centered ethnographical approach can also be used to investigate the lived experience of the WAoW.

Wikan advocates for an "experience-near anthropology" (1991: 285). Based on her research on the Balinese gender expression of emotion and how women have to hide their grief, she encourages us to rethink our production of knowledge by asking, "how do we come to know what we think that we know? What is to count as truth, and for what purpose?" (1991:287). And, "how valid is knowledge that is not anchored in experience?" (1991:288). According to Wikan, researchers have a tendency to privilege "expert" knowledge because it seems more coherent - rather than listening to people's experience that does not fit neatly into prescribed cultural models. Wikan ponders the status of "expert" versus "folk models" of knowledge, asking, are they equally valid? She believes that knowledge from different viewpoints cannot be defined as alternative cultural models. She asserts,

> Such embodied and supremely relevant models have to a great extent been overlooked by us in our preoccupation with 'culture,' a hegemonic concept that until recently and even today holds us in a straitjacket" or what Renato Rosaldo calls, "a monolithic formation of logically coherent parts with the observer as the authoritative adjudicator of what does and does not belong. (Wikan 1991:289).

The objective of reassessing the cultural model is to modify the anthropologist's methodology by "moving down the social ladder, away from association with culture spokesmen and evocateurs, to more ordinary people of humdrum" (1991:290). Wikan acknowledges the potential difficulties in changing anthropologists' habits: to turn away from eloquent informants in favor of individuals who might not inform us about traditional cultural norms. "An anthropology of experience requires a revitalization and redesign of concepts" (1991: 291). She believes that we need to understand culture based on what is relevant to individual experiences and concerns. Such is the case with the WAoW. These older women may not represent Mossi cultural norms: most of the time, elder relatives are treated with respect and represent an inherent part of their community, not rejected and socially excluded like the WAoW.

4.2.2. The philosophical standpoint

Renowned philosopher Nathalie Depraz (2012) invites us to understand and practice phenomenology from a philosophical standpoint. She insists that phenomenology is revitalized by multidisciplinary approaches and that before becoming a written text, it is the intuitive experience of singular individuals. According to Depraz (2012), theory, as opposed to practice, is supposed to be retrospective and achieved; whereas practice is prospective, continuous, unachieved, open to new possibilities, and undetermined (2012:19). Phenomenologists should take the risk to venture into unfamiliar spheres and look beyond their personal rationality. Depraz maintains that if we do not apply phenomenology, there is no phenomenology (2012:45). She asserts that anthropological fieldwork can offer phenomenological practices that are missing in philosophical approaches.

4.2.3. Oral histories

Julie Cruikshank defines oral histories as "research method where a sound recording is made of an interview about firsthand experience occurring during the lifetime of an eyewitness" (1994:404). While oral history was once (in the nineteenth century) considered a "cultural artifact" ignoring the social characters behind stories, by the beginning of the twentieth century, oral histories became a tool to study past and present social orders and has since been recognized as a valid and powerful method of acquiring knowledge (1994:407). Yet, the particular context in which oral histories are told and heard is essential: "there are cultural forms that organize perception, not containers of brute fact, because all facts are culturally mediated . . . meaning emerges from how they are used and practiced" (Cruikshank 1994:409). In the oral history setting, the narrator's (i.e., interlocutor's) social position, gender, and level of involvement in the story are all factors that must be taken into consideration. Feminists have also adopted oral

history practices because traditional knowledge has often ignored women's lives and voices (Sangster 1994). Even though narrative forms have often been the center of interest, Sangster recommends putting less emphasis on forms, stressing the context and social patterns in women's stories.

Using oral history as a method of research in Africa in general, and in Burkina Faso in particular, is an evident and applicable choice of methodology because of the African tradition of transmitting knowledge, history, and customs orally. According to Finnegan, "the African inheritance was maintained and constituted by the oral tradition . . . Oral tradition, speech, the verbal arts, orality, voice, audition, words, Africa - the images and the experiences hang together. They have played a crucial role in the delineation not only of Africa but also, by their contrasts, of the modernity of the west" (2007:1-2). The author also criticizes the twentieth-century Western assumption that non-written languages cannot have the same level of subtlety, aptitude of abstract thought, and capacity of analysis as the written language. It should be apparent, however, that spoken language can convey emotion not evident in words alone, in the tone, the silences, the kinetics associated with language, the eyes of the speaker, and the dramatization of the narratives. Finnegan believes that the "subaltern voices" so often assumed to be silent or suppressed can be heard loud and clear if one cares to locate oneself outside Western academies and networks" (2007:72). She credits all forms of oralities - even fictional and folklore - with some elements of truth and generality; that oral histories are shaped by experience. For Jack and Anderson, collecting oral histories necessitates a methodological transition from "information gathering" to "interaction, where the focus is on process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject's viewpoint" (1991:23). The authors assert that interviewers have to look "beyond the constraints of acceptable discussion... and facilitate the access to muted channels of women's

subjectivity" (1991:11); and that "listening" to a narrator is a skill that needs to be learned. We must teach ourselves to be aware of the speakers' "meta-statements," moments during which the narrator becomes aware of his/her own thoughts and the possible discrepancy between these thoughts. Furthermore, Jack and Anderson suggest a focus on the "logic of the narrative, noticing the internal consistency or contradictions in the person's statements" (1991:22). Contradictions can be signs that women are struggling with "conflicting cultural ideals" (1991:23).

During her research among the Burkinabe gold panners, Werthmann collected and analyzed songs women would chant while working. Through the lyric, she was able to infer some of the specific gender relationships occurring on gold mines sites and villages:

> The occurrence of gold has saved women . . . It's my husband's mean co-wife who send me away . . . I went to the gold village . . . If my husband don't want me anymore I will go with the gold panners . . . I went to the gold village, a young Mossi gave me five thousand francs to eat meat. When I ate the meat I became pregnant . . . men who beat women should learn to refrain their hands . . . men who insult women should learn to refrain their mouths" (2007:315 - 317 - translated by the author).

Besides the WAoW personal stories, older Mossi women may still remember and be able to recount traditional tales otherwise lost to time. It could prove invaluable to collect their memories and see how these tales have forged their identities and imposed gender roles. My hope is that though traditional African oral history, I will be able to learn more about witchcraft accusations, find out if the phenomenon existed pre-colonization, if it changed during French influence, and perhaps collect new information I did not expect to uncover.

4.2.3.1. Oral history criticism

The criticism most often associated with oral history-taking methods concerns the reliability and validity of the collected data itself (Angrosino 2008); the least of which, individual memories are not always consistent. Furthermore, narrators may transform their

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stories in order to adapt them to their interviewer's perceived expectations: there can be deception and dissimulation involved. Angrosino proposes to validate individual narratives with other sources when possible. Yet, from a phenomenological approach, we can also agree that stories are the individual's personal realities, their perception; what they remember is what their senses tell them they experienced. However, there is also the difficulty of conveying the narrator's emotions into a written form: "even the most faithful transcription is an approximation of the spoken discourse" (Angrosino 2008:21). However, the empathy necessary for successful phenomenological approaches may help the interviewer to feel and understand the narrator's emotions and, hopefully, is able to transcribe them faithfully - while acknowledging our human limitations and individual positionalities. I am personally committed to continually challenging the way I understand and represent the women for whom I already feel a sense of obligation to render as fatefully as possible their experiences, their suffering, their emotions, their hopes, and their realities.

4.3. A Bourdieusan Phenomenological approach

Phenomenology as a theoretical approach offers a variety of possibilities of methods, however, once the research data are collected, phenomenology does not allow a larger analysis of the research topic, and I realized that it was necessary to add another theoretical approach to the study of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. Understanding why women are the principal victims of various oppressions such as witchcraft accusations and their lived experience does not explain how these persecutions are produced and reproduced in the specific Mossi social context. In *Le Sens Pratique* (1980), Bourdieu affirms,

the so-called phenomenological knowledge (or if one wants to speak in terms of currently existing schools, "interactionist" or "ethnomethodological"), explains the truth of the first experience of the social world, that is, to say the relation of familiarity with the familiar environment, apprehension of the social world as a natural and self-evident world, which, by definition, is not reflected and excludes the question of its own conditions of possibility (1980:234)

However, I suggest that phenomenology and Bourdieu's theory are not necessarily contradictory if phenomenology is used as a method of investigation and Bourdieu's concepts as a framework of analysis. Many different directions could have been chosen to analyze the results of this research, but I have decided to select Bourdieu for various reasons.

Bourdieu is known for his theory of practice that is an alternative between two opposite theories: structuralism and phenomenology. He had previously consecutively adopted and later rejected because of the numerous pitfalls he found in each of them (Costey, 2004). "By opposing and artificially stigmatizing two groups, Bourdieu gives himself the means to take center stage with a theory that is the answer to the limits of the "objectivist" and "subjectivist" modes of knowledge. This rhetoric is one of the strategies - since it must be so named - the most obvious of the Bourdieu thought (Costey 2004: translated by the author)." Bourdieu has progressively constructed his theory based on philosophical, sociological, and anthropological approaches on various subjects such as education, art, and politics. Therefore, his work has taken many different directions that, according to Costey (2004), has retained a degree of uncertainty that the author has carefully maintained. His theory of practice is an example of his production, which has many gray areas. It is, therefore, quite challenging to define Bourdieu's theory of practice in a few words; however, Robbins concluded that Bourdieu has "attempted to advance a theory of immanent and socially constituted thought about socially constructed action (2014:40)". Bourdieu's theory of practice is not a framework that can be directly applicable; however, some

of his concepts such as habitus and symbolic violence have the best potential to explain the

arbitrariness of witchcraft accusations and why women seem to accept oppression and inequality.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's work investigates the possible intermediary between, on the one

hand, a subject endowed with a free will embodied by Sartre's thought, and on the other hand,

the determinism of the structuralist theory represented by Levi-Strauss (Costey 2004). Similarly,

this research once more questions people's agency inside their social world and, more

specifically, WAoW agency that appears to be limited. Even though phenomenological methods

have given a good sense of the lived experience of women ostracized after being accused of

witchcraft, women's explanations of the causes of their fate are limited by the conditions in

which these thoughts are produced. Therefore, another theoretical approach is necessary to

analyze the phenomenon.

It is in Bourdieu's book, *Masculine Domination* (2001) that I found the theoretical

approach that could best explain the phenomenon of social exclusion of WAoW. Bourdieu's

concepts of symbolic violence and habitus developed after his research among the Kabyle in

Algeria can be applied similarly to this research in Burkina Faso. One of the most observable

resemblances between the two societies and even though the studies have been conducted sixty

years apart is the masculine dominance observed in the two countries, that Bourdieu described,

> And I have seen the masculine domination, and the way it is imposed and
> suffered, as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I
> call symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its
> victims exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channel of
> communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or
> even feeling. This extraordinary ordinary social relation thus offers a privileged
> opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic
> principle known and recognized both by the dominant and by the dominated – a
> language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking,, and
> acting)- and more generally, a distinctive property, whether emblem or stigma, the

symbolically most powerful of which is that perfectly arbitrary and non-predictive bodily property, skin color. (2001:1,2)

For Bourdieu, when trying to understand the masculine domination, once will necessarily use "modes of thoughts that are the product of domination (2001:5)." Therefore, he believes that it is necessary to consider the results of the analysis of the structures of a particular society "as the instrument of a socioanalysis of the androcentric unconscious that is capable of objectifying the categories of that unconscious (2001:5)". He further explains the embodiment of domination,

> The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction (2001:23).

Bourdieu describes the process by which arbitrary laws that create the dichotomous gender classes become natural laws by "the somatization of the social relations of domination (2001:23)." It is the result of a

> Formidable collective labour of diffuse and continuous socialization that the distinctive identities instituted by the cultural arbitrary are embodied in habitus that are clearly differentiated according to the dominant principle of division and capable of perceiving the world according to this principle (2001:23)

Therefore, submission is inscribed into women's habitus that is the condition and the norm of the social world imposed by a normalized masculine domination. Bourdieu explains the choice of the word habitus,

> Why did I revive that old word? Because with the notion of habitus you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit while differing from it in one important respect. The habitus, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to existentialist modes of thought (Bourdieu 1993: 86)

According to Maton (2014), the concept of habitus is complex and has been used and misused by other scholars and has now "a life beyond the work of Bourdieu" (2014:49),

> Formally, Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of actors (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a "structured and structuring structure". It is "structured" by one's past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is "structuring" in that one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a "structure" in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned. This "structure" comprises a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations, and practices (Maton 2014: 50).

The concept of habitus provides "means of analyzing the workings of the social world through empirical Investigations" (Maton 2014:48).

Bourdieu's concept of "*champ*" or the social world has been translated into field; I would instead translate it as a location, not only a physical location populated with other individuals who are sharing the same location, but also a cultural, social, and psychological location. This location, which, depending on its size and flexibility, can allow its constituents to move into this specific space, with an agency limited by the habitus of the location. The location is also delimited (demarcated) and limited (restricted) by the various forms of capitals defined by Bourdieu, which can, if acquired, change the degree of agency. He differentiates material and symbolic capital (Moore 2014). Symbolic capital includes cultural and social capital. Cultural capital consists of the various forms of knowledge, such as education and skills; social capital is each individual's social connections that give him or her a specific location in the social world. Each form of capital can be acquired separately, but it is the sum of the different types of capital that gives people status and power.

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital do not explain the potential of agency each one has inside his or her location (field). Therefore, it is necessary to add another form of capital

that I would call personal (or natural) capital. Personal capital is each individual's intrinsic psychological disposition, including personality traits, intellectual and emotional dispositions present at birth, but that will be altered and remodeled by cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors. Nevertheless, parts of the initial personal/natural capital will remain and will have some influence in the acquisition of other forms of capital at disposition and consequently, to the acquisition of habitus.

Based on the research, it is evident that women accused of witchcraft have very little capital. They have no education, therefore they have almost no cultural capital except for the basic knowledge they have acquired consisting of carrying out their daily chores; they have no access to land, so they have no economic capital, and finally, they have a very small social capital since they are barely accepted in their husbands' family; their major social capital being their husbands and children and mainly their sons; if a woman loses her husband, she also loses part of her social capital that reduces her agency and her children's agency as well. Women only possess their personal/natural capital that is forcibly altered to fit inside the habitus imposed by their social world. Depriving women of almost all forms of capital is the result of the incessant exertion of symbolic violence by all members of the social world. For instance, Bourdieu explains how male domination is part of schemes inherent in each individual's habitus,

> These schemes, shaped by similar conditions, and therefore objectively harmonized, function as matrices of the perception, thoughts, and actions of all members of the society – historical transcendentals which, being shared by all, impose themselves on each agent as transcendent. As a consequence, the androcentric representation of biological reproduction and social reproduction is invested with the objectivity of a common sense, a practical, doxic consensus on the sense of practices. (2001:33)

Bourdieu claims that symbolic domination is not the result of voluntary and conscious choices, but is imposed,

Through the schemes of perception, appreciation, and action that are constitutive of the habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself (2001:37)

Therefore, Bourdieu explains that it is a fallacy to believe that the liberation of women will come "through immediate effect of the raising consciousness, forgetting the opacity and inertia that stem from the embedding of social structures in bodies. (2001:40)". Bourdieu believes that the relation of domination can only be disrupted through a fundamental "transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves" (2001:42).

To understand how the habitus is embodied in Mossi women accused of witchcraft, a phenomenological approach is necessary to perceive the hidden and complex forms of symbolic violence that lead to this extreme form of discrimination and oppression. I, therefore, will call it a Bourdieusian phenomenological approach.

4.3.1. Bourdieusan phenomenological approaches of witchcraft beliefs in Burkina Faso

In *The Power of the Between: an Anthropological Odyssey,* Stoller (2009) describes his phenomenological approach to his study of witchcraft, making an interesting argument about relativist and rationalist approaches. Drawing on Stanley Tambiah's ideas about relativism, he argues that uncritical relativism and absolute (Western) rationalism cannot explain witchcraft phenomena today. There is a necessity to be able to formulate critical judgments on cultural phenomena without reducing them to "verifiable propositional format of logicians" (2009:23). The scientific status of anthropology is still debated today: is relativism too naïve? Is rationalism too Eurocentric? Whereas Stoller was first interested in structuralism and in understanding rational beliefs and logical consistency of witchcraft beliefs among the Songhay people of Niger,

he started to question how rational thought can explain human behavior: "can rational intentionality explain social behavior? Do individual predispositions affect rational choice? Is rational choice free of social context?" (2009:15). Stoller believes that both Levi-Strauss and Evans-Pritchard's approaches to understanding witchcraft miss the critical aspect of embodiment, finding the work of Merleau-Ponty providing partial responses to his questions, accepting that "ethnographic research could yield only 'partial truths'" (2009:50). Stoller adopted a "between things" position: "between two or more languages, between two or more cultural traditions, between two or more apprehension of realities" (2009:4). It is in that liminal between space that anthropologists can be creative and "not only evoke the things most deeply human but do so in a way that underscores the existential multiplicities of social life in a complex world" (2009:6).

Perception is an important feature of phenomenology. When relating to witchcraft, we may ask ourselves if there might be a specific sense of perception of witchcraft. I have met people who have seen strange things, and I do not think they were hallucinations. Skeptical people would say that what they see can be interpreted in different ways. When some informants explained that they had seen specific lights in the night that were witches, the most important is not what those lights were, but their interpretations because it is their beliefs that affect their lives and the lives of people around them. I have already observed that people who live in remote villages have developed acute visual sense since there are no roads, and they have to orient themselves in the Bush. I have also observed that many people have developed skills to move at night without lights. Therefore, they have developed a sense of observation different from mine, adapted to their environment and their lifestyle, and by extension to their culture. What they see is not necessarily what I see; therefore, their perception is not my perception.

Another important question that I have been asking myself about explaining a series of bad events using a witchcraft framework: are the sequences of these events a coincidence, or is there causality between them? It would be easier to adopt a functionalist approach to explain witchcraft, such as Evan-Prichard's explanation that witchcraft is a form of philosophy that contributes to explain the relationship between men and adverse events. It is also very tempting to explain witchcraft as a relation of power between people, but it would not be enough to explain all the phenomena and how it has survived despite modernization and development. Yet as Geshiere suggested, has witchcraft intensified, and is witchcraft today associated with modernity? It is difficult to affirm that any form of modernity and any global cultural forces are impacting the specific phenomena of witchcraft accusations among older women in Burkina Faso.

Beliefs in witchcraft can also be interpreted from a Bourdieusan approach. Bourdieu's concept of habitus described as "the link not only between past, present, and future but also between the social and the individual, the objective and the subjective" (Matton 2014: 52), can further explain how these beliefs are so persistent and widespread among the Mossi population. It can also explain why people may not question them and consequently rebel against accusations. As Bourdieu underlined,

> The established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned (1977: 166).

The second reason why people may not rebel against witchcraft accusations is the habitus of yielding to a higher hierarchy that is a fundamental characteristic of the Mossi society. Therefore, if both habitus of belief in witchcraft and obedience to hierarchy is coupled, people

accused of witchcraft have little chance to receive the support of any member of the society and will not rebel against the forces that compel them to accept the sentence and leave the village.

Furthermore, as indicated by the concept of habitus, it is necessary to chart the phenomena of witchcraft along Burkina Faso's broader historical timeline. If we take into account Delobsom's writings (1934), we can infer that witchcraft accusations existed before colonialism. Colonialism and Christian religions may have influenced these beliefs, but since they still exist today, these influences were not critical. It is not Kantagba's opinion who believes that the colonizers soon realized that witches were a potential danger. So they worked to demonize them (Nana 2019). Additionally, post-colonial politics may also have some impact on witchcraft practices and beliefs, particularly during revolutionary periods such as the Sankarist insurrection. When reading Sankara discourses and observing the progress the country had made during the revolution (see chapter 2), I will venture to say that if Sankara had been able to develop all his ideas, witchcraft accusations would have disappeared because of his revolutionary perspective on changing women's role in the country and ending women's oppression. In my opinion, the Sankara revolution was too short and did not have a real impact on witchcraft phenomena and witchcraft beliefs. Nevertheless, I have not yet examined all the aspects of witchcraft in Burkina Faso since it was not the main purpose of my research.

4.4. Social exclusion and stigmatization
4.4.1. Social exclusion

Social exclusion has been described from various theoretical frameworks and within different contexts (Byrn 2007). My choice of vocabulary is dictated by my first encounter with a Burkinabe social worker in Ouagadougou, and who used these words to describe the fate of women accused of witchcraft (WAoW). I have decided to use the same vocabulary because of its

etymology and also because it seems prudent to use the same terms to designate the same phenomena; since the words have almost the same meaning in French as in English, it is a convenient vocabulary. It is, however, interesting to note that the term "social exclusion" is not often used by anthropologists who prefer the terms marginalization, segregation, or ostracism. By looking deeper into the origin of these words, it becomes more understandable. According to Percy-Smith (2000), the term "social exclusion" may have come into prominence during the French socialist government of the 1980s, and concerned individuals who did not have access to welfare. Peace (2001) contends that the concept of social exclusion developed among European policy-makers to offer an alternative to the stigmatized notions of poverty. The idea was new:

> The 'war on poverty' was out and the 'fight against social exclusion' was in . . . Social exclusion was a new and shiny term - perhaps even a Trojan horse - that would encourage rethinking of social issues and problems away from the tired concepts of poverty and deprivation (2001:19 - 20).

Many definitions of social exclusion have been proposed, but not all fit the specific case of WAoW. Drawing on Silver's explanation, Peace offers that

> Social exclusion was multidimensional, that it involved a lack of resources and/or denial of social rights and that exclusion was a dynamic process. The process of exclusion resulted in multiple deprivations, the breaking of family ties and social relationships, and loss of identity and purpose (2001:26).

According to Bonner (2007), "social exclusion is a highly complex phenomenon that involves a wide range of complex needs... To tackle the problems of social exclusion, a multidisciplinary evidence-based approach is required" (2007: xix). Byrn (2007) suggests that there is a cross-disciplinary debate about the subject; social sciences have been able to assess social processes, but, according to the author, they have failed to "integrate the individual with the social entities through which individuals lead their lives: the households, the complex and multi-layered components of social space, and the social order as a whole" (2007:4).

In her 1991 article, "Witchcraft and leprosy: two strategies of exclusion," Mary Douglas explains the process of social exclusion related to leprosy and witchcraft and offers an interesting comparison. According to Douglas, witchcraft and insidious illnesses (such as leprosy) have similar forms of hidden harm and trigger the same opportunity for accusation and exclusion[3]. In both cases, whether the witchcraft threat is real or assumed is irrelevant; the mere belief that a menace exists is the driving issue. In both situations, the condition can go unsuspected and has the capacity to deceive and cause injury, justifying the exclusion of the individual suspected of witchcraft or of carrying a dreadful disease. In any case, these individuals are considered *immoral*—and the accusation of immorality is a crucial element of social rejection.

As widely seen, an essential factor of any accusation is its seeming credibility, which can then be followed by a justified public demand to remove the source of danger. Such allegations are more effective if aimed towards individuals who are already disliked or distrusted by the community as well as if the accusation is ambiguous and difficult to prove or disprove. Douglas' comparison of leprosy and witchcraft demonstrates similar processes by which social exclusion is achieved through powerful social actors.

4.4.2. Stigmatization

Stigmatization is an important dimension of social exclusion, and it is through this process that individual identities are tarnished and considered illegitimate for social interactions (Kursban and Leary 2001). Stigma causes the devaluation of an individual due to deviant characteristics not coinciding with the norms of that individual's community. Considered unfit for social interaction, the individual may be seen as a threat to other members of his/her group.

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[3] Archival research has shown that the Delwendé shelter also hosted lepers earlier, but does not anymore.

Stigmatization is a powerful form of symbolic violence and a force that helps to maintain the norms and habitus of a society. It is a systematic force applied by all members of a society to ostracize individuals who perturb the traditional order, and in this case, it is the order imposed by men. Stigmatization is rarely questioned, and its effects are long-lasting. It is the force of the unity of the group that is tied with the power of habitus against individuals who are either unfit because they may rebel against the system, or who serve as a scapegoat to discourage rebellion.

4.5. Conclusion

Phenomenology-based research offers great potential for conducting research focused on the lives of women socially excluded from their villages after being accused of witchcraft by entering their subjective and sensorial worlds. By listening to their stories, this approach provides unique opportunities to understand their individual experiences from their personal perspectives—the "alter-narratives" we are not accustomed to hearing (Anzaldúa 1992:284). I would argue that it is only by listening carefully to these women's voices that we can understand their suffering, their needs, their hopes, and recognize their remarkable resilience. It is also necessary to understand the cultural context in which the narrations are produced, and the forces that shape women's stories based on symbolic violence.

CHAPTER 5: FEMINISM IN AFRICA AND WOMEN IN BURKINA FASO

"How does the woman manage to live out this particular dual identity, which makes her the vital link that keeps the whole family together...while at the same time guaranteeing she will be marginalized and ignored? (Sankara 1990:39)"

Even though Sankara had a vision of a country, Burkina Faso, where men and women were equal, Burkinabe women today are still facing many challenges in a society that strives with socioeconomic difficulties and cultural norms that are particularly affecting women. Women accused of witchcraft is one example of the multiple oppressions in which women are victims. This chapter first questions and reviews feminism in Africa in general and in Burkina Faso in particular and address the critiques made by African feminists to Western feminist researchers. The second part of the chapter is a review of the various forms of oppression that victimize Burkinabe women today in a country that has maintained strong cultural norms of gender and marriage, the traditional practice of female genital cutting, and obstacles to access economic independence and political positions. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence further explains the relentless process of women's oppression.

5.1. What feminism for Africa?

5.1.1. Critics of Western Feminism

Among feminists who have provided sharp critiques to Western scholars, G. C. Spivak (1988) has a personal and unique discourse. Spivak generated this distinctive and provocative question: "Can the subaltern speak?" Grounding her argument on the Indian cultural tradition of the *sati* (the widow sacrifice), she demonstrates how the phenomenon has been historically described by the dominant English colonizer, and she argues that it has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. As an Indian woman, Spivak gives her own interpretation of the practice, using various and "personally" reframed theoretical approaches such as Marxism or psychoanalysis. Spivak argues that feminists have to listen to the most vulnerable population of women and pay attention to the way elite groups are ignoring their voices. To some extent, there are similarities between *satis* and Burkinabe women accused of witchcraft. Spivak would undoubtedly agree that Burkinabe women accused of witchcraft are "the subalterns," the most marginalized and silenced sector of the Burkinabe population. But, how can the Burkinabe subalterns speak and be listened to if they have been maintained in such a position of marginality and imposed silence? Most of these women have not received formal education; they only speak an African language used by a limited portion of the population, and they live in shelters which sparate and alienate them from the general population. Organizations implementing anti-exclusion programs should include them into the discussion and the design of these programs.

Feminist standpoint theorists like Nancy Hartsock (1983) posit that women situated inside marginalized groups are more competent to inform about their lived experience and can provide new forms of knowledge that might otherwise be distorted by dominant scholars. Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa (1992) believes in a multicultural movement in which "mestiza"

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would have a voice; more specifically, their own voice. Yet, Anzaldúa leaves the space open to all feminists, "Progressive whites who have friends from different worlds and who study different cultures become intellectual mestizas" (1992: 281). The viewpoint that only Third World women can understand Third World women's oppression is constraining. It would seem to imply that Western women should not then be interested in problems that do not concern them directly. It is comparable to saying to a doctor, 'You cannot understand my pain until you feel it yourself.' Nevertheless, that doctor may well be able to help alleviate your pain.

It is not enough to say that Western feminists' models cannot be applied to the cause of African women. We can admire models of Islamic feminism and observe how women are "contesting the rules and restrictions imposed upon them, by ignoring them, or by embracing practices in a new creative way" (see section 3.8), but it is still only a small step, *une ébauche d'indépendance*, a beginning of women's empowerment. I believe that we should not be satisfied, and we should not romanticize those small steps toward independence and missing the big picture of what is actually going on. As long as women are suffering, we should not wait and see for "other solutions." How many women have to suffer and to die before feminists from all continents come to a consensus on what are the best solutions for African women? Even if we fail, as it was the case with many projects, we can learn and rebound and start new programs. The status quo is not acceptable. Some people might say that women's condition in Africa is changing. It is somewhat the case in larger cities, but a majority of women still have to suffer multiple ordeals and have few opportunities to talk about it.

All forms of feminism or other theoretical approaches have their supporters and their detractors. However, I hope I have been able to adopt a transnational feminist sensibility.

Transnational feminist practices refer us to the interdisciplinary study of the relationships among women in diverse parts of the world. These relationships are uneven, often unequal, and complex. They emerge from women's diverse needs and agendas in many cultures and societies... recent scholarship has shown that gender, class, religion, and sexuality produce different kinds of women in relation to different kinds of patriarchies (Kaplan and Grewal 2002:79).

According to Kaplan and Grewal, transnational feminists are aware of "asymmetrical power relations...Rather, transnational feminist practices, as we call them, involve forms of alliance, subversion, and complicity within which asymmetries and inequalities can be critiqued" (Kaplan and Grewal 2002:73).

5.1.2. Feminism in Africa

Another critical concern is feminism in Africa. Some have argued that feminism is incompatible with Africa because feminism is associated with Western individualism that is in opposition to the African community spirit; Hitchcott believes that this argument is a false interpretation of feminism and is the internalization of patriarchal mythology (1997:33). Hitchcott highlights the "seemingly insurmountable duality of the modern African and the possibility of assuming other feminine identities" (1997:33).

Rangira (2001) confirms that feminism has a bad connotation in Africa and emphasizes the difficulties of African female authors to face the critique of their readers characterized by "the patriarchal hegemonic discourse (2001:79)" that subsequently condition their writings and "forces them to engage in a perpetual process of discursive negotiations" (2001:78). However, some authors have dared to confront the established order by breaking the law of silence. The most cited example is Awa Thiam's book *La parole aux Négresses* published in 1978 and translated in English in 1986: *Speak out, Black Sisters: Feminism and Oppression in Black Africa*. Thiam was one of the first authors to write about female genital mutilation using a

feminist approach. Mianda argues that Thiam's work has not received enough attention even though she might have been the first author to explain women's oppression based on an intersectionality analysis. Thiam had no reticence to support the idea of the universality of women's oppression when affirming that there is a "common denominator for women: phallocratic violence. It is that violence which makes you believe that you are nothing without the other…the one who detains the phallus" (in Mianda 2014:9). Thiam's strong argument can be compared to Bourdieu's (2001) symbolic violence exercised by the androcentric forces that are invisible and normalized.

Throughout my research, I have tried to prioritize any article or books written by African authors, and more specifically, by Burkinabe authors. However, the literature is limited and difficult to access. Amina Mama (2007) underlined the lack of contribution of African scientists to the world scientific publication, most of the writings come from Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa, and a negligible proportion is produced by women.

Mianda also critiques the hegemony of the English language and the "invisibility or absence of acknowledgment of work in other languages" (2014:9). Because of the invisibility of the non-English work, it is also difficult to assess if there are different forms of African feminism. For instance, do Francophone and Anglophone African feminists share the same ideas; are they fighting the same battles? Are they using the same language? I have only tackled some of the Francophone feminine literature, and I have been surprised by the freedom of expression. Whereas I expected African women authors to shield their culture, Francophone African authors were much more critical about their culture that have oppressed women. Francophone African authors such as Thiam and Beyala expose with courage and candor the oppressive aspect of their culture in a vibrant and colorful language that I have rarely found in Anglophone African

authors. I am wondering if language can influence the tone and freedom of speech. My first

impression makes me think that there is greater freedom of tone among Francophone African

writers, but I need to investigate this idea further. Another more recent example of language

difference was the "me too" movement in the US, which also developed in France but was called

"balance ton porc" meaning "denounce your pig." The vocabulary is stronger and has this French

tone of sarcasm and provocation that is also present in francophone African feminine literature.

For example, in Calixthe Beyala's book, *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs Occidentales* (1995),

(Letter from an African woman to her Western sisters), the author denounces the rejection of

feminism both in Africa and in the West,

> Pour mes sœurs africaines, être féministes, c'est vouloir faire « comme les Blanches », Elles se veulent fixées à leur place, assise dans leur conception vieillotte du monde comme un magicien dans son cercle. Quant aux nouvelles générations de femmes occidentales, certaines crachent si profondément sur les féministes, les honnissent tant qu'elles souhaiteraient avoir une carte d'identité et une carte de gènes qui les différencieraient de ces gueuses ! La plus sublime des féministes sera considérée par la plus miteuse des filles de la nouvelle génération, comme une pauvre femme refoulée... Refoulée parce qu'en elles achèvent de moisir les reliques d'une société machiste, réceptacle des plus grandes injustices (1995:48).

> (For my African sisters, to be feminists is to want to do "like the whites," they want to be fixed in their place, seated in their antiquated conception of the world as a magician in his circle. As for the new generations of Western women, some spit so deeply on feminists, they hate them so much that they would like to have an identity card and a card of genes that differentiate them from these wretches! The nastiest girl from the new generation will consider the most sublime feminist as a poor inhibited woman... Inhibited by the relics of a macho society, receptacle of the greatest injustices that are molding in them [the feminists].)

Beyala's choice of language breaks the code of traditional African male authors. Beyala is not

afraid to critique a feminism that has lost its purpose in Western societies, and that has not yet

reached Africa as it is the case for Burkina Faso.

5.1.4. Feminism in Burkina Faso

During the time I have spent in Burkina, I noticed that the term feminism has a negative connotation. I asked many times if there were any feminist women in Burkina, and I was told that the group of women that could be affiliated with feminism is the Association des Femmes Juristes of Burkina Faso (AJF/BF). This is a scientific association, secular and apolitical, created on November 14, 1993. Its creation is the will of a group of women lawyers who are aware of the difficulties faced by women in Burkina Faso, and who have decided to unite to protect their rights and persistent inequalities. I tried to reach them many times but was unsuccessful.

After reading Monique Ilboudo's (2007) article, I understood why feminism is invisible in Burkina Faso. Ilboudo (2007) believes that there has never been a feminist movement in Burkina Faso. For her, feminism has never reached Burkina because it came too late as the word feminism was already "épuise, flétri, altéré….vilipendé, galvaudé" (exhausted, withered, distorted, vilified, and overused) (2007:163). It arrived with stereotyped and false images of indecent women challenging all sorts of authority. It was then easy for the anti-feminist brigade to definitively block its progression. The word had become so pejorative that even the most engaged women in feminism were afraid. Ilboudo (2007) affirms that there was nothing to be scared of and that there have always been feminists. She insists that before feminism, there were always feminists, and before feminist movements even developed, there were individual women who realized that there were inequalities and tried to understand the reasons and find solutions.

Ilboudo (2007) gives many reasons why feminism has not developed in Burkina Faso. First, she believes that women in Burkina Faso have benefited from the battles of other women in Western countries. They never had to fight for their right to vote or to work since these rights were established in the country during colonization at the same time than in France.

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Furthermore, the idea that women have committed the original sin is not only in the

Bible, but it is also inscribed in Mossi legends like the following one,

> At the beginning, the sky was very low and served as food for humans. When someone was hungry, he/she just had to cut a piece of the sky and feat oneself. One day, a greedy old woman cut so many pieces of the sky that God became angry and removed the sky so far away that it became inaccessible; it became then necessary to work to get food (Ilboudo 2007: 163 translated by the author).

Such myths and legends, along with other proverbs and sayings, legitimate inequalities and

violence against women. Men believe that women deserve to be maltreated, and women accept

their fate because they think they were born to suffer (Ilboudo 2007). The few women who

opposed the patriarchal rules are rarely mentioned in Burkina's history, which was done to avoid

making an example for other women to follow.

Another criticism made against those feminists is that they are part of an educated elite

who dare to speak in the name of all women; these women are accused of adopting an occidental

position and are blamed for bringing discord in a world of "harmony" (2007:167). These women

are castigated and stigmatized to the extent of the word "feminist" becoming an insult. Some

people associate the battle against feminism to the struggle against occidental political and

cultural conflicts. So, it is depicted as politically correct.

The image that is given to African women, including Burkinabe women, is an image of a

virtuous and happy woman. Therefore, they should not change their image, or they might lose

their identity. According to Ilboudo (2007), this imposture is one of the most efficient weapons

against feminism. Ilboudo also stated that Burkinabe women have to stay authentic and resist

feminist illusions (2007). Another reason why women have not yet been concerned by theoretical

concepts is that they are too preoccupied with their daily difficulties.

Even though there have been many actions to promote women's development supported by many international and governmental organizations, most of these programs focus on the consequences of inequalities and poverty without confronting the roots of gender inequalities. Often men have taken advantage of programs intended to support women economically, and the gender balance of power has remained unchanged. To avoid cultural interference, many sensitive subjects have not been tackled by international organizations. Until recently, these organizations have preferably supported economic development projects than supporting political program for women that would have generated fundamental changes. Today, some programs for the access of women in decision-making positions are approved, but none of them would use the word feminism (Ilboudo 2007). I also had the opportunity to work with a large organization, the GIZ (The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), that has engaged in a large-scale program of training governmental and local actors in designing budget sensitive to gender issues. This program is in progress, and it will still take some time to see tangible changes in women's lives.

There was a time when fundamental social changes were on the agenda in Burkina Faso. During the first revolution, some changes happened. It started with the Constitution of 1991 that pronounced all Burkinabe are born free and equal in rights. It was during the revolution that the first women associations were created, and for these women, it was an opportunity to get out of their daily life. Women have taken advantage of these opportunities to undertake new economic activities.

However, the hope of the revolution died with the assassination of Sankara, and even though the law declares equality between Burkinabe, women still suffer from many levels of discrimination. The one discrimination that has the most consequences on women's lives might

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be access to education. Because girls do not have equal access to education, they do not have equal access to jobs and higher positions both at work and in politics, and they do not know their rights. They are victims of many forms of violence, including genital mutilation, forced and early marriages, rape, social exclusion, and domestic violence that has not even started to be measured. All of which are some of the major inequalities that women have to endure.

According to Ilboudo, some women are supporting the anti-feminist movement: "women are born to suffer, it is life …we cannot do anything about it….Why fighting? Why not accept God's will? …" (2007:174). Women's economic and social position makes it difficult for them to fight for their basic rights and jeopardize their marital status and basic survival.

Ilboudo (2007) has not yet lost all hope for Burkina Faso, and she thinks that feminism is to come. Much progress was made in legislation, and even though these laws (such as the law against genital mutilation voted in 1990) are not yet all reinforced, only the repressive law of 1996 has led to a decrease in mutilations.

Furthermore, Ilboudo (2007) criticizes women who have tried to believe that there is specific African feminism and have, therefore, mitigated the battle. For those African women who may ask: "What did occidental women win with their feminism if not gender war?"(Ilboudo 2007:175), Ilboudo reminds them that it was because of western women fights that African women can enjoy today's fundamental rights without having to fight for them. African women will have to start a real reflection and have concerted actions to bring about a new social and political order (2007:176); and even though some African women believe in a "discreet" African feminism without excess and violence, can these changes they are longing for come without a breakdown? For Ilboudo, this is the real challenge (2007:176).

5.2. Burkinabe cultural norms and their symbolic violence affecting women

5.2.1 The social and biological construction of gender in Burkina Faso

According to Helmfrid (2004), children of the Mossi culture are born without a specific gender, and two processes serve to *construct* their gender identity. The first process is education. Mossi education begins immediately after the child is weaned, generally around three years old. In the case of young girls, they learn to help their mothers with chores and look after the smaller children (Ilboudo 2006). Boys, on the other hand, leave the "domain of the mother" and start working with their father at seven years of age (Helmfrid 2004: 11). As part of the educational process, all children learn to be respectful of adults and girls to be obedient (Ilboudo 2006). The second process that constructs gender is biological: circumcision. "When the boy's foreskin is cut, a female element of his genitals is eliminated. When the girl's clitoris is cut, a male element of her genitals is eliminated" (Helmfrid 2004: 13). Associating male and female circumcision reinforces the justification of female genital cutting and mitigates its gravity. Though traditional, female genital cutting is a highly sensitive topic (see chapter below).

5.2.2. Excision - Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

The subject of FGC (female genital cutting) has received much attention from Western scholars and non-governmental organizations in recent years. This attention has been influenced by miscomprehension of the tradition and its implications. "The debate is divided between universalists, who invoke monolithic categories and constructions of dignity, integrity, and empowerment to condemn genital surgeries, and relativists, who argue for locally autonomous and culturally sensitive reformatory strategies" (Obiora 1997: 284). The dangers and consequences of female circumcision have been discussed extensively in many articles, and there is a broad consensus to condemn the most extreme forms of circumcision. However, there is also

a consensus opposing its condemnation. For instance, for Obiora (1997), there is not enough

scientific research on the danger presented by *minor* forms of circumcision to condemn it.

The procedure of "clitoridectomy" practiced in Burkina Faso is not the most severe form,

yet if practiced in unsafe conditions, the consequences can be very serious (Jones et al. 1999

FGM are more prevalent in rural areas (68 percent) and among women who have never been to

school (70 percent). This practice is still quite common despite being banned and penalized since

1996. However, it seems to diminish over time and among the youngest. 81% of women over the

age of 40 have undergone the procedure, compared to 57% of women aged 18 to 29 (SIGI

Country Study - Burkina Faso, 2018).

Even though female genital cutting existed before the Islam influence in Burkina Faso,

Muslims consider it to be a Muslim tradition--even though it is not prescribed by the Qur'an

(Helmfrid 2004). According to Helmfrid (2004), in the Mossi tradition, it is assumed that a girl

will have difficulties delivering a baby if she has not been excised, and if the baby touches the

clitoris, it will die. Furthermore, an "uncut" woman does not receive the same funerary rites and

casts shame on her descent group.

5.2.2.1. Symbolic violence and FGC (female genital cutting)

Since the origin of the practice is unknown, speculations about the importance of the

FGM ritual are debated, and many critiques addressed the lack of cultural consideration of

campaigns against FGM. Obiora affirms that,

> The debate is divided between universalists, who invoke monolithic categories
> and constructions of dignity, integrity, and empowerment to condemn genital
> surgeries, and relativists, who argue for locally autonomous and culturally
> sensitive reformatory strategies (1996: 284).

Awa Thiam was the first African woman to denounce the practice of FGM in her book La parole aux Négresses published in France in 1978. Thiam had no dilemma to severely judge a practice that she said was "the control of female sexuality by the phallocratic system. (Mianda 2014:9)". Thiam had not the same approach as Obiora who adopted a more cultural relativistic position when considering FGM. We may agree with Obiora that,

> In a sense, female circumcision constitutes the bodily inscription of cultural codes. It may well be that the ritualized marking of the genitalia is not so much about gendered identity and counter-politics as it is about natalist symbolism. The confluence of natalist ideology and the celebration of "lifecycle" in the practice is refracted by a variety of cosmological orientations that have largely proven impenetrable for Western critical consensus (1996: 357).

Forty years after Thiam's book, FGM is still practiced even though it has decreased in Burkina Faso, and it is not evident that the debate has helped to address the problem efficiently. The practice of FGM has to be analyzed from various frameworks, and symbolic violence can explain the process of imposing practices that are detrimental for women. Bourdieu asserts that a "symbolic force is a form of power that is exerted on the bodies (2001:38)". FGM is an example of these symbolic forces. Even though these practices are performed by women on women, it is a form of symbolic/physical violence done on women's body that women have accepted as a normal practice, and, unconsciously, as an act of submission. Women are deceived into submitting themselves to this dangerous ritual because of false pretexts, as explained previously. The next step is to put the procedure in a ceremony that would make young girls feel they are reaching adulthood and that without that step in their life, they could never get married, which is the ultimate goal of any girl – another symbolic force.

A Burkinabe female House Representative that I had the chance to meet talked about those rites of passage; she explained that girls would receive relevant information during these ceremonies and that it is too bad that today, because of the decrease of FGM, the rites are also

disappearing, leaving young girls unaware of rudimentary information about sexuality. She

asserted that this is a reason why more teenage girls are getting pregnant today. This example

underlines the complexity of the changes that are happening in the Burkinabe society.

Suppressing harmful and detrimental practices such as FGM should not destroy aspects of the

culture that are positive and useful (at least until education can substitute for the lack of

knowledge transfer).

The subject of excision was never tackled during the interviews even though I sometimes

wanted to bring up that subject; my translator felt uncomfortable asking these questions. It is

likely that most of the women in the shelters underwent the procedure. It is also likely that since

two of the women were midwives, they may have practiced excisions on young girls.

5.2.3. Gender, marriage, and cultural norms

As Helmfrid (2004) underlines, "the principal obstacle to gender equality is said to be the

sociocultural weight of tradition which prevents rural women from contributing to development.

However, this macro-level perspective misses the processes that go on in villages. It misses local

women's contributions to development, their dynamism to adjust to new circumstances, and to

explore new strategies to gain their living" (2004: 4). The analysis of gender is complicated by

the intersectionality with ethnicity, class, age, profession, and religion. For example, polygyny

remains a norm since "more than 51 percent of Burkinabè women and 33 percent of the men live

in polygamous marriages" (Helmfrid 2004: 20). According to the author, women would rather

accept a polygamous marriage than stay single, and when a husband chooses to take a second (or

additional) wife, the first wife may decide to stay— the co-wife(ves) may have a difficult time

adjusting. Polygamous marriage can, however, offer several advantages for women because they

can share their workload with the other wives, and older women can take advantage of younger

co-wives to do the heavy work. If they can get along, this also may provide friendship. In the case of widowhood, a woman may accept marriage to her brother-in-law following the levirate rule, in order to be able to stay with her children, who would otherwise remain with their deceased father's descent group. Some women, however, choose elopement when dissatisfied or mistreated.

Among African societies, there is a broad diversity of forms of marriage and is the case among the Mossi of Burkina Faso (Attané 2007). Anne Attané spent seven years (1996 to 2003) studying gender relationships among the Mossi; in her article, she discussed matrimonial choices among the group, offered an extended description of all the forms of marriages, their consequences, and the changes that occurred through a personal anthropological approach. According to Attané, if unions are still routinely arranged according to gerontocratic rules, more and more often, the younger generation of Burkinabè decides to separate themselves from parental authority regarding marriage decisions. However, traditional marriages are still the norm in most villages and represent alliances that can be renegotiated even after the official union. Though bilateral exogamy is the rule, by and large, family members would rather not choose strangers as partners. Noteworthy, older women may play a pivotal role in the choice of a bride.

Among the Mossi of Burkina Faso, there are seven possible forms of unions: (1 and 2) *yelsomde* (gift to an older man) and *belongo* (young man offers his services); (3) marriage *pur-siure* (first girl born is given back to the mother's family); (4) elopement; (5) *pug-tekrim-terke* (exchange of women); (6) *levirate*, and (7) *lebsroogo* (marriage to another woman from the same family as the first wife).

Representing the most common forms of union practiced in Burkina Faso (and many other West African countries), *Yelsomde* and *belongo* both involve gift-giving. In the first, an

elder of the family will offer one of the group's girls to another elder in appreciation of services received. The elder who receives the girl can either marry her or give her to another man of his kinship. Similarly, in situations where a young man wants to marry a girl from another village, the boy will follow the *belongo* tradition by presenting gifts and offering his services (typically labor) to the girl's father, and by performing fieldwork and eventually earning the father's blessing to marry his daughter. These forms of marriage demonstrate the fundamental power and influence of the elders.

According to the rules of *pug-tekrim-terke* (the exchange of women), "The system of values that organizes the exchange of women between lineages is governed by the system of reciprocity" (Attané 2007: 190). For instance, *Pur-siure* (also, *rungu*) is a form of union requiring the couple to give their firstborn girl to the mother's family, where she will be married to a member of the kinship. It is a form of matrimonial compensation and moderates the patrilineal model. The *lebsroogo* form of marriage requires a sister of a deceased woman to be substituted in order to maintain an alliance between families. The *levirate* is primarily a form of duty in which a brother is compelled to marry the wife of a deceased brother. There is no ceremony and no exchange of gifts or goods - as the wife already belongs to the family of the dead husband (Attané 2007). The nature of the first union will influence any subsequent marriage(s), i.e., if the women have been given as a gift, she will then be "given" to a younger brother. However, if it was not a traditional marriage, the woman is free to choose to become the wife of one of her husband's brothers—or to leave. But in that, the children of the first union must stay in the father's family, and henceforth, many women choose to stay and accept to marry her brother-in-law rather than abandon their offspring

Nonetheless, women have also resisted those forms of forced marriage, and new forms of unions have emerged, such as elopement, as seen in many cultures all around the world, involves couples choosing to avoid familial traditions by mostly sneaking off to marry covertly. In addition to "traditional" unions, there is a recrudescence of couples who live together out of wedlock in many African cities (Attané 2007). Even though families do not approve of such unions, it does not seem to deter couples from choosing this form of relationship. For many young African men, it is difficult to provide for a family, and therefore, they may choose this arrangement as a temporary situation.

5.2.4. Economic violence

Overall, Burkinabe women have lower economic power than men, as reflected in their arduous socio-economic living conditions. Women are constrained to domestic work that is not recognized. As Bourdieu explained, "the fact that women's domestic labour has no monetary equivalent does indeed help to devalue it, even in their own eyes" (2001:98). Women are accomplishing heavy and tiresome work both in their households and in the fields. Monbiot (2011) declares, "if wealth were the inevitable result of hard work and enterprise, every woman in Africa would be a millionaire."

Women, more than men, find themselves isolated in un-parched areas, without water, without electricity, and without land to cultivate as it is the case for many women living in *non-loti* neighborhoods (see chapter 6). With no education, no income-generating experience, and little economic capital, most women cannot develop profitable economic activities. Another sensitive subject is land-owning. As Ouedraogo underlined,

> The cultural system is such that women do not inherit the property of their fathers. In addition, in an agricultural society where the safest property is land, it turns out

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that women are prohibited from owning property on the land. The precariousness of the woman is a cultural fact maintained by a society where the domination over the woman is total and without sharing (2006, translated by the author).

During meetings with parliamentarians, I had the chance to observe the confrontation between a young woman House Representative and an older conservative man. I was very impressed by the intervention of that female deputy during the discussion on gender issues. She intervened and brought up the sensitive subject of land property for women. An older deputy responded that land does not belong to anyone but to the whole family and that she should not start making problems where there is none! Bourdieu further analyses this kind of discourses,

> The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification: the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out of the discourses aimed at legitimating it. The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded" (2001:9).

This case exemplifies the difficulties for women to own land since there is no consensus on that subject among the parliamentarians. It also demonstrates the state of mind that has always prevailed. Since the land belongs to the family, and women are part of the family, they have no personal claim to make. However, when a woman becomes a widow, she is no longer recognized as a part of the family unless she marries a brother in law (levirate) and therefore loses all claims of the land from her deceased husband. Without a clear jurisdiction on land property, the tradition prevails.

Women are consistently excluded from the public and economic space as they are confined in their domestic universe. Maintaining women in a situation of economic dependence is a form of symbolic violence. Women have no choice but to accept the situation, and most of them have never conceptualized the idea that they could own land. The intervention of the male

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House Representative cited above emphasized the discourses that legitimatize masculine dominance and androcentric norms.

5.3. Small steps to Burkinabe women empowerment: Women in politics and economic empowerment

5.3.1. Women's rights and women's organizations

During the colonial period, several forms of associations were born, and many of these movements coincide with civil organizations struggling for national independence, such as unions, which structures included women. These organizations mainly protested against colonial exploitation. It was missionaries who first started to defend women in West Africa. Sister Marie-André du Sacré-Cœur (1939), for example, stresses that the Catholic Church has used "its influence to make women recognize the freedom and the dignity of women" (1939: 221). For example, the Mandel Decree passed on June 15, 1939, attempted to end the early and forced marriage of girls. In the first version, the age limit for marriage was 14 years old for girls and 16 for boys. It also stated that mutual consent was required. The levirate rule was also forbidden if the woman was not consenting. In the Mandel Decree, "forced marriage" was assimilated into slavery and punished consequently (Ilboudo 2006: 80). Later, in 1957, the Jacquinot Decree attempted to regulate dowries and establish monogamy. However, these decrees have not been very successful.

It was during the colonial period that gender inequalities and violence against women had been called into public attention for the first time. After the independence, the Catholic Church under the aegis of the "Soeurs Blanches" (who will also create the shelter for women accused of witchcraft later) instigated the creation of the first national women's association in 1958 called

"l'Amitié Africaine" (Ilboudo 2006). Two other women associations appeared later in 1969: L'Association des Femmes Voltaiques (the association of Voltaic Women) and "L'Entraide Feminine" (Feminine Mutual Aid), with both born from the scission of the first association. In 1974, the Associations des Veuves et des Orphelins (Association for widows and Orphans) was created, and it has since become an influential NGO. It is mainly through these organizations and not political parties that Burkina Faso women have gradually been able to build a force that counts. In 1975 International Woman Day was celebrated for the first time in Burkina Faso. Women have also played an essential role in the first popular uprising from 1966 that caused the fall of the first president Maurice Yaméogo (Ilboudo 2006).

In this second phase, the advocacy platforms focused on women's and girls' access to education, health care, obtaining a family code, denouncing female genital mutilation. The advocacy means used were talks, conferences-debates with women, radio broadcasts, the creation of "women's animation" sections attached to the Regional Development Organizations (ORD) of the time, the literacy of women, the sexual education of women girls, the organization of annual events called "week of the female voltaic" where among other activities, films were projected, etc (Ilboudo 2006).

Under the Sankarist revolution, the women's movement developed most significantly. Sankara believed that revolution would change the social order that oppresses the woman, and would help them to emancipate (Sankara 1983). During the years of revolution, several other victories were won: (1) Land reform (Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière) which guaranteed women the right of access and ownership of land; (2) creation of bases for the elaboration and adoption of a code of persons and the family; and (3) institution of the "day off work and paid on the occasion" of March 8, women's day, etc. The Revolution certainly built the foundations of

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many achievements of women in Burkina Faso. The vast majority of current women leaders and politicians emerged from the revolutionary period.

During the Compaoré era significant legal gains were obtained such as the adoption of "Code des Personnes et de la Famille" (the Personal and Family Code) in 1989, the "Politique Nationale Genre" (National Gender Policy) (PNG) in 2009, and the law setting a 30 percent quota for the benefit of both sexes in the legislative and municipal elections adopted on April 16, 2009, after a long process of advocacy and lobbying. Overall, the advocacy platforms have remained multifaceted (women's access to education, credit, stopping female genital mutilation, etc.) with a declared desire to participate widely in political power, especially from 2005-2006. According to Rouamba, women have really started playing a significant role in politics since October 2014.

5.3.2 Women's empowerment during the Sankara regime

According to Tripp et al., "the introduction of new gender-related reforms has been tied first and foremost to the rise of new women's movement in Africa and started in the late 1980s, and gaining full steam in the 1990s" (2009: 2). Sankara was an *avant-gardist* in his vision of gender issues and asserted that the future of the revolution depends on women (Sankara 1990). From the beginning of his time in office, Sankara chose women ministers and put women in positions previously occupied by men only. In the Burkinabè government, there were women in strategic ministries such as budget, family affairs, culture, and health (Harsh 2013). At that time in history, few countries in the world had so many women holding government seats.

The speech Sankara made on March 8th, 1987, during the commemoration of International Women's Day was compelling. Sankara's awareness of women's issues in Burkina

was clear: "our women are still confined to depersonalizing darkness" (Sankara 1990: 22).

According to Sankara, women had been kept in "condition of subjugation, a condition imposed over centuries by various systems of exploitation" (Sankara 1990: 22). He severely criticized the Burkinabè society, saying: "Our society – still too primitively agrarian, patriarchal, and polygamous – turns the woman into an object of exploitation for her labor power and of consumption for her biological reproductive capacity" (Sankara 1990: 39). Sankara proposed a cultural revolution in which the relation of authority between men and women should be reviewed, and the "shameless exploitation of women" was to be eliminated (Sankara 1990: 23). He also denounced the way women are educated: "a psychological straitjacket called *virtue* produces a spirit of personal alienation within her" (Sankara 1990: 37). He also wanted to eliminate prostitution, homelessness, female delinquency, forced marriages, and female circumcision. Furthermore, Sankara condemned the norms of beauty imposed on women that "violate the integrity of their bodies, such as female circumcision, scarring, the filling of teeth, and the piercing of lips and noses" (Sankara 1990: 59). He did, however, use stereotypical and unfortunate remarks to criticize bourgeois women when he stated, "These are women who lose all dignity, all self-control, and all principles as soon as they hear the clinking of jewelry or the clinking of banknotes. Some of them, unfortunately, push men into debt, even to embezzlement and corruption" (Sankara 1990: 48).

Similarly, Sankara's international vision is evident in this speech: "we must understand how the struggle of Burkinabè women today is part of the worldwide struggle of all women and, beyond that, part of the struggle for the full rehabilitation of our continent. The condition of women is, therefore, at the heart of the question of humanity itself, here, there, and everywhere. The question is thus universal in character" (Sankara 1990: 25). He concluded this speech using

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these fervent and passionate words that characterized his eloquence: "Comrades, there is no true social revolution without the liberation of women. May my eyes never see, and my feet never take me to a society where half the people are held in silence. I hear the roar of women's silence. I sense the rumble of their storm and feel the fury of their revolt" (Sankara 1990: 64).

Overall, Sankara's speech addressed a primarily female audience. It should be noted that Sankara does not address more specific cultural norms, and never talks about witchcraft or other sociocultural beliefs. According to Harsch (2013), despite particular measures intended to advance women's emancipation, the progress promised by Sankara was slow to take place, and women are still facing significant challenges today. We may wonder if the assassination of Sankara stopped the emancipation of women and killed the seeds of hope he had planted. Would women still be accused of witchcraft today if Sankara had been able to see his dream through to fruition?

5.3.3. Women in politics

According to Rouamba (2010), there have been four important periods in the development of women's participation in politics in Burkina Faso. The first one, the initiation phase, started after independence in 1960; the second one was during the Sankara revolution (1983-1987), which was the awakening of women's political consciences. The third period began after Sankara, between 1987 and 1995, in which women were more participant-observant in politics until 1995 when women started the fourth period by protesting for their rights. These protests took off after 2006 and amplified until the uprising of 2014. During these periods, Burkinabe women have managed to break down barriers and enter the male political bastion.

Since 2014, on the eve of the popular uprising, under the National Transition Council (October 2014 - December 2015) and under the pursuit of the Fourth Republic (since December 2015), we can speak of a period of occupation of the public space and liberation of women's speech. Women, for example, marched on October 28, 2014, with spatulas to protest against the revision of Article 37 of the Constitution, which limited the number of terms of the President of the Republic to two terms. The spatula is endowed with grave symbolism, and its exit in the street is a sign of warning translating a serious private or social situation. This women's march was a fertile ground for the other demonstrations that compelled President Compaoré to flee on October 31, 2014, four days after the women's movement.

Women now occupy public space. They claim and take their place in the management of the affairs of the country; in more details, two women politicians, Saran Seré-Seremé and Françoise Toé, were in the running for the presidential elections of November 29, 2015. They participated at many public conferences on television and radio in which they claimed their rights, and denounce and condemn corruption. For example, several women's organizations (Women's Council of Burkina Faso, World March of Women of Burkina Faso, Yamwekre Association, Association of Support and Awakening Pugsada, Burkinabe Coalition for Women's Rights) made a statement condemning the coup d'état perpetrated by General Gilbert Diendéré on September 16, 2015 (CFB et al. 2015). The Women's Council of Burkina Faso, a women's organization set up in 2014 and whose mission is to watch, alert and act on all questions concerning women, girls and the life of the city, for its part, held several press conferences (31 July 2015, 26 and 29 January 2016) to denounce the non-application of the law on quotas.

5.3.4 Burkinabè women: shea butter industry

Despite common perception, women's roles in Burkina Faso's economy may be underestimated. Ndoko's (2015) article "the empowerment of women through the shea butter industry" discusses Burkina women's contributions to the economy. In other words, Ndoko (2015) stated that about 80 percent percent of the population is employed in subsistence farming; the main exports being livestock and cotton, "referred to as men's crops, although women provide most of the labor as they also do for the subsistence crops" (2015: 5). In the 1980s, women involved in these industries were employed at low salaries with no rights to join a union, to receive maternity leave, and to receive pensions. In Burkina Faso, women have collected nuts from shea trees for centuries since 80 percent of the shea trees are concentrated in Burkina Faso (Ndoko 2015). When the European cosmetic industry first became interested in shea butter, the demands of various companies created new opportunities for women's economic empowerment and reduction in female poverty.

Today, in the 21st century, the shea butter industry has become a remarkable success story, supported by the government, who initiated the National Shea Butter Project in 1995 (Ndoko 2015). The most notable aspects of this young industry are: (1) it has remained a women's endeavor, and (2) the development of the market has coincided with concerns of sustainability from European companies such as L'Occitane en Provence. According to Ndoko (2015), "between 2000 and 2002, 1340 associations were created, 18,590 women received training". By the year 2000, shea butter had become the fifth-most important export and has since become the second-most important revenue for the country. Another interesting fact is that women have organized into village cooperatives to produce shea butter, supported by organizations such as the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM/WIDE: Fonds des Nations

Unies pour la Femme) and the Burkina Faso government—even developing a modern business model via the Internet. These cooperatives are now pushing for land rights in order to obtain the property where the shea trees grow and have become more aware of the associated environmental issues. Thus, the shea butter industry has not only contributed to the reduction of poverty among women, but it has a side benefit that has been providing opportunities for children of these women to attend school - eventually reducing the illiteracy rate.

5.3.5. Muslim women's associations

Another form of women's empowerment has been observed among Muslim women through being organized into local associations. Responding to Lila Abu-Lughod's (2002) provocative question, "Do Muslim women need saving?", Burkinabè Muslim women have found their own way of negotiating their rights, and have gained considerable visibility (Madore and Gomez-Perez 2016). Over the last three decades, while the Sunni Islam movement has established itself in Burkinabè cities, Muslim associations have been created along with Koranic schools, with many women gravitating towards these communities. Furthermore, female preachers have been established and have become "pioneer figures in Islamic activism" (Madore and Gomez-Perez 2016: 47). After the initial stage in the 1970s, when women's Islamic education was promoted, women began traveling abroad (such as to Saudi Arabia) to study the Qur'an.

Little by little, these female preachers have become more accepted. Since the 1990s, they have also participated in Islamic radio programs, enabling them to spread their message to a broader audience. Their words include traditional values such as religious obligations, piety, and virtue, but it also approaches sensitive subjects such as gender relations, the spacing of births, female circumcision, and forced marriages (Madore and Gomez-Perez 2016: 54). They have, for

instance, stood against female circumcision by arguing that it is not written in the Qura'an and that it has deleterious effects on women. Furthermore, they declared that women should not be forced into marriage and that they have the right to divorce.

Additionally, they instruct men in behaving as exemplary husbands. To their credit, they have found a way to effectively defend women's rights without direct confrontation with male power (aka without directly challenging gender and generational norms, and by recommending obedience instead). This example demonstrates that women can negotiate and can thoughtfully challenge their conditions.

In her article about African feminisms, Lewis (2001) presents the various forms of feminism that have developed in Africa (including the example proposed by Margot Badran of Islamic feminism), challenging the idea that feminism should be secular, contesting the binary division between religion and secularism, and arguing that Islamic feminism occupies a "middle space" and focuses on "holistic cultural feminism" (2001: 5). Interestingly, similar examples of Islamic feminism have been observed among Malian women (De Jorio 2009), Egyptian women (Mahmood 2005), and women of Niger (Masquelier 2009). In her ethnography, Masquelier (2009) first explains the postcolonial development of Muslim practices and the clash of traditional and modern forms of Islam spread by reformists. The most important aspect of her research is, perhaps, her demonstration of how Mawri women in Nigerien villages have been able to critically engage with Muslim practices by either contesting the rules and restrictions imposed upon them through ignoring them or through embracing practices in a new creative way. They have also been able to eventually reject and challenge preachers' stigmatization of women's identities marked by lack of virtue and ignorance.

5.4. Conclusion

Since its independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso has undergone various challenging political and economic developments. Burkinabe women have continuously struggled to develop new forms of agency in a country where gender roles, social and economic stratification, religion, and ethnicities have traditionally been significant obstacles to such development. Conducting research on social exclusion of women has to take into consideration all these aspects of Burkinabe women's lives and be attentive to Third World feminist critiques of knowledge produced by predominantly white First World scholars.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODS, LIMITATIONS, AND POSITIONALITY

From August 2017 to November 2018, I spent 16 months doing fieldwork in Burkina Faso. During the first year, I divided my time between the two major shelters hosting women accused of witchcraft. I participated in many activities such as spinning cotton, sorting grain, cooking, and taking part in different events. The second part of the research was divided into visiting villages and the interview of people outside the shelters.

6.1. Research methods
6.1.1. Participant observation

According to Jarvie (1969), participant observation fieldwork was a characteristic innovation of modern anthropology often illustrated by the work of Bronislaw Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands. Still today, it is an unavoidable anthropological method of research events though it has received criticism about ethical aspects and questioning about the validity of data collected. During fieldwork, any research might at some point include participant observations even if it is not the main research method. Tedlock (1991) asserts that at the beginning of the 1970s, ethnographers have also started to observe their own participation in the life of their research subjects, and today, we often use self-reflexivity to adjust and justify the results of research.

Participant observation is a concept, a method that remains a theory unless you spend enough time in the field to truly grasp the significance of that method. You may start research, and "be there," but you may never enter the scene. When doing participant observation, you enter a liminal space, continuously in and out, with an evolving mindset. The first days of fieldwork, when everything is still new, the way we look at things, people, and the environment is the glance of a stranger whose gaze is first attracted by things that are different and unusual. When you get used to seeing things, you do not pay as much attention anymore to some details such as smells and noises. As anthropologists, we are looking at things from our research perspective, and it is though quite more difficult to look at things from the perspective of our informants.

6.1.2. Interviews

6.1.2.1. Interviews of women accused of witchcraft

During the 16 months of fieldwork, I spent most of my time doing interviews or having informal conversations. Interviews were also the occasion to observe women's behavior and their relationship in the shelters. I also observed their reaction and the effect some topics had on them. I intended to interview as many women as possible. I was able to interview 42 women out of the 63 women at the shelter Cour de Solidarité, and 142 women out of 206 at Delwendé. At Delwendé, six men lived at the shelter. Three of them had also been accused of witchcraft. I interviewed one of them. I had a translator for all my interviews since none of the women could speak French. I used a questionnaire including basic demographic questions to start and open-ended questions on more sensitive subjects at the end. The reason for that choice is that it was easier to start with basic questions to get the women to feel more comfortable; it was sometimes the opportunity to also talk about other subjects. For all the interviews, I obtained most of the

demographic data, I was unable to go through all the sensitive questions with all the women because some did not want to answer or for other reasons that I will explain in later chapters.

Some women never wanted to be interviewed, others had serious hearing problems that made the interview impossible, some women were sleeping most of the time, and some women had psychological disorders: they were senile or had more serious problems such as paranoia. During the harvest seasons, some women were also outside the shelters working for farmers, some went to the market to collect grains, or they went out of the shelters for other purposes.

I also went to visit women who lived in houses in Boussé; they lived in shelters before and have had the opportunity to leave the shelter and move into small houses. They did not go back to their families, but they live in neighborhoods called "non-loti"; these are quarters without electricity and running water located at the periphery of towns and cities. I interviewed four women in Boussé.

6.1.2.2. Other interviews

I had the opportunity to talk with chiefs (Naba) from villages such as Pilimpikou and Fingla. I also had the chance to interview the Larle Naaba Tigre, a minister of the Mossi King. I met with people from different organizations such as ministers: human rights, women, family, and national solidarity, and people from social services.

I interviewed children of women accused of witchcraft when they came to visit their mothers at the shelter. I did not have a specific questionnaire for these interviews and mostly improvised when I had the opportunity to meet with the children and when they would agree to talk with me.

Finally, I interviewed people from the villages of Yako and Pilimpikou who were important informants about witchcraft accusations; these interviews gave me the opportunity to understand better the process of an indictment, the beliefs, and the fear of people in villages, and to have another perspective on the subject.

During my fieldwork, I had discussions about witchcraft and witchcraft accusations with various interlocutors in different occasions, locations, and circumstances. All these discussions have furthered my understanding of the subject.

6.1.3. Life stories and Focus groups

I integrated the two methods -life stories and focus- groups for practical reasons and because it offered many advantages. I used focus group methods previously during research in nursing homes in the United States. I realized that for older persons, having discussions about their past were pleasant moments, the memories of some of them enhanced the memories of others. They could share their experiences, and the researcher has less influence on the process because people are talking to each other more than to the researcher. There are also drawbacks because people may not want to talk about sensitive subjects in a group. The environment and the location also influenced the choice of the focus group, particularly in Delwende, where there were 4 to 10 women in a room, and it was difficult to ask them to move outside and isolate them from other women. Therefore, these rooms became a perfect place for focus groups because women who lived in the same groups knew each other well. I would not have been able to conduct focus groups in every room because some women did not get along very well, and I also had to obtain consent from all the women in the room before doing a focus group. If one woman did not want to participate, then I would not do the focus group. I organized two focus groups in Delwendé and one in Cour de Solidarité. I talked more than once to these groups of women. The

focus groups at Delwendé were scheduled the week before to make all the women will be there; it was an opportunity to share a snack and drink juice that I had brought.

Even though I first intended to collect many life stories, I was not able to collect more than six complete life stories. I collected partial life stories from many women at the shelter. Collecting life stories is an ongoing process. Even though some days I went to the shelter to gather life stories, I often found situations where women were not at the shelters, they were sick, or they had visitors and were not alone. One of my principal informants passed away, and I was thus unable to complete her life story.

6.1.4. Conference/workshop

On February 22nd, 2018, I organized a day-long workshop to bring together the different organizations supporting the cause of assisting women accused of witchcraft. Twenty persons participated in the workshop from ten different organizations, such as the Commission Justice et Paix, Ministries of Human Rights, Justice and Women, ATD Quart Monde, ABEVI, representative form the shelters, Community St Elgidio, Comité de Veil, and individuals who were not affiliated to any organization, but were volunteering in shelters or had written about the subject. We talked about causes and consequences, prevention, rehabilitation, legal aspects, and the living conditions of women in shelters.

What was expected from the workshop was for the different actors to meet (sometimes for the first time) and have productive reflections and exchanges on the topic, to share their experience and give advice, to develop new ideas, and hopefully to come to an agreement to form a multi-stakeholder committee to develop a national program to fight social exclusion of persons accused of witchcraft.

I was invited from time to time to meetings, sometimes in the shelters, or organized by organizations such as UNESCO. These meetings allowed me to meet with informants from various backgrounds and with different agendas and perspectives.

6.1.5. Other methods

6.1.5.1. Archival research

I had the opportunity to look at Delwendé archives, but unfortunately, most of the archives had been destroyed during the 2009 flood. Even so, I retrieved almost 600 individual records of women and some men (very few) who had lived or still live at Delwendé. Some of these records were in very bad shape and almost impossible to read. I could access only 30 records of women who actually live at the shelter because the flood destroyed the forms of the women who arrived before 2009.

I also accessed the individual forms of women in the shelter Cour de Solidarité that I further compared with the data collected during interviews. I decided to create individual numerical entries for each woman at both shelters based on the information retrieved from the archives and my interviews.

6.1.5.2. Local article and book research

During my preliminary literature review, I had come to realize that it was very difficult to find books and articles on Burkina Faso written by Burkinabe authors. So I decided to research books written by local authors. I also became interested in articles published on local internet media such as Faso.net, Jeune Afrique, and other media because they offered recent information on various topics related to my research. These articles not only highlight the issue from a local point of view but are also intended for a local audience. Finally, I was fortunate to find a small

book store – there are a few book stores in Ouagadougou—and the bookseller helped me find books by Burkinabe writers that I have been able to use for the present dissertation.

6.2. Difficulties and limitations

6.2.1. Languages and translation

The question of communication is essential in Burkina Faso. According to a census of 1985, 90 percent of the population speak 14 principal languages, and 10 percent speak the 45 other languages (Bazie 2011). Less than one percent of the population speaks French at home and really master the language. Yet French is the official language, a heritage of colonialism. It is the official language in politics, justice, administrations, and education. It is also the primary language used in media. So even though French is a minority language, it surpasses and depreciates all other languages. Bazie critiques the use of French by an elite who do not realize that they are losing their identity and traditions and jeopardizing their capacity to communicate with others (2011).

All the women I interviewed spoke Mooré. Whereas it is easy to learn the basic greeting in Mooré, the language is complicated to understand and to learn. The first difficulty comes from the fact that it is a tonal language. The same word pronounced differently has an entirely different meaning. One interesting word that has caused some confusion is the word husband in Mooré: *sida*. I had some difficulty making the distinction between the word *sida* and SIDA, meaning AIDS in French, not quite the same meaning! Most of the time, the subtle difference in pronunciation of words is not noticeable by people who do not speak Mooré. I took Mooré classes but still struggled with the language. Fortunately, I had a translator who helped me during

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my interviews. She was not Mossi, but Samoro; she spoke Mooré and Dyula (Jula) fluently. I did not realize that her ethnicity would have some consequences because people from different ethnicities always joke about each other. It turned out to be an excellent choice to have a woman translator from another ethnicity. The first reason was that women at the shelter would always tease her, and it helped to break the ice. Women at the center called her Samo, and they would say things like: "you're a thief, I'm going to hit you." My translator was always laughing, but I sometimes felt uncomfortable! The second reason is that since she was not a Mossi, women could not accuse her of being an accomplice of those who accused them. Some women told me later that they would not have talked to Mossi men and that they had sometimes sent back men who came to interview them. Furthermore, my translator discovered with me the fate of these women accused of witchcraft because among the Samoro, even though witchcraft accusations may exist, they would not expel a woman, and my translator has become an advocate for these women.

Some of the difficulties of translation also came from different vocabulary about kinship and family relationship since Mossi do not have the notion of a nuclear family. So it was sometimes quite difficult to understand which family ties would connect the different protagonists involved in women's stories about witchcraft accusations.

6.2.1.1. Greeting

One important characteristic of Mossi language is the diversity and the number of greetings that also include many blessings. The more I became accepted by the women, the longer the greetings and blessings had become. Shaking hands is also not a simple act; I have shaken so many of these frail and yet strong hands like dry oaths of vines, used by the hard labor. Older women had a precise way of shaking hands; they would slightly press your hand many

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times during the time she would say all the greetings following by the blessings. Mooré has an incredibly rich vocabulary when it comes to greetings and blessings, but there are also codes, who are supposed to say what and how. Yet, when it comes to greeting a Nasara (meaning white person and the name I have been given all the time), there is no strict code. In normal times, a younger person will bow or put oneself in a lower position in front of an older person. A woman would do the same in front of a man. These little details already emphasize the importance of hierarchy and gender roles among the Mossi.

6.2.1.2. Translation frustrations

I quickly became frustrated not being able to understand and talk directly to my interviewees. I realized that my translator had sometimes to change my questions for cultural reasons. For instance, she would never ask directly the ethnicity of a woman because it is not polite, but would rather ask: are you Mossi?" sometimes, women talked for a long time, and the result of the translation seemed much shorter. Since I recorded my interview, I asked somebody else to translate some of the recordings, and I realized that it did not contain much more information than the first translation. I understood that women were often reiterating the same story.

I have also observed that many women were not comfortable talking about their accusations. My translator would also feel that discomfort and would sometimes tell me that she could not ask that question to some women. Furthermore, she also had to maintain her position of a younger woman talking to an older one and always show respect.

6.2.2. Trust and emotions

Gaining women's trust has been a challenge at the beginning of my fieldwork. Women are used to receiving Westerner visitors at the shelter. They also had many journalists and other social workers coming to talk with them. For them, I was just one more person curious about their fate. It is at Delwendé that I encountered the most resistance. As I explained earlier, it was also a reaction against the managers of the shelter who forced them to move to Sakoula; a woman would tell me later that they thought I was sent by the manager to spy on them. During the introduction assembly, three women who were obviously leaders took the floor and told me that they had already talked to many people before me, and it did not change anything for them; furthermore, they said that it is hard and traumatic for them to talk about their misfortune. Nobody would contradict them, and all the other women would stay silent after that. I told them that they were free to talk to me or not and dismissed the assembly. However, a small group of women stayed and we engaged in small talks. After a while, a woman came from outside the shelter to sell *dolo*, a local millet beer, and I decided to buy some in order to break the ice. Women asked me many questions about me, my life, my family, and eventually about the reasons that brought me at the shelter. One of the three women who took the floor earlier decided that I could be trusted and that she would agree to talk with me; consequently, the other women in the small group also agreed to talk to me. However, among the women in both shelters, there were always some who did not want to talk to me. Two women at Delwendé were particularly resistant and somehow aggressive against me. I did not insist on interviewing them but kept greeting them each time I would visit the shelter. Others were avoidant and would go elsewhere when I was close to their room. I have formed a close relationship with other women, and one of them decided that I was her daughter since her daughter, who had the same first name as me

never came to visit her; I accepted the role, and we developed a great friendship. My research was emotionally difficult because of all the sad stories I heard, yet when my adoptive mother passed away, it was a very sad and difficult moment (story's details in chapter 10).

6.2.3. Other limitations

It is needless to point out the large difference between the women and my culture. The Western idea of feminine solidarity does not make much sense for these women, and for them, it was hard to believe that somebody would leave her country, her family, and her comfort to come to support them.

Besides language and cultural barriers, many other obstacles hampered the research. When I arrived, it took me some time to obtain all the permission to start my research. Since I arrived in August, many people were on vacation, and I had to wait for their return to obtain all the clearance. It though showed me the importance of protocol and administrative burdens that slow down the country.

I had also to overcome physical obstacles. Accessing to Delwendé and villages outside the capital was a challenge. After driving a couple of times to Delwendé and not being sure to be able to come back because the road was in such bad condition, my translator and I decided to go there on her motorcycle. During the rainy season, that task was even more challenging. It added much stress to the research.

I would have like to conduct more research in villages, but because of road conditions and security issues related to recent terrorist attacks, I was limited. I had to have a driver and a guide, making the task more challenging and more expensive. Yet, I have been fortunate to meet key informants for my research.

6.3. Positionality and self-reflexivity

Lorraine Nencel affirms that "for a substantial group of feminist anthropologists, being reflexive throughout the research process and writing oneself into the text, comes virtually as second nature" (2013:75), and it is the result of strong feminist critiques of the colonial anthropological legacy. To the critique that reflexivity reproduces colonial relationship, Nencel argues that,

> As engaged feminist researchers, reflexivity as well as intersubjectivity are
> experienced and performed situatedly, depending on the research contextuality.
> Consequently, the textual representation of both actors, as well as their
> relationship, flow out of the particularities of the research context/process
> (2013:76).

I suggest that self-reflexivity necessitates a cultural striptease, so-to-speak, in order to remove (or at least become aware of) all the different layers of education, language, cultural backgrounds, religious/secular factors that could affect the researcher-research participant relationship. I am ever-conscious of my multicultural experience – which is predominantly French but has since been significantly altered by my American life. Therefore I have to be aware of the double influences of these two cultures that have a heavy historical colonialist history. Even though anthropologists understand the necessity of decolonizing the discipline that was so heavily stained by imperialism, I am conscious that I am representing two nations that still impose forms of neocolonialism. On top of that, I am White and have received a mixed secular French and American anthropological education. To make things even more complicated, I have to comply with my Ph.D. scholarly requirements.

Evaluating the social exclusion of WAoW and other forms of gender-based violence from the perspective of a Western woman is extremely difficult and can be easily criticized. After living sixteen months close to women in a country like Burkina Faso, I am not the same person anymore. I thought that once I would come back to the US, I would resume a more "neutral" position and be able to step back and analyze and neutralize my emotions, but I still have feelings of revolt against a system that put such a burden on women. Yet, it also triggers a feeling of deep empathy and admiration for their capacity of resilience and courage they demonstrate in extreme situations. That being said, I do not think that because it is part of their cultural heritage that women have to suffer and be submissive. I would be very supportive of any model of African women development that could both maintain cultural tradition and empower women.

I am ready to assume my position and take the risk of being accused of "cultural imperialism" by choosing a more engaged anthropological standpoint. I agree that I would never really understand and experience WAoW's suffering perched on my white privileged position, but what I experienced during my research was intense and disturbing to the point that I cannot just stay neutral and not choose a position. As scholars, are we supposed to analyze our research and write with restraint, which would imply that our feelings and emotions are relegated to the depths of our personality like robots without hearts and emotions? However, the scholar is also a human with feelings and passions with the advantage of being able to analyze these emotions.

The first day of my research at the Delwendé shelter, the women were first opposed to my research and did not trust me; they argued that I would not be able to understand their problems and that I could not do anything for them; therefore, it would be a waste of time to talk about those problems. These arguments still resonate in my mind, and they had some provocative

effects on me; I thought "prove them wrong! Do something for them." When these women finally let me enter their lives by telling me their stories, I felt a vital responsibility toward them. The obligation to transcribe their suffering as they experienced it, the responsibility to be their advocate, and the responsibility to take a position in their favor.

After my research, I felt extremely frustrated by not having been able to have done more than just discussing the subject of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. I do believe that this frustration will drive me to go further and not to stop working on the issue after writing my dissertation. Then again, I could be accused of exhibiting the white savior complex even though I believe that the issue of WAoW is a problem that needs to be addressed by the Burkinabe population. My possible contribution would be as a facilitator and as an advocate for WAoW, who do not have many supporters willing to take their defense openly.

I want to respond to the justified concerns Third World and Black feminists are addressing to Western researchers (with anthropology having a heavy colonialist history) about being able to understand and effectively report the experience of these African women without firstly being African, and secondly, without having experienced witchcraft accusation myself. I argue that with an empathically proper method, self-reflexivity, and a phenomenological approach, I have been able to transcend some of these obstacles and build bridges of insight.

In accordance with Mohanty, I believe that "If we pay attention to and think from the most disenfranchised communities of women in the world, we are more likely to envision a just and democratic society capable of treating all its citizen fairly" (2003: 542). Listening to the critics of Third World, Latina, and Black feminists, I am committed to continually rethinking my positionality and serve the best interests of the women associated with my research.

6.4. Conclusion

Phenomenology-based research offers great potential for conducting research focused on the lives of women accused of witchcraft by entering their subjective and sensorial worlds. By listening to their stories, this approach provides unique opportunities to understand their individual experiences from their personal perspectives—the "alter-narratives" we are not accustomed to hearing (Anzaldúa 1992:284). (The very stories African feminists exhort us to listen to in a new way that can help erase Western biases and honor African women.) I would argue that it is only by listening carefully to these women's voices that we can understand their suffering, their needs, their hopes - and recognize their remarkable resistance. This is an essential, if not a critical first step in pursuing further projects (applied anthropological projects) to bring justice to the world's most disenfranchised.

CHAPTER 7: RESULTS

> It was after the death of a 4-year-old boy in our neighborhood that I was accused
> of being responsible for his death. They [the villagers] carried the *siongho* that
> designated three of us. So the whole village stood up against us. Defenseless, I
> took the road to come to Ouaga to save my life.

Touba's story illustrates the relentless and ineluctable process of a witchcraft accusation.

Many of the women who live now in shelters in Ouagadougou have undergone similar

tribulations. This chapter describes their daily life. The questionnaires and interviews helped to

draw a mapping of the regions where witchcraft accusations are the most widespread, and to

reveal the specific profile of women accused of witchcraft and expelled from their home; most of

them are widows, from polygamous households. They almost all had children, and their average

age is above the average Burkinabe life expectancy. It also highlights the accusation processes,

their causes, and their consequences. Even though most of the women accused had traditional

religious beliefs (animism), other religions also played a role in the phenomenon of social

exclusion of WAoW. The Catholics are the most invested in support of WAoW. Finally, this

chapter reviews the laws supposed to protect women, but that are rarely enforced.

7.1 Research setting

7.1.2. Shelters and other residences for women accused of witchcraft

7.1.2.1.Delwendé

The shelter was founded in 1965; it is named Delwendé, which in Mooré means "in the hands of God." In 1968, a missionary sister of Our Lady of Africa, Madelaine Founigaut began to propose activities for women, including cotton spinning. She worked there until her final return to France in 1983. The same year, the city council entrusted the management of the shelter to the missionary sisters. The name Delwendé was adopted in 1989. It first hosted people with mental disorders before it became a shelter exclusively for women accused of witchcraft. However, there are still three men with psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia who have stayed in the accommodation. Three men accused of witchcraft and who had been severely injured during their accusations also live there.

When I first visited the shelter in June 2016, it was still located in the Tanghin quarter, on the banks of the dam north of Ouagadougou. The sister in charge of the shelter did not tell me that it was about to move to another place. The project of moving Delwendé was the result of the 2009 flood, during which all the women of the shelter had to be evacuated because the water had almost wholly submerged the shelter. Negotiations had been conducted to find a new place for the shelter, and the mayor of Sakoula, a village located 35 minutes north from the capital, eventually accepted the construction of the center, which was financed by the government. Compared with the previous shelter, the one in Sakoula was larger, and the rooms for the women were also vaster, newer, and more salubrious as it was less humid. Yet, the move to Sakoula caused a lot of discontents. The women did not want to move because the shelter was located out

of the city, and it was more difficult for them to go to the market were they regularly collected the grains that had fallen on the floor during the merchants/customers' transactions. Furthermore, even though the shelter in Sakoula had an area for a garden, that space was much smaller than the garden women had around the dam. And finally, the women felt that they were further socially excluded due to the location.

The conditions and circumstances during which the relocation took place were challenging because it was after another flood in June 2016. The managers made the quick decision to move, which had been postponed for some time because of the reluctance of the women. Because of this, the women were forced to move in a hurry. The move created severe conflicts between the women and the managers of the shelter. In addition, it occurred so suddenly that some women did not have the chance to notify their families and did not receive visits from them since they had moved because the shelter was more difficult to find, and the road to access it was in bad condition.

During the inauguration of the shelter in October 2016, some women complained about the shelter in front of officials who were invited to the event. One woman said that they were "brought to hell;" the mayor of Sakoula answered: "you brought hell with you." The resentment was still palpable when I arrived in August 2017. It even had some consequences on my research, at least at the beginning, because the manager introduced me to the assembly of women, and women did not want to talk to me at first but eventually changed their minds.

During the 16 months I spent visiting Delwendé twice or three times a week, I observed a change in women's opinions about the shelter. Many of them have finally agreed that Sakoula was a safer place for them, "the floods brought us to Sakoula, and we are happy that there is no flood here." Today we can say that they have settled well into their new life. People living

around the shelter are getting used to the "old ladies" from the center even though they were a little scared at the beginning. Each time I have been there, I have seen children or other villagers coming to the shelter and doing some business with the women: either buying grains of cotton, ore selling various goods such as food (fruits, spices, donuts, or kola nuts) or other small objects.

Today, the Delwendé Shelter hosts a little more than 200 women; 206 women when I started my research, but the number is variable because some women leave the shelter (see chapter 7), some die, and new women arrive. When I first visited the Delwendé in Sakoula, it was the end of the rainy season, and I still could see some greens in the garden, the sorghum (white and red) was high and ripe, there were a few trees that did not offer much shade, and the heat was already untenable. The place was like a vast courtyard surrounded by high walls with a massive iron portal at the entrance. Besides the infirmary and the administration building, the area is divided into two parts; each of them is formed by three rectangular concrete buildings forming a U with a large open hangar in the middle. One of these structures is used for ceremonies, mass, and other meetings. Overall, 30 rooms are accommodating 3 to 10 women. These rooms look all the same: rectangular, with a concrete floor, some metal shelves on which each woman store their belongings. In some rooms, there are metal beds with mattresses covert with black plastic. Yet none of the women were sitting on these beds or lying on them but would rather sit on the concrete floor.

7.1.2.2.Cour de Solidarité du Secteur 12

Cour de Solidarité was created in 1984 to take care of the needy and to welcome excluded or marginalized people (beggars, disabled, blind, deaf-mute, etc.) Under the Sankara regime, many shelters were created in larger cities to protect the indigent population. Among the people living in those shelters, 85.5 percent were women accused of witchcraft. Later, some of

these shelters have also accepted young girls who had fled from their homes to avoid forced marriages.

Cour de Solidarité du Secteur 12 located in Paspanga is also called La Cour des Sorcières (The Witches' Courtyard). It is a public center founded in 1994 following the overpopulation of Delwendé shelter. It is under the tutelage of the Ministry of Woman, Family and National Solidarity, and the accommodation is run by two social workers; one is the director, and the other is her assistant. There were 63 women in the shelter when I arrived. The rooms are smaller than at Delwendé and accommodate two women. The center is made of 3 rows of long buildings with a total of 42 rooms. Everything is made with concrete and has the traditional ochre color that we see everywhere in the country. The color comes from the soil and the dust that invade every nook and cranny and dye all the landscape. The doors are in iron painted in green; the roofs are made of corrugated iron sheets that made these rooms extremely hot during the dry season. Women are sitting on the concrete floor on a piece of fabric called *pagne* in French. On the floor, we can see different plastic or aluminum bowls with grains inside, mostly millet that is drying in the sun.

Cour de Solidarité is much smaller than Delwendé and does not have space for a garden. Since the number of women is also lower, the organization of the shelter is more straightforward. There is one chief of the among the residents, with another woman assisting her. Yet, the head is under the authority of the director of the shelter. The authoritarian style of the director first surprised me. However, I later understood that because she was younger than all the women at the shelter, she needed to impose her authority to maintain a social cohesion of the community. Women at the shelter respected and liked her. Shelters, unwittingly, have become auspices or retirement homes for the elderly. There are no nursing homes in the country, and for many of the women at the shelter, it will be their last residence.

7.1.2.3. Funding

Even though the government provided the building for Delwendé, there is very little governmental support for operating expenses. One supervisor at Delwendé told me that they receive about 5,500 USD a year. In October 2017, the shelter had not received anything yet. The shelter depends almost entirely on donations of various origins. Nevertheless, it is functioning quite well.

The other shelter, Cour de Solidarité, is supposedly run by public funds. However, the center also receives many donations that help the manager to maintain a decent life for these older women. Without these donations, living conditions would be much more difficult for them.

7.1.2.4. Health care and hygiene

Delwendé has a medical center where women can consult a nurse every day for free. The center is also available for people in the neighborhoods, but they have to pay. When women need advanced medical care, the shelter has an ambulance to take them to the hospital. The shelter would also pay for medical care at the hospital. Furthermore, a psychiatric nurse visits women at the center once a week.

At Cour de Solidarité, there is no medical facility. The managers of the shelter sometimes have to take women to a health center on their motorcycle. Usually, social services are supposed to provide a vehicle. Still, it takes too long to send for a car to drive the sick women to a hospital because of the burdensome administrative procedures. Fortunately, a European non-governmental organization is sponsoring the cost of medication for women.

In both shelters, women have access to bathrooms with showers and toilets. These are conveniences they may not have had in their village before and that they may not have if they leave the shelter. There is running water and power in both locations.

7.1.2.5. Food

Women in both shelters take turns cooking; both centers have one kitchen with huge pots where women cook once a day, but women can also prepare small individual meals. For having helped women in the kitchen, I experienced the cumbersome job of mixing the food in those big pots: you have to be strong to do that! All the food is cooked on a wood-fired stove, and women have also to maintain the fire under the pots. At Delwendé, residents have chicken once a week: two small pieces for each woman. At the other shelter, women rarely have access to meat. They eat almost the same kind of food in both places: beans, rice, couscous, and millet form the basis of their alimentation. They may have pasta with tomato sauce from time to time. When they cook for themselves, they like to prepare the traditional tô (a millet porridge) accompanied by a *sauce feuille* (leaf sauce made with several dried leaves that women either find in the bushes or cultivated); it is a traditional Burkinabe dish that most Burkinabe particularly like.

With the little money they make from spinning cotton or other little business, women like to buy kola nuts that have several health benefits such as boosting energy, helping with digestion, and maybe antibacterial benefits. It has a bitter taste at the beginning but becomes sweeter after chewing it for a while. I had the experience of chewing kola after feeling nauseous because of the smell in the room of one woman, and it worked very well. Women also enjoy tobacco. They would rub their gums with a yellow/orange tobacco powder that gives them an orange mouth.

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7.1.2.6. Activities

In both shelters, one of the principal activities for women is spinning cotton. They either receive (as a donation) or more often buy the cotton flower. They first crush the cotton flower on a stone to remove the seeds, then they card the cotton before spinning it on wooden rods. It takes almost ten days to form a large cotton ball that sells 500 francs CFA (less than $1).

Another common daily activity is sorting grains. Women at Cour de Solidarité go to the market and sweep the alleys of the market to collect all the grains that had fallen from bags. They will then sort the grain and sell it as livestock feed. Women from the shelters have not always been welcomed at the market. Merchants have chased and beaten them. Women from Delwendé would also come from time to time to the market in Ouagadougou by taking a "moto-taxi" (motorcycle taxi). The traffic in Ouagadougou is very dense, and to go to the market is quite dangerous because there are no real sidewalks. Many women had been injured by motorcycles or cars; one woman was paralyzed after an accident. When women first arrive at the shelters, they are not used to the city traffic.

There are other income-generating activities such as making sumbala, a local condiment made with néré seeds that are boiled, fermented, and assembled into ping-pong size balls. When women are making the sumbala, the pungent smell of the condiment covers all other odors and is pervasive in the shelters. For a foreigner, it takes some time to get used to it. We always had that debate when I would say that the smell was terrible, many Burkinabe would answer that it smells better than camembert cheese!

Local farmers sometimes employ women who are healthy and fit for various agricultural work. There are generally paid 1,500 Francs CFA for a long day (about 2.5 USD). Even though

women are used to that kind of work, it is still difficult for them, and only a few of them can do it. The manager of one of the shelters complained that the farmers would not give them anything to drink or to eat during the day.

7.1.2.7. Clothing

When visiting the shelter for the first time, we may believe that women do not care about their looks. Many of them wear old fabric *pagne*s around their waist, and some of them would not wear anything on the top. However, women asked to have pictures from themselves, so we organized a picture day, and I witnessed the metamorphosis of these women. Women started to unpack their best clothes and put them on. They were opening their bag as if they had some treasure in there. Each woman of the room starts to put their most beautiful *pagne* sewn by a seamstress, sometimes adding a string of beads known as a *chaplet*, a purse, and flip-flops --most of the time, women are barefoot. Suddenly these poor older women looked like any other old and respected Burkinabe women. They were all very excited to put their most beautiful clothes, and the room suddenly became colorful and joyful. Among the various donations, women regularly received new *pagnes* every year. I have also assisted in one of these donations at Cour de Solidarité; these are very cheerful and happy times for them; they grab their music instruments, dance, smile, and laugh.

7.1.2.8. Other settings: Tema Bokin and Non-Loti.

In addition to the two previous shelters, I have also visited Téma Bokin, located two hours north from the capital. As with Delwendé, the center is run by Catholic nuns. There are 28 women there, and the setting is similar to the shelter Cour de Solidarité. I did not interview women in that shelter. However, I have talked with the nuns who are taking care of them. They

struggle much more to get funding to run the place because they are far away from the capital, non-governmental organizations rarely come to visit them, and the funding they receive from the Catholic Church is decreasing each year and does not cover the needs. Therefore, they have to find more income activities. They had recently invested in a sty and hope that they will be able to make some money from raising pork.

I also interviewed women who lived in individual houses located in *non-loti* areas where plots of land are not registered with the government. In these neighborhoods, the populations are lacking almost everything: drinking water resources, electricity, health, school infrastructure, and road accesses. Robineau explained how the *non-loti* have developed,

> Given the rapid growth of African cities, states fail to produce enough housing for the entire population and the most precarious families will live on the outskirts of cities, in so-called "spontaneous" neighborhoods. They are built regardless of the formal and legal urbanization process and are often invisible in urban planning documents, even if they sometimes shelter the majority of the urban population. In Burkina Faso, these neighborhoods are called "non-lotis." Despite their informality and their invisibility, these neighborhoods "in-between" - between social, spatial and legal - are an integral part of the urbanization process of the city and materialize a new type of urbanity, halfway between the rural and the urban and between the "formal" and the "informal"(Robineau 2014, translated by the author).

The living conditions of these women is much more difficult because these women have to provide for themselves. They have to buy food because they do not have land to produce it. Women have to pay for health care; they must draw water from the well, fetch wood for the stove, and find ways to have some income. Sometimes their children live close by, but most women are alone. They form small groups of abandoned women helping each other with minimal means.

7.1.3 Mapping social exclusion of alleged witches

An essential result of the research concerns the mapping of the regions where exclusions took place. Among the women in the shelters, most of the women are coming from the North Region and surrounding areas that form the Mossi plateau. Another notable aspect of the mapping is that it gives specific areas of where to run prevention programs. Reducing or eliminating social exclusion in these locations would be a major achievement.

There are 45 provinces in Burkina Faso, but the majority of accused women, more than 90 percent, came from five provinces in the Mossi plateau: 46 percent of women were accused in the Passoré region, 15 percent of women came from Kourweogo, 12 percent from Boulkiemde, 10 percent from Sanmatenga, and 8 percent from Oubritenga province (see Map 2).

The province of Passoré includes nine departments: Arbolé, Grand-Samba, Bagare, La-Toden, Kirsi, Tema Bokin, Gomponsom, Pilimpikou, and Yako. Among the departments affected by exclusion, Yako is the most implicated, with 26 percent of women accused, followed by Bousse with 12 percent (Kurweogo province), Pilimpikou 8 percent, Mane 7 percent (Sanmatenga), and Arbole 6 percent. Other departments have less than 4 percent of women accused. On a map, we can observe that these departments are very close to each other. (see Map 3)

Map 1: Distribution of ethnic groups in Burkina Faso: http://www.planete-

burkina.com/ethnies_burkina_faso.php
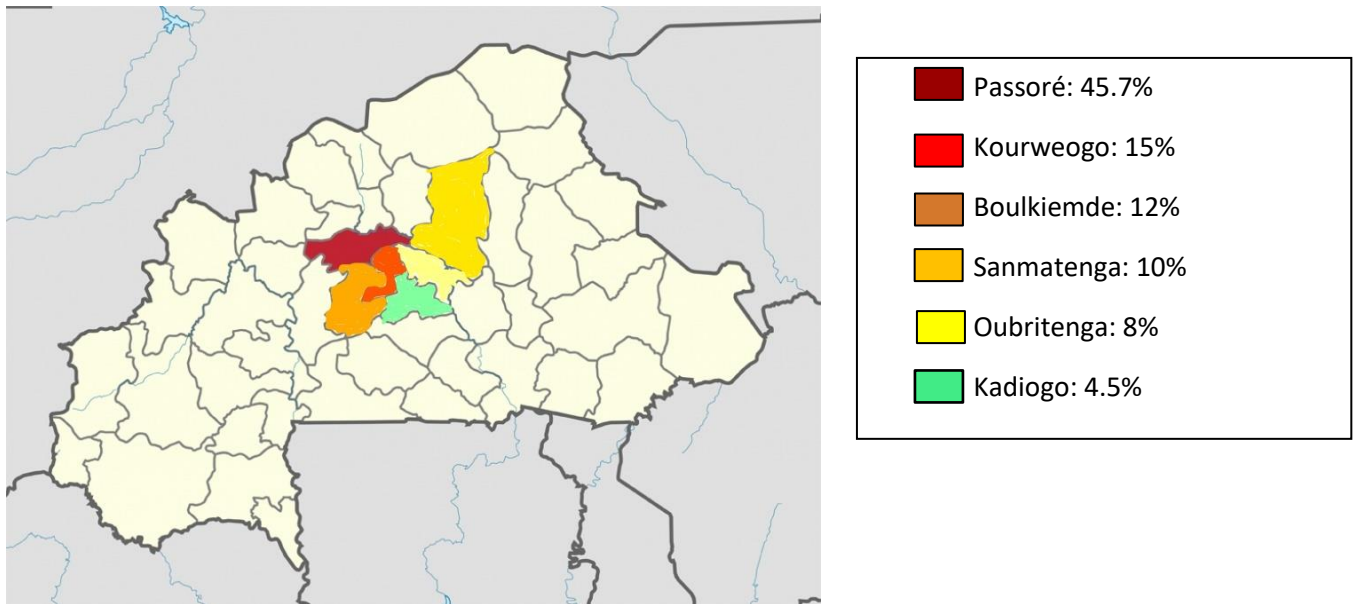
Map2: Provinces in Burkina Faso affected by social exclusion of alleged witches

Map3: Departments in Burkina Faso concerned with social exclusion of alleged witches

The mapping clearly delimited a specific zone from which alleged witches are excluded. As expected, that zone is also located in the Mossi rural region. Furthermore, the North region is particularly poor. As indicated by the 2016 PNDS (Plan National de Dévelopement Economique et Social) poverty in Burkina Faso is mostly rural: nine persons out of ten living under the poverty threshold reside in rural areas, the north region being the most affected by poverty. The literacy rate of the region is 34.6 percent (INSD 2015), based on the 2015 report from the Ministry of Finance; there is one doctor for 43,000 inhabitants and one nurse for 4,350 inhabitants. If more than 90 percent of children would enter school for the first year (48 percent off girls), only 50 percent will finish primary school, and 13 percent would go to secondary school (37 percent of girls).

I visited three of the primary locations where women were accused and excluded. Yako, the capital of the Passoré province, is a larger town with a large mosque. In the department of

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Yako, there are 24,000 inhabitants. Boussé, the capital of the Kourweogo province, is located in the Plateau-Central region, at the border of the North region. The town has 13,000 inhabitants and is located along the road that leads to Yako and Ouahigouya. Finally, Pilimpikou, both a municipality and the name of a department, is more isolated and very difficult to access. There are 7,000 inhabitants in the department. Most of the women originate from villages around these locations.

7.2. Number of persons excluded after witchcraft accusations

According to Ouédraogo, social exclusion is a phenomenon known to the population, 86 percent of the population knows about it, and more than 60 percent know excluded persons (2006). However, it is difficult to estimate the number of persons expelled from their villages after being accused of witchcraft. The number of women seeking refuge in shelters might only represent a small portion of the excluded population. As stated earlier in this chapter, the number of suicides is very high. The other information that is missing is about the number of women who return to their natal village and stay there. Women may go to other regions of the country where alleged witches are not excluded and start a new life, but we have few examples of that.

I visited a village, Berenga, in which the chief welcomed excluded people. There are actually 28 people victims of exclusion who live in Berenga; some of them are families whose fathers were accused and banned from Pilimpikou, and their wives and children decided to follow them. Berenga's chief is a Muslim from the Peul ethnicity but unlike many Peuls, he is sedentary. The reasons why he welcomed these people are not very clear. Berenga is a small village, and the arrival of these families had significantly increased the size of the inhabitants.

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These people represent an additional workforce for the village that seems to have successful vegetable farming. The chief also receives the support of various organizations. However, the housing of these families is deplorable, and there is no access to electricity and water.

During the Pilimpikou witch hunt of 2016 (see Chapter 9), at least 100 persons were expelled from the department. However, only three women from Pilimpikou arrived at the shelter during that time frame. This underlines the difficulty of estimating the number of people accused. Furthermore, during interviews, women said that they were not the only ones indicted, and when asked where the other women went, most of them had no clue. One woman, though, told me that they were four women accused, two of them went to the shelters, and two went back to their families. Furthermore, in Boussé, social services have relocated women in *non-loti* neighborhoods rather than sending them to the shelters. Therefore, the recent statistics of the social exclusion of women in Boussé might be biased because they are based on the number of women in shelters.

The shelters likely represent the last place where women would go after being accused because many of them did not know the existence of the centers before arriving in Ouagadougou. Therefore, more women would maybe come to the shelters after being accused if they knew about them, and some of them would not have committed suicide. In any case, the number of women living in shelters represents only a small part of the total number of accused women.

7.3. Victims of accusation: Profile of women living in shelters

It is important to specify that the profile of women accused of witchcraft living in shelters might be different from the total population of women accused of witchcraft in Burkina Faso

because not all of them live in refuges, and many of them went somewhere else after being

accused. According to Ouédraogo, they may have left their region and started a new life

somewhere else (2006). However, there is a very high probability that all these women share a

similar profile.

7.3.1. Ethnic origin

Most of the women interviewed were Mossi. The ethnicity of one of the women

interviewed could not be determined because she had psychological issues and has never been

able to tell her story. Nevertheless, since she speaks a mix of Dioula and Mooré, she might not

be Mossi but have lived among them. Yet, most women spoke Mooré, and, as we have seen

previously, all of them came from the Mossi Plateau.

In previous unpublished research conducted by Albert Ouédraogo in 2006, the author

reported that about 85 percent of excluded persons were Mossi, and the others were Dafing,

Marka, or San. It is possible that the phenomenon has since evolved and that it mostly affects the

Mossi now. Even though other ethnic groups may also believe in witchcraft, I met Gurunsi,

Dagara, and Samoro people who told me that they do not exclude alleged witches from their

villages. However, they would be marginalized in these villages.

7.3.2. Age

When women first arrived at the different shelters, the average age was 58, with the

youngest being 35 years old and the oldest was 76 years old. In 2018, the average age of women

living in shelters was 70 years old. However, I encountered difficulty when trying to obtain the

exact age of women. Age is not essential for these women. What makes a person "old" might be

the number of children and if these children are grown up and have children themselves. Most of

them did not know their age. Some had an electoral card they obtained during some presidential campaigns to gain their votes. A tiny number of women had a birth certificate. On these "official" documents, the month and day of birth always was January 1st, indicating that the date of birth had been approximatively determined. When women arrive at the shelters, managers would often have to guess their ages.

During the time of my fieldwork, the Town Hall of Paspanga organized a program to provide birth certificates to the women at the Cour de Solidarité. After many days of surveys, the Mayor of Paspanga came to the shelter to distribute the certificates to the women. During the event, a woman came along to ask for hers, but she was not at the center during the survey. The employees of the Town Hall requested her name and age in order to make a certificate; she first said that she was 100 years old, and everybody laughed and said that it was not possible. The older woman then said that she was nine years old. People around burst out laughing. What can be learned from this anecdote is that the age of women in shelters is very imprecise, but since it is local people who have made a guess and that they might have elements of comparison, we can still use these data.

Another difficult task was to determine if these women had siblings. The concept of brothers and sisters is much vaguer for Burkinabe people who live together in large extended and polygamous families. A brother or a sister could be a cousin based on the Western kinship system. There might be few distinctions between siblings and cousins in the same family. It is all the same family.

7.3.3. Children of women living in shelters

Most of the women in the shelters had children. Only two percent of them never had a child. The average number of children per woman was 6.6 children, very close to the national average. However, the average number of children alive is 3.6. Women have lost many children during their lives in their villages (2 on average). Among these women, only 16 percent had not lost a child. One woman had lost six children.

Nevertheless, it is essential to make a distinction between sons and daughters. For the women who had children, 20 percent of them had no son, and 12 percent had no daughter. During my interviews, three women first said that they had no children. Then, during the talk, we learned that they had, in fact, one or more daughters, as if having a daughter does not count. For these women, it is much more important to have sons because when older and widow, it is often sons who would take care of their mothers.

7.3.4. Marital status

At their arrival at the shelter, 74 percent of the women were widows. Shepley's research in 2009 confirmed this number. Some of the women became widows later, and 25 percent of women are married.

Some women had a more unusual journey because they left their first husband and ran away with another man. Some women whose husband had later died married their brother in law (levirate marriage system); two of them married the older son of their husband from a first marriage; it was surprising when these women would say that they had married their sons!

7.3.5. Polygamy

Eighty-seven percent of the women had been in a polygamous marriage. The number of co-wives varied from one to 9, with an average of almost 2 (1.87). Among these women, 51 percent were the first wife. These statistics will be further analyzed below.

7.3.6. Polygamy, Jealousy, and Symbolic violence

Another form of symbolic violence that developed because of the structure of the Mossi society is the competition between women inside polygamous households, which often causes jealousy and frustrations among women. Based on the research results (see chapter 6), a majority of women in the shelters had co-wives. It is difficult to determine the role played by polygyny in witchcraft accusations; however, it has to be addressed in the analysis of the phenomenon.

As underlined by Madhavan, "co-wife relationships and women's experience with polygyny can only be understood within a particular sociocultural and personal context." (2002:69). According to the author, co-wives may use various strategies within the households that can be both competitive and collaborative, depending on factors such as "cultural attitudes about self-assertion versus consensus, sexual jealousy, reproductive competition, individual personalities, and life circumstances" (2002:70).

Jankowiak et al. (2005) observed that for a majority of women in the polygynous system, there is evidence of pragmatic cooperation with one other; nonetheless, they are maintaining a respectful distance while there is competition to access their mutual husband. During interviews with WAoW in the shelters, few of them complained about their relationship with their cowives. Many of them said that they had no problem with their family. However, in many cases, it was following the death of a cowife's child that women were accused of witchcraft. Women in the shelters never directly designated the person(s) who accused them. Still, most of the time, they

vaguely said: "they," encompassing all the people who participated actively or passively to their exclusion. There is probably someone who started to spread the rumor, but women rarely identified that person. Despite that, when asked if their "official" accusers were still in the village, they would always have a definite answer and seemed to fear the power of these accusers, who were influential people in the town. These "official" accusers were always men.

Another example that underlines the distant relationship between cowives is when two or three of them were accused together, each of them will take a different direction. They would not support each other or be solidary to one another. There is not enough cooperation and unity to rebel against an unfair accusation. The relationship between cowives would never be strong enough for any of them to protest against a wrong indictment or to defend another co-wife.

Is polygyny a form of symbolic violence perpetrated against women? Do all women suffer from polygyny? Not all women would openly criticize polygyny, and many of the women in shelters accepted the situation as being something normal and, therefore, part of their habitus as described by Bourdieu. The symbolic violence in polygyny lies in the fact that the situation is imposed on them, and that it creates unnecessary conflicts, competition, and unequal access to resources for the members of the household. Ouattara and Storeng confirm that "within Burkinabe polygamous marriages, the second wife is considered to be the favorite" (2014:32); therefore, it is evident that conflicts and competition can arise.

On the other hand, women may argue that having co-wives help to reduce chores and fieldwork. Yet, it is not evident that the tasks are equally distributed, and new co-wives have to work more or less than the older co-wives. Thus, it sparked jealousy, and when an opportunity is presented to get rid of a co-wife by spreading rumors, younger co-wives will seize it to gain

more power. This argument would explain why a majority of women in the shelters were the first wives in polygynous households.

Furthermore, many women struggle to achieve or maintain their status within their families; motherhood is their unique way to attain a higher rank in the family and, by extension, in society. Ouattara and Storeng affirm that "the anticipation of fertility once married is an expectation that makes the woman vulnerable, and thus exposes her to the risk of violence" (2014:30). In chapter 7, we talked about the difficulties of evaluating the emotional impact of losing a child, and why, in some instances, it could trigger a witchcraft accusation. Here, it is crucial to take into account the social consequences of the death of a child, which can cause regression in a woman's status. This situation could lead the poor mother to accuse another woman of the loss of her child for the mother to maintain her status. The symbolic violence in the relationship between women results in an unescapable rivalry and competition within the polygynous union, which will either be constant or arise from time to time.

The apparent peace and cooperation between co-wives should not mask the reality of their lived experiences. If women would have a "real" choice to be part of a polygynous household, they would likely prefer being in a monogamous marriage. Meeker and Franklin, observed,

> However, in many instances, women disapprove of polygynous unions. Yoruba respondents who would not be pleased to have a co-wife frequently indicated an aversion to having to share resources, both sexual and material. Such a situation may result in jealousy, and this, in turn, reduces the potential for cooperation among co-wives (1995:315-316).

If we analyze co-wives' relationships based on co-wives' perceptions of their relationships, then we can miss the forces of symbolic violence that are at stake and are blurring these women's awareness. As proposed by Bourdieu, "the women's thoughts and perceptions are structured in

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accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of cognition are, inevitably, acts of recognition, submission" (2001:13). Women cannot perceive the symbolic forces because they are omnipresent, omnipotent, and invisible.

7.3.6.1. Jealousy

In this dissertation, several examples and processes of symbolic violence were analyzed, but what is not evident are the psychological consequences of symbolic violence. When undergoing powerful but yet invisible violence, how do victims react to these forces they cannot see and cannot understand because it is imposed on them by powerful and dominant cultural norms? Inevitably, emotions developed that victims of symbolic violence cannot always explain and control. Jealousy has been a framework to justify many of the problems related to witchcraft accusations that can be linked to polygyny. Meeker and Franklin (1995) showed that jealousy is recurrent and widespread to the point that it is suggested in the vocabulary of many African ethnic groups,

> In several societies, the potential for jealousy or rivalry is reflected in the terminology used to refer to co-wives. For example, among the Luo (Kenya) a co-wife is called *nyieka* (my partner in jealousy), the Hausa (Nigeria) use the term *kishiya* (jealousy), and the Yoruba (Nigeria) word for co-wife is orogun (rival or competitor). Likewise, among the Bakgalagadi of Botswana the term for co-wives, *bagadikano*, means rivals, and the term for polygyny, *lefufa*, implies jealousy (315-316).

Jealousy is a strong and mostly negative emotion produced by symbolic violence. Because symbolic violence is invisible and omnipotent, women cannot analyze the origin of their malaise and frustrations, and it can transform into jealousy. According to TenHouten,

> Jealousy must be understood both in terms of social situations and the psychology of object relations. It certainly also requires cognitive appraisal of threat. It follows that jealousy results not only from surprise but also from the concurrent experience of fear and sadness, fear of losing the other's affections, resources, and

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emotional energy, and sadness at the loss, or imagined possibility of loss (2009: 202).

Therefore, jealousy is both a threat for the person who experiences the emotions and for the person who might become the victim of the jealous one. When it spreads, people are caught in a vicious circle, because jealousy breeds revenge. It is a product of symbolic violence. It is the product of the constant pressure of a society that does not pay attention to women's well-being due to the structure of the community and the strong traditions they are trying to maintain, despite the changes that are inexorably happening in their country.

7.3.7. Education

In Burkina Faso, most educated people can speak French, which is the official language taught at school. However, those who have not been able to go to school do not speak French. None of the women in both shelters spoke French for the simple reason that none of them went to school. Most of the time, when I asked if they had been to school, they would find the question incongruous and useless. One woman told me, "If I had gone to school, I wouldn't be here [at the shelter]." For most of them, they did not even have the opportunity to have an education because there was no school in their village, and the possibility of going to boarding school did not exist or was not an option because nobody would leave the town. It would have been much too expensive. When there was a school in the village, parents would rather send their sons than their daughters. One woman told me that once there were missionaries who were enrolling children at school, but she hid because she did not want to go. She realized later how regretful she was!

7.3.8. Visit and communication with family

Receiving visits from children and other members of the family is always an essential and cheerful time for the women at the shelters. Nevertheless, 22 percent of them never receive any visitors. If the children live far away, they may not often come as it is the case of one daughter I met who lives in Cote d'Ivoire and was able to come to visit her mother three times in ten years. When daughters come to visit, they may stay for a while. I met one who had recently given birth and had stayed with her mother for almost a month. Only daughters or sometimes daughters in law would stay and sleep at the shelter. Women would proudly introduce their children to me, and I could see how happy they were. Grown-up grandchildren also come to visit their grandmothers, especially if these grandchildren live in Ouagadougou and are studying there.

Many women told me that their daughters would not come to visit them because their husbands would not allow them to come. Husbands were afraid that their wives may become witches, or that other people in the village may think so and accuse them if anything would happen. For these daughters, the fate of their mothers sometimes had to be kept secret.

I did not expect to see women at the shelter with cell phones, and yet a significant number of them (almost 30 percent) had a basic cell phone. Even though these women could not read, they were able to use their phones. Most of the time, their children provided phones with their contacts stored, and they had given instructions on how to use them. Very often, they would ask my translator to check if they still had credit or to find the number they wanted to call. There are power plugs in each room to charge their phones. These phones are an essential means for them to keep in contact with their children. Managers of the shelters can also contact the children of the women who may be sick or dying.

7.4. Why and how are women accused? Multiple causes of witchcraft accusations

> A child under one year old died. He was the child of my husband's younger brother. The parents of the child accused me of being responsible for his death. My husband died, and I lived alone. The only girl I have is married, so I do not have anyone to defend me. I went to my family, but they did not agree to receive me. That's why I came to request asylum in the Delwendé shelter because I did not know where to go. The whole village of my husband was mobilized to expel me from the village.

The scenario of exclusion is, most of the time, the same. According to women's stories: "somebody died in the village, and I was accused." In most of the cases, the person who died was from the same extended family than the accused, such as a grandchild, nephews, co-wife, or other members of the family. In his research conducted in 2006, Albert Ouédraogo found that among the "official reasons" that trigger accusations of witchcraft, almost 60 percent were related to the death of a person, and often of children (45 percent). However, other reasons such as sickness (12 percent), or miscarriages of a relative (4 percent) were also mentioned.

7.4.1. How are women accused?

When a younger person dies suddenly, rumors quickly spread out that the death might not be natural. Since there is no autopsy, it is difficult to establish the causes of death, and for the serenity of the village, it is vital to find out if the death was natural or not. In some cases, to establish if the cause of death is natural, a chicken will be sacrificed. The earth chief, also called *Tingsoba* will cut the head of a living chicken and throw the chicken. Depending on how the chicken will fall, it will indicate the circumstances of death: If the chicken falls on its back, the fatality is natural; if not, further investigations have to be conducted.

Once the "abnormality" of the death was established, the next step is to unmask the "witch (es)" responsible for it. In 38 percent of the cases, some women are designated and immediately expelled from the village. A relative of the victim might publicly utter the

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accusation. Yet, most the time (60 percent of the cases), new rituals will be conducted to expose the culprits. There are two major rituals: the truth-potion and the *siongho*.

An earth-chief or a diviner called to the village for the purpose will administrate the truth-potion to suspected witches. The potion is supposed to have a strong effect on a "witch" who would then fell on the ground and sometimes confess having killed people. About 10 percent of women have been accused of witchcraft using that method. These potions may induce a delusional state, but sometimes it could get worse as it was the case in April 2018, at Grand Samba, when the concoction (poison) was administered to two men. One died immediately, and the other ended up in a coma. For the villagers, it was evident that they were both guilty.

During my interviews, a woman told me that she had been given the product, but it did not affect her. Then the diviner looked for another product: "it was a drug for the crazy ones," said the woman; the drug probably was a powerful psychotropic because she reacted violently and had convulsions. The poor women did not recover, and the villagers finally decided to take her to the hospital on a motorcycle, but as she had lost consciousness, she could not stand on the motorcycle, so they tied her up. Her feet were attached to the muffler, and she suffered severe burns to the point of losing several toes. These two stories demonstrate that people who administrate the so-called "truth-potion" do not control its effect. Furthermore, once under the influence of the "poison," accused people may more easily admit being witches and having killed people.

Finally, for more than half of the women (51 percent) at the shelters, villagers used the *siongho* ritual to accuse them. Namely, the corpse is placed on a sort of stretcher and carried by four men. It is the corpse that (is supposed to) will direct the procession to the guilty party. Even if the body cannot be used, if, for example, it has already been buried, one can use the clothes of

the dead or the earth of his grave. In chapter 8, the ritual of the *siongho* is further described and analyzed.

7.4.2. Who are the accusers?

Rituals to expose a witch are always conducted by men, such as the earth chief, soothsayers, or marabouts. However, accusations are first uttered by a relative of the victim that can take the form of a rumor. According to Ouédraogo:

> Surveys show that relatives of excluded persons order the ritual of the witch detection; the accusers who trigger the exclusion are mostly relatives of the victim [the person who died]. Eighty percent of the accusers are relatives of the victim. It also appears that the accusers are mainly male. In fact, out of 53 people who were excluded, 47 men (86.6%) and only six women (11.3%) were behind the accusation…it seems that the underground charges are first and foremost the case of women who have lost one of their children. So, as paradoxical as it may seem, it turns out that women are often used to manipulate their husbands to victimize other women. (2006 translated by the author)

It is though interesting that in women's stories, they would often say that it is "the village" that accused and excluded them. It though takes a village to eliminate a woman, even though the number of persons who spread the rumor might be minimal, once the ritual designates a culprit, all the villagers will accept the decision.

The reasons for the exclusion of men might be different from those for women. According to Ouédraogo (2006), social exclusion of men may be based on economic interests (possession of agricultural land, inheritance, etc.) or other settlement issues. Thus, when an individual has seen a member of his family excluded, he may develop a spirit of revenge that will be expressed through the accusation of a member of the family responsible for the first exclusion (Ouédraogo 2006).

7.4.3. Other causes of accusations

Besides the cultural Mossi tradition and beliefs behind a witchcraft indictment, the profile of the accused women indicates that other factors may also influence the choice of a victim of accusation. Structural, economic, and psychological factors can all interfere in the selection of the person that is going to be accused (see figure below). For instance, compared to larger cities, the villages where these women lived and were accused of witchcraft have insufficient healthcare facilities and arduous access to hospitals that have inevitable consequences on the number of deaths of people that can further cause accusations of witchcraft. Villages also have fewer schools even though access to elementary school is higher today, it was not the case for these women when they were children. Various factors are interrelated in the case of exclusion of WAoW. The analysis of all the elements is further developed in chapter 9.

Causes of exclusion

Cultural
Beliefs in witchcraft / Traditions
Hierarchy
Polygamy

Structural
Education: insufficient schools and teachers
Health: insufficient healthcare facilities
Law enforcement: insufficient employees
Vulnerability of women

Political
Lack of political commitment
Corruption

Psychological
frustrations
Jealousy
Wickedness

Economic
Poverty
No access to land ownership for women
Unemployment

Figure 1: Multiple causes of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft

7.5. Consequences of accusations

There are multiple consequences of the exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. The phenomenon of exclusion does not only affect accused women. However, they are paying the heaviest price, and it is practically a life sentence.

The trauma of the accusation is enormous. First of all, most of these older women have never lived outside of their husband or father's village before being excluded. Therefore, it is an enormous shock when they found themselves alone in the bush. Some, of course, will go back to their father's village, but they would eventually be also excluded from that village once they find out that she had been accused of witchcraft.

7.5.1. Suicide and death

There are no recent and reliable data on the number of suicides committed by women accused of witchcraft. Still, the number of suicides per year might probably be higher than the number of newcomers in shelters. The case of Nanoro emphasizes the problem of suicide; in that town, 20 women were accused, and ten of them committed suicide. In an online media article published in 2009, Jean-Victor Ouédraogo indicates that the province of Passoré recorded a critical number of suicides. He wrote:

> To be designated and to describe as soul-eaters has severe consequences for the life of the alleged ones. Most likely, the accused women are driven to commit suicide. The numbers are staggering and disturbing: thirty-six (36) hangings a year. "This is my first time in a jurisdiction to see such a high rate of suicides by hanging or drowning in a well. It's widespread. At least one to two hangings per month, "said the prosecutor of Faso. Sources close to the gendarmerie and the police added that the only city of Yako records 5 to 6 hangings per month (2009, translated by the author).

In November 2018, an article published on Net Afrique mentioned the case of a woman in the town of Arbollé who hanged herself after being accused of witchcraft (Net Afrique 2018),

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indicating that the phenomenon persists today. Many women told me that there were thinking about suicide shortly after being charged. According to Ouédraogo (2006), 81.1 percent of excluded people, shocked by the accusation of witchcraft, wished to disappear or commit suicide.

Committing suicide is a desperate act of women who do not see any other option, who have not heard about the shelters, who have no other place to go, and are entirely alone. Nevertheless, according to Pacéré (1981), before colonization, when someone was condemned to capital punishment, there was no executioner of the sentence and the convicted had to kill himself or herself. It is not evident that women who committed suicide were following that ancient tradition, but it would be another fascinating topic of research. More investigation is also necessary to find out if the number of suicides is decreasing. Once in the shelters, these suicidal thoughts tend to disappear since there have not been any suicides recorded in refuges; these women also have a high level of resilience, as we will see later in chapter 8.

Besides suicide, some women may be killed after being accused; however, these data are not available. Ouédraogo (2006) affirms that many women are killed after being charged. Given the high level of hatred and commotion that immediately follows an accusation, the most fragile women might not survive the violence and injury they might endure. These cases are not recorded, and nobody in the village would dare to mention anything to the police or other authorities since they are all guilty directly or indirectly as accomplices; it is the law of silence that prevails. Among all my informants, including the women in the shelters, nobody ever mentioned any killing after a witchcraft conviction. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the number of women killed after being accused might not be as significant.

7.5.2. Violence and injury

Among the women I have interviewed, only a few of them have reported being beaten after their accusations. One woman said having that she was beaten and attached to a chair for many days after being accused and before her brother helped her to escape. Ouédraogo (2006) reported that less than ten percent of women were battered after being inducted. Violence might escalate if a woman refuses to leave the village after her accusation. Women know the risk and are extremely afraid of what could happen to them; therefore, they flee immediately after being accused.

It seems like men are undergoing a higher level of violence after being accused, as it is the case of the three men who live now at Delwendé and who were injured and needed surgery. That was also the condition for them to stay at the shelter.

7.5.3. Psychological consequences

Besides physical violence, women are experiencing significant psychological effects after being excluded. The trauma of the accusation leaves severe sequelae. At Delwendé, a psychiatric nurse visits women at the shelter every Thursday morning. I had the opportunity to tour the camp with him. He confirmed that many women were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders and depression, yet he could not give the prevalence of psychological troubles. According to the nurse, some women even lost their minds after being accused. Most of his work is to help women with nervous breakdowns by giving them medication since nurses can prescribe medication in Burkina Faso. In chapter 8, the experience of the trauma of the accusation is further described and analyzed.

7.5.4. Consequences on children

The experiences of children whose parents are excluded by an allegation of witchcraft also need to be addressed. Even though most of the women were older after being accused, they left behind their children in the village. The youngest woman at the Paspanga shelter was very upset and distraught by the fact that she had left very young children behind. The youngest was only six months old when she was accused, and the poor woman was not allowed to bring the child with her even though she was still breastfeeding her. She was crying during the interview. Women at the shelter know that once they have been expelled from their villages, their children will not have the same chances as other children. It is another reason for them to be depressed. Furthermore, the psychological consequences of the trauma on these children are unknown.

During one interview with Yambrawho came to visit her mother, the daughter expressed her pain and how helpless she and her sister felt after their mother's accusation. Yambra said: "Once you are accused, it's the end of everything! It is because my mom had no son and was a widow that she was accused." The daughter had been living in Cote d'Ivoire for a long time, even before her mother was accused. She has only one sister, and their father died when they were still young.

When Yambra first came back from Cote d'Ivoire to find out that her mother had been accused, she did not find her and went back to Cote d'Ivoire without knowing where she was and if she was still alive. The second time the daughter came, she went looking everywhere for her mother, in all possible places all around the city. She eventually arrived at the shelter, thanks to children in the street who showed her the way there. She had only 250 CFA (50 cents) in her pocket. If she had not found her mom, she would not have enough money to return to the village. Yambra also said that her life in Cote d'Ivoire was not easy; she and her husband cultivate cocoa.

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She would rather live in Burkina Faso, but because of accusations and prejudices, she prefers to stay in Cote d'Ivoire. It is costly for her to travel from Cote d'Ivoire to Burkina. The first time she came, it took her seven days to travel by bus. The second time it took nine days and this time only three days. It is costly for her: 35,000 CFA about 65 USD for one way. She feels lucky that her husband accepts and pays for her travel. When she comes to visit, she will always stay some days with her mother in the shelter before going to visit the village. However, she would never tell anyone that she went to visit her mother.

Sibdou, another daughter who lives in Boussé, comes once a year and always stays for a while. She is married and has four children. The children sometimes travel with her. Her husband let her come. She has much bitterness about the situation of her mother even though she did not have too many problems with the people in the village. She was still young when it happened, and her father and his co-wife took care of her. She did not go to school. Her mother could not come to her wedding.

Yopoco from Yako told me that when her mother was accused, she was a baby. She hardly knew her mother, and she suffered a lot. As her mother was indicted, she was called the daughter of the witch, and people avoided her. She could not go to school. Her father was still alive. He had only one wife, other women from the extended family took care of her. In the village, people are afraid that she would also become a witch by visiting her mother in the shelter; they have no empathy, no compassion either for the older woman or for her children. Her dad also suffered a lot when his wife was forced to leave; his two children were very young.

I met Tinda, who came to visit her mother in law at the shelter. She told me that her husband was very sad when her mother was accused, and he was then a young child and could not do anything for her. He still feels humiliated today.

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Other consequences of accusation are not evaluated as it is for the education of the accused women's children. For instance, the fate of the children of parents who were charged at Pilimpikou is unknown. According to local informants, these children left with their parents and consequently have dropped out of school. For some of them, they might not be able to return to school because their parents also lost all their savings and belongings. Therefore, children of accused women may not have the same chances to go to school than other children, even though they stay in the village and are raised by their father's co-wives. Likely, these women would instead favor their own children over the children of the "absent" mother who has no opportunity to support them.

Furthermore, these children may also be deprived of their assets. According to Ouédraogo, "in the case of older women, this may be a devious way of socially destroying their sons who will have a hard time being proud of their mother's lapse (2006 translated by the author)." Children may have no support to claim their rights and access to their heritage, particularly if their fathers have died. An informant told me that because of all the grief and humiliation these children had suffered, they would sometimes seek revenge by accusing of witchcraft someone from the family of their tormentor. The problem may never end.

7.5.5. Consequences on husbands

> When you are excluded, your husband and your children are not happy, but as the village does not belong to them, they have no choice, they are forced to suffer. It hurts to talk about it.

For the women who were still married at the time of the accusation, it must also have been a difficult time for their husbands. However, the consequences for husbands are unknown. According to Ouédraogo (2006), if a husband refuses that his wife is being excluded, he can be isolated from the community until he decides to expel his wife. Until then, he is forbidden to

meet with other members of the group, under penalty of violent reprisals. He no longer benefits from the solidarity of the community, even in case of misfortune. He is forbidden to frequent public places (market, fountain, etc.). He is in quarantine until he recognizes his twist and asks for forgiveness and obey the community. If it persists, the reprisals may be to take away the livelihood (the plow lands). It exemplifies the power of symbolic forces that are imposed on people in order to maintain the habitus of the social world, and consequently, the little agency people have inside their location.

During my fieldwork, I met with Tibo, the husband of a woman who had just arrived and who explained the situation. It was evident for him that the accusation of his wife was the result of a prolonged disagreement he had with a man of his family. When the wife of that man died from an accident, he accused the wife of his opponent. The poor husband had not been able to protect his wife and to keep her with him. He showed distress and sadness and was willing to find a solution to reunite with his only wife and their ten children. He felt that he was in danger in the village, and his wife worried about him. Therefore, he hoped that they would be able to move to the town of his wife, but he had first to obtain the consent from her family. Six months later, the wife was still in the shelter.

7.5.6. Economic consequences

Women living in shelters have access to health care, and they do not have to worry about food and other material needs; however, women residing in *non-loti* neighborhoods struggle to survive, as explained in chapter 6. Their material and health situations are worrying even though the social services do their best to support them, and there are very few funds available for them. They have to find ways to support themselves and make substantial money to survive. However,

they do not always have the physical conditions to work, and spin cotton can become arduous if they have visual deficiencies, as is the case for many older people.

The situation of these women emphasizes the fact that women are the primary victims of poverty. As underlined by Ouédraogo (2006), the precariousness of the woman is a cultural fact maintained by a society where the domination over the woman is total. Outside cities, their possessions can be summed up as kitchen utensils, jewels of lesser value, and some poultry that the husband can dispose of at any time. 46.6 percent of the excluded say they own property (consisting of cooking utensils, clothing, food, poultry, and small ruminant), while 45.2 percent say they did not have any belongings before their rejections. After the exclusion, they have nothing left (Ouédraogo 2006).

Furthermore, Ouédraogo's survey (2006) shows that 58 percent of excluded people live on less than five hundred francs a month (less than 1 USD) and less than 6,000 francs (10 USD) a year, while 21.7 percent live on the sum of one thousand 1,000 francs (less than 2 USD) a month. The poverty limit in Burkina is estimated at 82,672 francs; therefore, the excluded people are more than six times below the poverty limit. Excluded women are forced to reduce their needs to the minimum requirement: food. Clothing and health needs become superfluous.

Women in shelters then become a burden for the society that has to provide for them. For the managers of both refuges, it is always a struggle to maintain a decent level of life for the women, to have enough healthy food for them, and to be able to pay for their health care. Still, they have the support of many organizations. It is not the case for excluded women outside shelters.

7.5.7. Other social consequences

Stigmatization is another important aspect of witchcraft accusations. Women who live in shelters are further marginalized since the centers are known to host these women and are often called the "witch courtyard" by the population. Even though the local community gets used to the women in the shelter and does some business with them, the impact of the stigmatization has not been measured yet. It may also explain why women would rather live outside the shelters, in *non-loti* neighborhood where their living conditions might be much more difficult. Finally, the exclusion of women accused of witchcraft in Burkina has a negative effect on the way the country is perceived internationally.

As we have seen, the consequences of the exclusion of women are severe and widespread. It affects women principally but also has significant impacts on their children and husbands, and society in general.

7.6. Religion and witchcraft accusation

Upon their arrival at the shelters, 20.5 percent of women were Christian (13 percent Catholic and 8 percent Protestant), and 3.5 percent were Muslim. Therefore, most of the women were animist when they arrived. It is necessary to redefine the term animism that was first used by Sir Edward Tylor to design "primitive" beliefs and had later a very pejorative connotation (Wilkinson 2017). However, the term has reappeared later with a more respectable meaning. According to Wilkinson,

> I argue that the new animism is only selectively "indigenous" in its promotion of non-Western ontologies, and suggest that it is ultimately best understood as a kind

of analytical metaphor rather than an objective category of religious practice that exists out there in the world (2017:289).

The high proportion of animists among the women accused of witchcraft is symptomatic of the context in which they lived in their villages that was more traditional. Nonetheless, the role of religion(s) before and after an accusation of witchcraft needs to be taken into consideration and is broadly discussed here, but necessitates further research.

7.6.1. Islam and witchcraft accusation

It is noteworthy to underline that very few WAoW were Muslim (3.5 percent) when entering the shelters. When discussing that aspect with a Muslim *naaba* from a village close to Pilimpikou, the *naaba* would explain that Muslims may accept death as God's will rather than trying to attribute death to supernatural witchcraft power. In that village, there were no witchcraft accusations. For Ouedraogo (2006), the followers of Islam refuse to believe in witchcraft, which is not the case for Christians (Catholics and Protestants).

In the shelters, none of the women have converted to Islam after their arrival. Fati told us, "at first I was Muslim. My husband and children are Muslim. My daughters wear the veil. When I arrived here, I was alone, so I had to change my religion. When you want a roof, you have to accept that religion." However, few women converted from Islam to Catholicism, and the women may probably return to Islam if they have the chance to be reinserted with their family. It is not easy for Muslim women to practice their religion in the shelters; they have to search outside for a mosque. More research needs to be conducted to find out how Muslim communities accept WAoW.

7.6.2. Evangelical churches and witchcraft accusations

Evangelical churches often affiliated with the Pentecostal churches have an ambiguous position on witchcraft. According to Fancello (2006), the active contribution of Pentecostalism to the phenomenon of witchcraft is a significant component of the success of this religious movement in Africa. According to the author, atypical leaders on the sidelines of the official church integrate new representations of witchcraft inspired by American evangelical literature into practice. The double game of Pentecostalism toward African witchcraft is more noticeable in marginal urban structures outside the official churches that are potent attractions for people. The union of the older forms of African witchcraft and Pentecostal churches gave rise to new types of witchcraft and witchcraft accusations that were associated with modernity among various authors such as Geshiere, Ashforth, or many others (Fancello 2006). Those religious movements called Assemblée de Dieu (Assembly of God) are also present in Burkina Faso, but mostly in larger cities, where they can attract more followers and make more money.

Nevertheless, very few WAoW were part of these churches (seven percent) before being accused of witchcraft. However, in one specific case, Tiga was indicted a second time by a pastor and further excluded by the community from which she sought help. She explained,

> After the death of my husband, I was accused of being a witch. My house was destructed, and nobody wanted to help me rebuild it. I ended up leaving and went to Kaya where Pastor K. from Kaya found me a home in a non-loti neighborhood. In prayer [during a Sunday worship], the pastor revealed that three old witches were in the church. He called our names and told us to leave the church and to go elsewhere. Another pastor directed me to the shelter. I wish to stay in this shelter until the day when my children knowing that I am here, will come and get me.

Some of the women in the shelters have converted to Protestantism, but not for the same reasons that pushed others to become Catholic. For instance, a woman explained, "My son was sick, and that's when I decided to become a Protestant to help my son"; another one said, "Initially, I was

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Catholic. For four years. Then I got sick, and I became Protestant." The Pentecostal or Assemblee de Dieu churches are known for offering a cure to disease through prayer (Fancello 2006). There are 22 (Sakoula) and 26 (Cour de Solidarite) percent of Protestant women in the shelters. I have observed outsider Protestant women coming to Cour de Solidarité to pray with the women. However, I have not met with Protestant organizations willing to support WAoW and helping them. The equivocal position of the Protestant Church hence the Pentecostal Church or Assemblée de Dieu makes them hesitant to be involved with accused witches. Nevertheless, the director of the Cour de Solidarité was part of such a church, but she was employed by the social services and did not choose the position. It may explain her dilemma when we discussed witchcraft accusations; she acknowledged that most of the women were innocent and was an excellent advocate for the WAoW even though she also believed in witchcraft.

7.6.3. The Catholic Church

Today, the Catholic Church represented by diverse congregations such as the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, often called the White Sisters (in charge of the Delwende shelter), the Commission Justice et Paix, and other Catholic groups are the most involved in the protection and the support WAoW. From a historical perspective, the involvement of the Catholic Church with witchcraft today can be seen as a paradox since the Catholic Church was the major actor in witchcraft accusations three centuries ago. Nevertheless, since the opening of the first shelter in 1965, the Catholics have been the most reliable and consistent support for WAoW.

The support of the Catholics has also compelled women to convert to Catholicism. It seems like women are choosing to convert to Catholicism because they feel obliged to, by opportunism, to fit in, or to adapt and be accepted. One woman explained that when she arrived

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at Delwendé, the shelter run by Catholic sisters, she was told that if she feels very sad, Jesus could help her; we can infer that women were "gently" offered to choose the Catholic faith. Another woman said, "when we come here, they [the sisters] bring us together, we have a meeting, and they tell us, "With all that happens to you, it would be good to entrust yourself to God and the Virgin Mary if you are sad." At Delwendé, even though the shelter is a private Catholic institution, women are supposedly free to choose their religion. However, they are encouraged to select Catholicism as highlighted by the following testimony, "when I arrived, I was told that it was not good to be Protestant, so I converted. It was later that I learned that there were also Protestants here, but as I had already committed, I could not turn back."

At Delwendé, 75 percent of the women are now Catholic; at the Cour the Solidarité, they are 59 percent. Very few women remain animists. Women sometimes said that they had no religion before entering the shelter. We can infer that this is what they were led to believe in order to persuade them to convert into Catholicism. Once they have converted, they show substantial involvement in the religion and are following all the steps to be baptized. During the baptismal ceremony, they receive a new Christian name. When interviewed, women would either give their baptized name or their birth name. To what extent does being baptized and accepting a Christian name change women's identity? How important is it for them to be part of the Catholic faith? I have not further explored that aspect of women's lives.

Furthermore, the contribution of religion to WAoW's resilience was discussed in chapter 7. It is difficult to establish the role of religion in women's resilience since it also seems clear that women would easily change faiths depending on circumstances. For instance, many women said that they turned to Protestantism because of health issues. What is certain is that converting to Catholicism helps them to be part of a community and to receive support and direction from

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that community. Women have always lived in some form of communities and are used to have a structure that gives them direction and imposes specific ways of living and reproduces the habitus of their previous lives.

On the other hand, becoming a Catholic can also be an obstacle for women's reinsertion because there might not be a Catholic Church in the village where they will be reinserted. If they want to maintain and practice their faith, it could be difficult and can ostracize them from the community.

7.7. Legal issues

The values that drive the research concerning women accused of witchcraft are typical of the human values that applied anthropologists share. The first value concerns justice and human rights. Witchcraft accusations, by their discriminatory and groundless aspects, are direct women's rights violations. Even though there have been controversies about the universality of human rights that was considered as a typical Western approach when women are oppressed and suffer, cultural relativism cannot be an excuse for the political "laissez-faire." In 1974, Burkina Faso signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948, as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The creation of a Ministry of Human Rights is an example of the government's consciousness and determination to protect Burkinabe's rights according to the universal human rights charter, and the Ministry of Human Rights has conducted a campaign against witchcraft accusations and exclusions (in this chapter).

Furthermore, Burkina Faso's penal code includes laws that could also be used to prevent these kinds of injustices, such as the Law No. 043/96 ADP of 13 November 1996 which punishes defamation, disturbance of public order, violence and assault, the destruction of property of others, and deliberate fires. This law could be applied to condemn all forms of defamation, and witchcraft accusations can be considered as a form of defamation. It can also be used to condemn the destruction of WAoW's belonging. Additionally, the Law n ° 061-2015 / CNT concerning the prevention, the repression, and the repair of violence against women and girls and care of the victims are supposed to protect women from all kinds of aggressions.

According to Ouédraogo (2006), excluded persons, who are mostly women, are unaware of their rights. The phenomenon of violence against so-called "soul-eating women" inevitably raises the question of the existence of justice for these women. Do they have rights? Is the legal provision sufficient? If so, why are these women not protected? Is it because the jurisdictional mechanism is failing? Is it because of the lack of adequate legislation? Is it because the victims are afraid and prefer to stay silent or are forced to be silent? Or is it because of a general indifference concerning the rights of that marginalized group of women? Why does the government not intervene to resolve the problem of social exclusion of older women even though laws exist that should be enforced to protect them and to punish those responsible for accusations? Anomie is a possible explanation of the difficulties of implementing legislation in Burkina Faso.

7.7.1. Anomie and the difficulties to enforce laws

There are several reasons why women accused of witchcraft do not obtain justice. The challenges reside in the fact that people in the government, in the police, and persons that have the authority to enforce laws do also believe in witchcraft. For some of them, this belief prevents

them from acting. Furthermore, as the example of Pilimpikou emphasized, authorities are not

prepared to face a population that is angry and refuses to collaborate. The number of police

officers is too low. The government has not the financial means to end the practices of social

exclusion.

Another reason is that the victims of accusations are older women with little social

support. For politics, supporting the cause of women accused of witchcraft is not of great

interest, and it can even have some negative consequences to their electorate. They would not

take such risk in a country that is already struggling with many other worrying and threatening

issues such as terrorist attacks that have escalated during the last years and that are starting to

divide the population. Furthermore, the country is facing a significant problem of population

displacement because of the recurrent terrorist attacks in the North, and they have to deal with

thousands of deprived people coming from the northern regions and settling in the capital. The

problem of WAoW becomes secondary.

The major problem resides in the pluralism of authority and anomie. As Bouju and

Bruijn explain,

> Yet, what would appear to be specific to the post-colonial African context is a
> situation of normative pluralism where reinvented traditional customs are
> competing on equal terms with modern legal principles. A kind of anomie
> characterizes the social order: there is a general ineffectiveness of its existence.
> People generally pay little attention to state laws and legal principles of action,
> and social interaction is mainly regulated by neo-customary norms where social
> hierarchies based on wealth, seniority or gender define inequalities. As a result,
> local rule tends to be the unpredictable fallout of patronage domination, and the
> poorest people often only survive as subjects bound to powerful protectors.
> Official law does not protect people simply because they do not know of it
> (2014:2, 3).

The Kogl-weoogo, the militia that imposes its own law (see chapter 8), is an example of the

pluralism of authority. The government struggles to enforce state laws efficiently, and for many

people who live far away from the capital and are isolated, these laws are inexistent.

7.7.2. Hope in justice

In June 2019, the Burkinabe government adopted a new penal code that includes an

original article specifically designed to protect women accused of witchcraft. The section 514-1

specifies that,

> The accusation of witchcraft practice is any imputation to one or more persons of
> magical, abstract, imaginary, supernatural or paranormal facts which cannot be
> materially or scientifically proven and which is likely to undermine the honor,
> reputation, security or life of it.
>
> The material element of the offense is characterized by any fact, any act described
> as charlatanism or occultism, by rites or words, speeches tending to accuse others
> of one or more supernatural or paranormal events which cannot be materially or
> scientifically proven.
>
> The intentional element is inferred from the knowledge of the damaging
> consequences of the indictment on the victim, such as dishonor, social exclusion,
> violence, and assault (Zorome 2019: translated by the author).

Will accused people be able to claim their rights, and will the law be enforced? This remains to

be confirmed in the near future.

CHAPTER 8: VIOLENCE AMONG THE MOSSI: THE CASE OF PILIMPIKOU

In this chapter, I propose to analyze the violence among the Mossi by using a specific example of an event that took place in 2016 in Pilimpikou, a village situated in the Passoré region that is a mythical Mossi location. The extreme cases of witchcraft accusations that occurred in that place illustrate the process of the indictment with the use of the ritual of the *siongho* (carrying the body), the reasons behind these accusations, and the structural and symbolic violence hidden behind this phenomenon such as poverty and isolation. In this specific case, we can also observe changes in the Mossi societies, with young Mossi people trying to rebel against the upper hierarchy of their community.

8.1. The case of Pilimpikou

In May 2016, a 3-day witch hunt occurred in the village of Pilimpikou. The brutal death of a young man who recently returned from Cote d'Ivoire triggered a heated and violent succession of exclusions of people (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016). It first started with the witchcraft accusation of two men and one older woman using the *siongho* ritual. These people were immediately expelled from the village. Following this event, a group of young people in the town decided to put an end to these recurrent problems of witchcraft in Pilimpikou and

unleashed three days of accusations that caused the exclusion of more than 100 people, most of which were older women who were forced to leave the village.

8.2. The myths of Pilimpikou

The location of the event is not a coincidence because Pilimpikou has a long history of witchcraft and is a mythical Mossi site. The town/department of 7,000 inhabitants is located in the Passoré province. The first inhabitants of Pilimpikou were nomads. When they arrived at the current site of the village, they saw clouds of butterflies that never left the ground. They saw this as a sign of fertility, and they decided to settle there. They called this place Pilimpikou, which means butterfly in Mooré (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016). Over the years, many myths and legends have surrounded Pilimpikou, and the village became famous all over the Mossi plateau.

The village is surrounded on both sides by hills; the regional landscape is predominantly flat; therefore, Pilimpikou has unique scenery, and the Pilimpikou mounts contain many secrets. One of the most common mysteries is "the tree that has no name" and whose leaves, if pulled out, will grow back a minute later (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016). Many informants talked about that tree during interviews. Mem, a man from Yako, explained that if people wanted to find out how long they had to live, they had to pull out the leaves until they stopped growing back; then people would count the number of leaves in their hand, and that number will represent the number of years that they had left. However, after pulling out the leaves, they must leave them at the location. Some precautions have to be taken before going to this tree; a chicken has to be sacrificed before getting there, and it is only if the chicken dies in a certain way that a person can go to see the tree accompanied by a ritual chief. Mem said that he witnessed the phenomenon of

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the leaves growing back. Mem remembered tourists who wanted to pull out the leaves, but he warned them against it, as he would not even do it himself. According to Mem, the Minister of Tourism asked to cut a branch from the tree so that the variety of the tree could be determined, but nobody dared to cut a branch. Nowadays, we still do not know what type of tree it is, and its mystery and myth as remained intact.

Besides the mysterious tree, what makes Pilimpikou the most mystical site is the hill of the ancestors. It is a place of passage for the souls of the dead on their way to the beyond. For instance, on the eve of the death of a Mossi chief, his soul would go to Pilimpikou. Pilimpikou soothsayers could then presage the passing of the Mossi *naaba* (chief) (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016). The precise location of the hill is not clear. Some informants talk about a cave on the hill located near the mysterious tree. It is said that for a long time, parents came to Pilimpikou to communicate with a deceased relative, but it is forbidden to cry at the sight of the dead or to reveal what the spirit said (Delobsom 1959; L'Observateur Paalaga 2016Delobsom). My informant from Pilimpikou and some of the women at the shelters told me about this cave. Gere from Pilimpikou said that when people go there, they can talk with a person of their family who died in strange conditions such as witchcraft. It is forbidden to speak of what was communicated on that hill in case a family member has a desire to get revenge for the circumstances of their loved one's death. The women in the shelter explained, "there is a hole where there is a diviner or seer; you enter through the hole, and he is the one who will contact the dead. If he calls, then the person will talk with you. You must bring belongings from the deceased, and it is through these objects that the seer will come into contact with the dead person." The stories about the possibilities to talk with deceased persons were consistent among the informants.

The village is also famous for its sacred masks. It is strictly forbidden to take pictures of these masks (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016). According to Gere, "Pilimpikou is a place where people may come for various reasons, mostly with an intent to obtain something through paranormal means. They can be politicians, professional soccer players, and so on." Gere knows these psychic, charlatans, and other diviners in the village. They are so popular that people are both attracted and afraid of Pilimpikou. The village breeds fear. Many officials refuse to settle there. As it was the case of forest guards, since the death of the last one, nobody wants to accept the job. Many people do not want to come to Pilimpikou because they say there is "wack" (witchcraft). They say that if they go there, they will die (L'Observateur Paalaga, 2016). "It is for these reasons," Gere explained, "that the young people wanted to stop the witchcraft in their village."

8.3. Visiting Pilimpikou

After hearing about the case of Pilimpikou, I was eager to discover the place and understand what the real problems of Pilimpikou were. I went twice to the village; first, I was invited to a Catholic mass in January 2018. The second time, in September of that same year, I decided to go there with a driver and a guide. There was a crucial difference in the landscape between the two visits because, in January, it was the dry season with little vegetation. In contrast, in September, it was shortly after the rainy season and just before the harvest. The millet was very high and hid the village entirely. We had to drive around for a while before finding the chief's court.

Going to Pilimpikou opened my eyes. The "detail" that struck me the most is the road that leads to Pilimpikou. I took it once in January 2018, and I already noticed the poor condition of the infrastructures. The second time in October, since it was almost the end of the rainy season, the heavy rains of the previous months had further damaged the road. The crops were high and hid everything. It was impossible to see the village. We were driving to the *naaba*'s place, but could barely find it, and the car could hardly access it. The son of the *naaba* showed us the way, but I had a strange feeling. "Where was I?" I thought to myself. If I had to drive back by myself, I would have been completely lost.

We finally arrived at a small hamlet composing the traditional Mossi courtyard. Compared to other *naaba*'s properties I have seen in other villages, this one was very modest and humble. We were invited to sit on benches under a patio made with wood and straw. They installed other seats and a special chair. On the side of the patio, an older man was sitting on the floor. He looked very old and senile. The few clothes he was wearing were dirty and had holes. Nobody seemed to pay attention to him. He was not talking. Several men started to come and sit in very specific places. Then, an older man came and sat on the bench. I first thought he was the *Naaba,* but after a while, the *Naaba*, a man in his fifties, finally came and sat on the chair intended for him. Then started the traditional greetings. I was the only woman. The *Naaba* looked affable, calm, and yet I could feel some distrust. I knew I had to be very careful about how I would broach the subject but Bado, who was our guide, quickly brought it up.

The *Naaba* had no reluctance to talk about the 2016 witch-craze. He justified it by explaining that the young men represent the living force of a village; he emphasized his argument by pointing to his sons sitting in front of him; "It is a pride to see young people working. They do the most important work. The elders rely on them to survive." So when young

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men are dying (alluding to the beginning of the 2016 crisis), it is unacceptable and incomprehensible; it can only be the result of acts of witchcraft. Therefore, it is vital to stop the "massacre" because, according to him, up to ten young men had died; "Every time I learn of the death of a young person it shocks me. There have been many." Did the *Naaba* exaggerate the number of deaths in order to enhance his argument?

The *Naaba* appreciated my approach of coming to the village to learn more about it rather than listening to all the gossips about Pilimpikou. Although, when I started to ask about the hill of the ancestors and the tree of life, he avoided my questions and said that even though he heard about it, he did not know where the hill of the ancestors was, "People are coming for the information. There are people who spread this information for money."

8.4. Kogl-weoogo: the militia

A group of young men launched the Pilimpikou witch craze after an incident of witchcraft accusation. These young people took the ritual and appropriated it to impose their authority while maintaining a semblance of tradition so that nobody could criticize them and prevent their actions. This phenomenon highlights the transformations of Mossi society. Young people are looking for opportunities to impose their laws while showing an appearance of respect for the traditions. The event also questions the limits of power.

Who are these groups of young men who have elicited the witch hunt in Pilimpikou? These groups can be affiliated to the Kogl-weoogo, a form of militia that exists all over the country. Derived from the double root "Kogl," which means to protect and "Weogo," which refers to the bush, the term *kogl-wéogo* means "keeper of the bush" in the language Mooré

(Vigneron and Andega 2018). These self-defense committees, which are nowadays decried and strongly accused of conducting practices contrary to the principles of the rule of law, originally formed a sort of brigade in charge of protecting the environment. Indeed, when the rainy season had not been sufficiently watered, village communities set their sights on fruit production to mitigate the weakness of cereal harvests. However, in these periods of scarcity, fruit trees were generally raided. Because of this insecurity, the *kogl-wéogo* were solicited to intervene as a bulwark against all persons likely to commit acts of robbery, looting, or destruction. These groups existed before colonization, but it was not until after independence that they became active again. At the beginning of the 1990s, when the need arose to face security challenges such as the exactions of road cutters, groups of citizens decided to join together to create community self-defense committees especially in the regions of North Center (Sanmatenga and Bam provinces) and the Central Plateau (Province of Oubritenga) (Vigneron and Andega 2018).

These various associations that aim to fight against depredations and rapine of all kinds benefited from the support of the government. Even if the support was not always based on legal grounds, these groups were nevertheless legitimized by strong popular support within the communities. These defense groups have been growing steadily since 2010 due to the weakness of the state's governance system, which is characterized by a failing judicial system, an inability to guarantee order and security, and an ineffective police administration throughout the country. It is estimated today that there are nearly 4,400 associations of *kogl-wéogo* spread throughout the Burkinabe countryside (Vigneron and Andega 2018). According to the *Laarle Naaba* interviewed on that topic, the *kogl-wéogo* are necessary because there are not enough police officers in the country. From the *Laarle's* opinion, it is possible to infer that the *kogl-wéogo* also have the support of the Mossi rulers.

The judgments rendered by the militias are expeditious. Assailants who are found guilty as soon as they are apprehended are routinely interrogated with beatings and corporal punishment (sometimes flogging, lacerations, kidnapping, burns, lashing alleged offenders on poles or trees, and public beatings). These degrading procedures aim at compelling the apprehended persons to either repent by expressing public regrets or to extort confessions from them in the absence of a flagrant offense.

Whether in town or the countryside, the actions of *kogl-wéogo* are controversial and have separated Burkinabe into two opposing camps. The "anti" *kogl-wéogo* demands the outright dismantling of these groups while the "pro" *kogl-wéogo* favors a tight framework between public authorities and these defense group. However, because of their multiple cases of abuse and the unconventional methods of judgment they use in summary trials, there are voices to condemn these defense groups for severe violations of human rights.

The influence of these groups explains why no intervention was conducted by the police or by other government officials in Pilimpikou during the witch hunt of 2016. According to the article, the prefect of Pilimpikou and the head of the special delegation did not wish to comment invoking a duty of confidentiality of the administration. The former mayor of the town also preferred to stay silent (L'Observateur Paalaga 2016).

The population has more confidence in the *kogl-wéogo* justice system than in the government's, as they perceive their government as corrupt. Therefore, the violence used by these groups is widely accepted and encouraged. Violence is part of the daily life of a Burkinabè. Mothers will bring their children to assist with the torture of a thief to teach them a moral lesson. Even though some people condemn that form of justice, most people support the *kogl-wéogo* because of the effectiveness of their actions.

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8.5. The ritual of the *siongho*

Given the importance of the ritual of the *siongho* in the witchcraft accusation process (see chapter 6: 51 percent of the women in shelters have been accused using the rite), a closer look and analysis of the phenomenon is necessary. The *naaba* of Pilimpikou asserted that it is the principal method to debunk a witch in Pilimpikou.

According to Mem, the first step of the ritual is to sacrifice a chicken, and the way the chicken dies determines if the death was natural or not. If the chicken falls on its back, it means that the passing was natural, and the body can be buried. If not, new investigations have to be conducted, and the *siongho* ritual (carrying of the body) is arranged. The body is covered with a straw blanket and is fixed on a wooden stretcher that will be transported by four men on their shoulders. The body will then guide the carriers toward the person or the house of the person who killed him/her. If there are suspicions, questions will be asked to the corpse; was it your destiny? Who killed you, a man or a woman? The cadaver is supposed to move in a certain way, depending on the questions. Then, one after the other, each member of the family will come in front of the corpse and ask, "is it me who killed you?" If the cadaver hits a person, everyone will believe that that person is guilty without a doubt. Mem has seen many cases like these. He once saw a corpse hit five people who were all accused. Last year, the body of a woman hit a man who then went to the police to declare that he was not alone to cause the death of the woman, but that they were three of them. He gave the name of his two accomplices, who were declared innocent since the cadaver only hit one man.

A question that is often raised during interviews concerns the age of the phenomenon. Is the *siongho* a recent ritual that developed over the last 50 years, or is it an old tradition? According to Pilimpikou's *naaba*, it has always existed; he used an expression in Mooré "rogem

miki" ("né trouver" in French) (born found), meaning that it existed when he was born. However, according to some women in the shelters, it only developed recently. One of the men at Delwendé, who was accused in Pilimpikou, expressed his strong dissatisfaction with this ritual, which, according to him, is not valid. He said he was born in 1947 and never saw this ritual during his childhood.

Two explanations are therefore possible: the ritual is old and was updated, or it was recently invented. Delobsom does not mention the existence of this ritual in his book; instead, he mentions the use of a truth-potion to detect witches. Therefore, it might be possible that the rite recently developed. That said, the accusers that use this ritual believe in its use and effectiveness, and will testify that it is an old ritual used by the ancestors beforehand; therefore, it cannot be questioned. It is a practice that does not require the intervention of an expert witch doctor, it can be used at any time, it is impossible to question its effectiveness, and unlike a truth-potion, the verdict of *siongho* is relentless. A potion may not have an effect, but the *siongho* can unfailingly accuse an "unwanted" person.

According to Gere (from Pilimpikou), when the dead body is carried around the village, the carriers cannot control the path it will take. If the body orders them to lie down, they will. If there is only a small passage, the body will manage a way through it, even if it seems almost impossible for the carriers to go through. If the corpse touches a house, it means that there is something suspicious inside it.

When asked about the fact that the carriers of the body may influence who will be designated, the answer is always the same: no, it is the cadaver that identifies its murderer. Mem gave the example of a strange event that he once witnessed during the ritual. One of the four carriers was, in fact, the witch who caused the death. The corpse started to spin around until the

guilty man fell. He then had to ask the cadaver if he was the one who killed him, and the body hit him.

Mem tells us that he had previously been accused of the death of his son, who was poisoned. In response, Mem asked that the body of his son be carried, and the body designated another person, which exculpated Mem. This example explains why Mem truly believes in the importance of the *siongho* ritual to expose the real culprit.

8.6. Questioning the *siongho*

Not everyone believes that the verdict of the *siongho* is unquestionable. The women in the shelters explained,

> Before raising the dead body, they do a ritual, and your name could be given. If someone has something against you, your name will be mentioned, and when they are going to bear the dead, you can be sure that you are going to be hit. For example, when a woman is prosperous, has children, has everything she needs, and someone on the ritual committee has a tooth against her (typically jealousy), they will give your name in secret.

When asked if the ritual of the *siongho* has always existed, Mem was not sure, and he was a little vague. He confirmed that ill-intentioned young men had appropriated the ritual with the cruel intention of killing for no reason. Some of these young men have been accused of witchcraft themselves. For Mem, the problem of Pilimpikou is that the exclusion of alleged witches has become customary, and it has become an easy way to get revenge.

Why did the people accused of witchcraft let the young men in Pilimpikou accuse them, knowing that they did not follow the traditions of the ritual? The women in the shelters explained that the people in the village were afraid of them. Each one feared being accused and expelled.

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"If you identify them [the young men] and summon them, the whole population will get up against you."

Gere confessed that there were innocent people who were excluded from Pilimpikou,

> Everybody knows that there are old sorcerers, but they are untouchable because when they kill someone, they manage to have other people accused instead. The truth is that expelling accused witches helped the families [of the deceased]; they were relieved. We cannot know which ones we have wrongly accused. Only the real sorcerers can know.

A significant pattern is observable each time we talked about witchcraft and other beliefs with informants; there are always contradictions. For instance, they believe that the verdict of the *siongho* is indubitable; yet, they admit that the *siongho* can be misguided by powerful sorcerers, but they would not acknowledge that women were wrongly accused.

8.7. Symbolic violence of the *Siongho*

When victims of accusation escape symbolic violence by moving to a new environment and new social order, as a shelter, they can start questioning the veracity of the *siongho* and those accusations in general. No one in the centers affirmed that the allegations made by the *siongho* rituals were true.

The symbolic violence carried by the ritual of the *siongho* is evident. The *siongho* is the symbolic instrument of male domination (since the *siongho* is only transported by men), and it imposes shreds of evidence on all the members of society. Without question, the accusers and the accused accept the verdict of the *siongho* with a form of fatalism for the victims and their families, given that they have minimal chances to oppose the judgment, to defend themselves, or to avoid the execution of the sentence of exclusion immediately following the accusation.

Are all the carriers of the *siongho* genuinely convinced that the dead body is conducting the ritual? For some people, there is no doubt that the corpse that drives the procession. It could be possible that, unconsciously, the carriers lead the *siongho* to hit (hence accuse) a specific person. There are always four men who carry the body, similarly to how there are multiple persons to execute a death penalty, each has a specific role, yet they know what is going to happen. Comparably, the carriers of the *siongho* know the consequences of appointing someone, and it is also a final and indisputable verdict. Generally, the man who coordinates the ritual will not carry out the *siongho*. The carriers are just the "followers" and the executors of the sentence.

Once the *siongho* has designated one or more culprits, the whole population will apply the sentence of exclusion. Everybody has to show allegiance to the verdict of the ritual. The craze of the community carries fear, but the fear of what? The fear of being accused of witchcraft or the fear of witchcraft itself? The fear of the powerful men who have the destiny of older vulnerable women in their hands? The fear of an uncertain future? The frustration of poverty and helplessness? The craze of the population who are hatefully chasing an older woman from their village is, in fact, a combination of various fears and frustrations.

8.8. Analysis of the Pilimpikou case

The case of Pilimpikou is an extreme example of the social exclusion of alleged witches. It is an exceptional and unique event, but nothing is preventing it from happening again. Pilimpikou is a distinctive location because of the myths that surround the place and its history, but also because of other factors that were significant in the development of the witch-craze.

Pilimpikou struggles with economic and geographic issues. The town is entirely isolated. During the rainy season, it is inaccessible; therefore, people have limited access to health care facilities, maternity for women, or schools for kids. Big electric pylons cross the region and yet, the village has no electricity and no running water. The destitution of the area is flagrant. Furthermore, with the reputation of the town, there are few development programs planned there.

The witch-craze that occurred in Pilimpikou is a conjunction of the high level of poverty, the frustration of the young population who have no education and little hope in their future, and the relentless beliefs in witchcraft by the people. The town of Pilimpikou suffers from exclusion itself.

Despite the strong beliefs in witchcraft and other myths in Pilimpikou, this phenomenon highlights the transformations of the Mossi society. Young people are looking for ways to assert themselves while showing respect for traditions. They are confronting and opposing the traditional hierarchy. Unfortunately, the situation has become out of control. It has become a way to get revenge. Instead of cleaning up the village from its "bad influences," the witch hunt has boosted the region's bad reputation and reinforced Pilimpikou's image of a strange and dangerous place.

The *naaba* of Pilimpikou assures that the town has become safer since the witch-craze episode because people know that if they venture into these practices, they will be chased out, but the events have left some scares. It created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the village. It is difficult to measure and grasp the role that the *naaba* played during the Pilimpikou witch-craze. It would be difficult for him to admit, as a chief, that he had no control over the situation.

A few days before my departure from Burkina Faso, I was able to meet with the *naaba* of Pilimpikou again, but in Ouagadougou this time. His daughter served as a translator; I met with him and two of his brothers. I realized that the *naaba* somewhat changed his mind about me and showed much more trust. He told me that I could come back to Pilimpikou, and he would ask everyone in the village to welcome me and help me with my research. I wish I had the time to go back, and hopefully, I will be able to do it one day. During that second meeting, I learned that the *naaba* and his brothers each had just one wife. Even though he believes in witchcraft, he is also open to change and wants the best for the people of Pilimpikou; "our wish is that people give up witchcraft, but we do not know if it will disappear." He agreed that education is an essential aspect of development; his daughter was a college student. The *naaba* of Pilimpikou reiterated his request; he wished I could be their emissary and spread the word that Pilimpikou needs roads and facilities to develop and prosper. He is eager to change the image of Pilimpikou so that people would not be afraid of the town, and for interactions and business to finally develop.

CHAPTER 9: SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF ALLEGED WITCHES

L'âge avait affaibli mes yeux, mais par l'écoute en éveil, j'ai entendu leurs pas, bruissant comme de légers froissements de feuilles mortes. Car il y avait alors plus de soixante-cinq années que j'étais venue à la vie. Mon corps et mon âme de toutes ces épreuves étaient marqués et lassés. J'étais la vieille dame qu'ils ne désiraient plus à leurs côtés. Comme le poussin perdu, livré au chat, j'étais sans soutien, livrée aux hargnes de la calomnie, aux griffures du mensonge qui dépérissent l'impétuosité de l'esprit. Le jour où je perdis le dernier des miens, je devins pour eux « la sorcière » (Kiba 2005: 10).

(Age had weakened my eyes, but by listening, I could hear their footsteps, rustling like the slight crackle of dead leaves. For it was then more than sixty-five years since I had come to life. My body and soul were marked and tired of all this hardship. I was the old woman whom they no longer desired by their side. Like the lost chick given to the cat, I was without support, subjected to the slander of calumny, to the injuries of lies that ruin the impetuosity of the spirit. The day I lost the last of my relatives, I became for them "the witch").

Excluding older women from their villages because of witchcraft accusation is a severe form of oppression and is perceived as such by their victims according to their stories. Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon that mostly affects vulnerable women, involves stigmatization, and have long-lasting adverse effects. It is an extreme form of symbolic violence intended to control women and to prevent them from transgressing Mossi social norms.

9.1. Multiple social exclusions and stigmatization

Women accused of witchcraft (WAoW) undergo multiple exclusions, which all resulted from the first accusation. Once women are accused of witchcraft and banished from their village, many of them will also be rejected from their native communities when they seek refuge within their own family. The reason for that second exclusion might vary from the fear of the villagers

of letting a "witch" live among them, the shame of the parents because of the accusation, or the fact that a married daughter is not supposed to come back to her family where there is no room for her. Poko, explained, "When you are away, and when misfortune happens, you come to take refuge in your family, but if it is in your own family that you are accused, it hurts a lot. Where can you go?" Zongo also described her second exclusion, "After being excluded, I stayed five years in the [native] village and my son left for Cote d'Ivoire. After five years, a child, whom I had never seen, became sick. The child died, and they came to say that it is me, and they chased me away." Similarly, Zeta explained, "When I was chased out, I went to my parents' house, but since they are in the same village, they said they could not keep me there." Many women had the same difficulties in being accepted in their paternal families after being accused of witchcraft in their husband's villages. Kikou further justified her rejection from the native family, "After the death of a child in the neighborhood of the village where I was, I have been found guilty. I left the village to go to my home village, where my father still lived. According to my father, a woman driven away by her husband should not return to her parents' home in order to see her father die."

Witchcraft accusations usually generate stigmatization. For some of the women in shelters, rumors have preceded their indictments, but most of them have were accused without being first stigmatized. Stigmatization comes after the accusation, and given the short lapse of time between the condemnation and the exclusion, stigmatization is more evident after the first eviction. For instance, after being chased from their villages, women are also rejected by their native communities because of the stigmatization. Fati explained, "I had already been suspected of witchcraft in my husband's village, the rumor also broke out in my own village." Once a

witch, always a witch. When women have been accused of witchcraft, they will carry the infamy for the rest of their lives. There is nothing to erase the condemnation or to absolve them.

When these women finally reach Ouagadougou and find a shelter, they are still excluded from society and stigmatized. Even though the centers are safe, they have enough to eat and access to health care (which they may not have if they were still in their villages), the shelters still isolate them from society. On the other hand, women who have been able to relocate to houses in non-loti neighborhoods are also segregated, but their living conditions are more complicated. Women living in shelters are free to go out during the day, and the local population can also enter the place to visit women, but women in the centers are further stigmatized because they all share the same fate.

9.2. Presumption of innocence or guilt?

When conducting research on witchcraft accusations, and regardless of the researcher's beliefs, the question of innocence inevitably arises. Did any of these women commit something terrible that could have triggered their accusations? Whereas the prospect of killing someone by eating his or her soul seems very abstract, the innocence of these women remains questioned nonetheless. Interviews with several informants from various backgrounds regarding the guiltiness of the women produced results that suddenly complicated the analysis.

For the chief of Pilimpikou, it is evident that all of the women are guilty, which he believes is why they have not found any other place to stay than in the shelters. For him, the *siongho* (see chapter 8) cannot lie; it is an old practice that has always existed, and it is an efficient, reliable, and truthful way of proving witchcraft. According to the chief:

> When they leave here [Pilimpikou], they arrive first at Boussé, but they do not stop there because they are afraid of Finglan [where they could ask the fetish to prove their

innocence]. They could go there [Fingla], but they prefer to continue to Ouaga [Ouagadougou]. Women know where these special areas are [like Fingla], but they avoid them to go to Ouaga because they are not innocent.

When I asked another informant from Pilimpikou if a woman can kill her own child by witchcraft [as it is the case for a woman in the shelter], he explained that "a person can reach such a level of witchcraft that can make her strong enough to kill her own child."

According to Laarle Naaba Tigre, "when you really want to find out who are the real soul-eaters and who are victims of jealousy and meanness, you will see that it's maybe 15 percent of real witches and 85 percent of people falsely accused. I believe in that." I have used these approximate figures later to ask the same question to other informants, and many would agree on them.

Who are these 15 percent of women who might be guilty of witchcraft? What have they done? During an interview with a priest in Téma Bokin, he explained that some women had come to confess to him having done witchcraft, but the priest could not say more because of the seal of the confession. He was convinced of their guilt, but it concerned only a very small number of the women living at the Téma Bokin shelter, where I have not conducted extensive research. However, there is evidence that the experiences of the women at the Téma Bokin shelter are about the same as those of women in other locations.

9.2.1. Interview with a victim of witchcraft

I had the opportunity to interview a woman whose husband has been killed by a "witch." One day, a woman, Ada[1], who knew of my current research, came to see me and told me that I had to listen to the story of her friend, Bila, who had been a victim of witchcraft. So Ada and Bila came to my house, and we sat, had some drinks, and the conversation quickly turned to the sensitive subject. I must say that I was surprised that Bila would agree to talk about witchcraft

with such ease. Later, I realized that once you have been able to win the trust of your

interlocutors by showing them that you are not judging or doubting them, they are eager to talk

about any subject.

Bila, who is a 40-year-old woman with three children, told me her personal story. When

Bila's husband died two years ago, Bila was convinced that it was her husband's cousin, Teka[1],

who killed him. (The kinship is not completely clear as is usually the case because she also said

that the woman who killed her husband was the wife of her husband's grandfather). According to

Bila, the woman had killed eight persons. Teka was making dolo (a traditional beer made with

sprouted red millet), and in the dolo, she was adding hair to cast spells. The first victim was

Bila's husband. After that, she killed the co-wife and her own mother. Teka even took the life of

the child of her last daughter. The latest victim began to have severe pain on the side of his

abdomen. However, doctors at the hospital could not find the origin of his ache, so the man was

brought back to the village. At his arrival, the victim said: "Teka, what have I done to you that

you want to kill me?" He kept asking that same question over and over. When one of the

victim's colleagues saw the sick man, he was worried. He decided to bring the sick man to a

village near Koudougou to consult a traditional healer. When the healer saw the patient, he said

that it must be someone from the family who caused his illness. The healer gave a potion to find

the culprit in the community. They left the patient at the healer's house and returned to the

village. When they arrived, Teka inquired about the patient's health. She said that there had been

a lot of people who have died in the family. "She [Teka] acted as if she were innocent," said

Bila. Teka asked to accompany the two men to the healer's house in Koudougou. When they all

arrived, the healer put the potion in a calabash and asked all the relatives of the patient to

approach. Everyone drank the mixture, but when Teka's turn came, she had a strong reaction, and

she started jumping and undressing until she was completely naked. She began to call the names of the people she had killed to ask forgiveness, including the one who was sick. According to Bila, Teka took the souls of these dead people and put them in the hollow of a tree. The chief of the witches (a man) took then these souls and transferred them into animals. These animals were taken to the Cote d'Ivoire, where they were slaughtered, causing the death of the person whose soul was stolen. There was more than one witch who committed these crimes planned by their leader in Koudougou, but Teka did not give the name of the leader nor that of her accomplices.

The sick man eventually died. Teka was beaten and attached to a chair. The men of the village wanted to wait until after the burial of the deceased man to decide Teka's fate. Meantime, Teka's brother came and freed her. She immediately ran away and found refuge at Delwendé. If Teka had not been untied, Bila believed they would have done something to annihilate her power and prevent her from harming.

Yet, according to Bila, she did not stop doing witchcraft once she was in the shelter. Bila is convinced that Teka sent an old woman during the funeral of a man from the village in order to "catch some souls." The older woman claimed to have come for condolences. An older man saw her sitting on a suspicious bucket and asked her what was inside. The old lady said nothing, but the older man was not fooled. Another man from the family of the deceased came to ask what was going on, but the older man did not want to tell him. The man then took a stick to hit the older woman and hurt her forehead. The older man opened the bucket, which was full of lizards, geckos, and other small animals that ran through the legs of the people present for the funeral. Everyone started shouting; she was planning to kill people. Consequently, the entire village chased the older woman away.

I met with Teka in the shelter, but I was never able to interview her because she was always very reticent and elusive, and she consistently rejected me despite all my efforts to obtain her trust. However, I accessed the story she gave to the manager of the center when she arrived. Teka is around 60 years old. She has six children and is a widow. Here is her story,

> I was in Cote d'Ivoire with my husband, and when he retired, we came back to the country. In the meantime, he went back to Cote d'Ivoire to collect his pension, so he stayed there for five years without returning. Then he fell ill and died. I went back to the village with my children. After the death of a child in the family, they chased me away, and I went to my parents' home, where I lived quietly. In June, the wife of an uncle died. A few days later, one of my cousins fell ill. That's how my brothers brought me to someone who prays, and he said I was the one who wanted to kill the child. They gathered around me to pray. In the meantime, they began to say that the Holy Spirit revealed that I was the culprit. For a week, I did not eat or drink. I was only beaten. So my brothers thought that if the child dies, they will kill me. Not knowing what to do, I fled to come to Ouagadougou. I did not even have clothes on me anymore. I was dispossessed of everything. It's a couple who gave me an outfit that I am wearing to save me. I had never been to Ouagadougou, but I knew about the shelter, I found it, and when I arrived, I asked if I could stay there.

If both stories are somewhat different, they also have many similar details. These two stories highlight the process of witchcraft accusations from different perspectives. It emphasizes the degree of hatred involved in an indictment and how difficult it seems for women to be exculpated or forgiven.

Based on Bila's story, the alleged witch used food to poison her victims. It might then be plausible that some women may have used poison either to hurt or to kill someone. As we have seen in chapter 6, the truth-potion can be extremely harmful and lethal; therefore, it is evident that people have knowledge and access to such potent concoction. However, from a Westerner's perspective, poisoning is not witchcraft but a crime. One of my informants said, "they should be happy to be alive and live in the shelters where they have everything they need." But without autopsies, the reason behind the deaths will almost always remain unknown. Even when the

causes are known, such as an accident or an illness, women are still accused of having provoked these casualties.

As expected, none of the women confessed to any wrong actions during the interviews. However, many women have claimed their innocence and gave explanations about the real reasons of their accusations:

> The reason for it is revenge… It's a kind of revenge and jealousy because my parents also accused a woman of witchcraft in their family. I do not even know the child who died there. I had to save my life... It starts with rumors, and people say you are not a good person. The people of the village are not nice. When they see that everything is fine for you, you have healthy children, and you cultivate well they are jealous... I am not even able to kill a single chicken, let alone a child…I cannot prevent my neighbors from being sick or dying! This is the natural cycle of life... When someone accuses you of witchcraft, it is perhaps the person who accuses who is a witch. If we were really witches, wouldn't we be killing each other?

Even in shelters, women sometimes question the "reality" of witchcraft. "I had heard about it [accusations of witchcraft] many times. However, women could be accused of witchcraft and not be excluded. Even here [in the shelter], I heard that some are witches, but there is no evidence."

Many people I have interviewed have said that the real witches, often men, are never caught. When I asked women if real witches are men, they would often agree: "Yes, it's true. When men are accused, they are not excluded. One day my husband told me that the chief himself was accused of killing two people. And he was not excluded, and it is not normal." Yet the women explained, "even for men we cannot know if they are real witches…For me, it is not women who are witches. We cannot be sure that a person is a witch. It is complicated." Men have a higher status in their community and have more power. Their social positions protect them from being excluded from their villages even though they are suspected of witchcraft. However, some men are also indicted are expelled. More research is necessary to compare and contrast gender differences in witchcraft allegations.

Even though most of the women I interviewed claimed their innocence, they still believe

that witchcraft exists, but that they can find ways to prevent witchcraft. "When you accuse

someone of witchcraft, you can make her drink a potion, so she does not backslide. If the person

drinks the potion, she cannot kill because if the person tries to kill, it is she who will die." When

asked why they would not give that potion to all alleged witches, women said, "most of the time

it is men who are given the potion. They give him the potion, and he can stay. For women, there

is never clemency. They are banished."

Other stories become more complicated, Kokobo recounted:

My oldest son had no children. I went to ask the masks (fetishes) to help him, and four
years later, he had a wife and children. It happened that one of his children died, and he
accused me. Yet he did not repay the debt of the sacrifice, which consists of a dog and
dolo. They carried the siongho, and it hit my house. But the mask people said that it is not
witchcraft, but that the fate of the children was related to my request.

Women were also accused because they had gone outside at night, something only

witches are known to do. "One night, when I went to get grasshoppers for the medicine for my

foot that was hurting, I was surprised by a resident of the village who claimed that I had gone out

to catch a child's soul. Because of that, I have been accused of soul-eating and driven out of the

village." Another woman said, "one night, I lit a torch, and my brother's wife came out to find

me, and she told her husband to chase me that I am a witch."

Being wrongly accused of witchcraft brings some doubt about their own beliefs on

witchcraft, but not enough to entirely deny its existence. They do realize that it is difficult to

prove its existence. They also doubt the idea of being able to "eat the soul of anyone." It triggers

questions about the metaphor of soul-eating. The act of eating a soul reflects the importance

given to the spirit and the soul, the invisible part of an individual. When someone is about to

harm someone else, it is his or her soul that he or she has to catch; in other words, he or she will

capture the essence of that person. Women question the significance of the act. "How is it possible to say that human beings eat one another? That is not possible. You can go to a pound to fish and eat the fish, or a fish can eat another fish, but between humans, how is it possible?" They do not see the symbolism behind the metaphor. Killing someone by eating their soul is perhaps the worst way to die because, without a soul, that person may not be able to join their ancestors in the afterlife.

If it is the case, we may wonder why women would use any form of witchcraft to harm someone else. The same explanations behind accusations may apply. For example, social, economic, and psychological factors can all trigger jealousy and hatred. Therefore, understanding all these factors is essential in the fight against both witchcraft and witchcraft accusations.

9.3. Excluding older women: a cultural paradox

According to the last census (2006), the population over 65 years old represents 3.8 percent of the total population in Burkina, with twenty percent more males than females in this category. With an average age of 70 years old, women in shelters have far exceeded average life expectancy for women (60 years old) and can be considered among the oldest population. In a culture that worships the elders, accusing and excluding older women is a contradiction to the Mossi tradition. During my prior research in Burkina Faso in 2013, a Burkinabe woman working in an orphanage told me that during her visit to France, she was shocked by one thing: hospices for the elderly. "How can you [French people] abandon your parents like that!" she said. In Burkina Faso, there are no nursing homes or hospices. As underlined by Ouédraogo,

> The living conditions in Africa were so hard, given a rather hostile environment (diseases, epidemics, natural disasters, wild and venomous animals, etc.) that life expectancy was very low. Under these conditions, aging in Africa held merit and therefore gave respect and consideration, all the more so as knowledge was transmitted

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orally. This explains why only the elderly, in many cultures of Burkina Faso, are entitled to the funeral festivities after their death. In African cultures (stories, legends, myths, etc.), the elderly are considered as beings enjoying the protection of the ancestors. Before independence, the elderly in Burkina and the countries of the sub-region (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Guinea, etc.) had high authority and were venerated, given the social structure based on gerontocracy (Ouédraogo 2006 translated by the author).

However, not all elderly receive the respect and reverence that is expected in the Mossi tradition. Some older people are confined to their houses without receiving visits because people fear that they exchange their deaths for the lives of others (Ouédraogo 2006). As I have been warned, "You should never visit an old person in the morning because she or he might take years off your life if you are a young person." Among the causes of exclusion of the elderly, poverty is the most common, followed by witchcraft accusation and the diseases and disabilities (Ouédraogo 2006). These different causes also overlap. Social exclusion is higher in areas of extreme poverty, as is the case in the Mossi Plateau. Witchcraft represents 89.9 percent of the causes of exclusion of older women. Yet the population would recognize that the rejection of the elderly is regretful; 77.5 percent of the respondents in Ouédraogo's research disapprove of exclusion (2006). The survey also reveals that 90.4 percent attest that there is some discrimination in social exclusion. Older women experience more exclusion than older men. 57.6 percent of the people accused of witchcraft believe that their age is probably one cause of the fate reserved for them by their communities (Ouédraogo 2006). The question was not addressed in the research, and when asked about the origins of accusations, women never mentioned their age as a reason for their indictment.

According to Ouédraogo (2006), banished people are no longer allowed to return to their community. At the same time, there is a breakdown of all social links with the victim who is considered socially dead by the community. No one should see her, talk to her, or give her any

assistance during her lifetime. If the victim dies, no member of the community is allowed to attend the burial or funeral. Shelters, unwittingly, have become auspices or retirement homes for these older women.

Nothing in these women's childhoods has presaged the fate that will await them at the crepuscular phase of their lives. All the women interviewed about their childhood had happy memories: "I had a happy childhood and a happy life until problems arrived…My childhood was happy. We had fun and danced. We were all Muslim in the village, so during Ramadan, I was partying every night." Even though their lives were not easy, they were still satisfied. "Before, even without money, I got married. And everything was fine. These days we had only one *pagne* [piece of fabric] we were wearing. When we had a child, we cut a little piece of that loincloth to wrap and put the child on the back." During focus groups, women were reminiscent of the "good old times." "It was a wonderful time when we were young girls and married. The market days were joyful; we drank dolo at will from one place to another, and we braided our hair. We would leave in the morning and return at dusk."

All these women expected to have a peaceful and serene old age as they all worked hard and had many children. "When you give birth to children, these children are supposed to take care of you!" Women of the shelters often express their wishes to be able to share their food with their family and particularly with their grandchildren. "[here] I have enough to eat, and I could share with my grandchildren. Here when I want something, I have to get up while in the village I could send someone to pick it up for me... I would like to be reintegrated in the village with my son, so my daughter-in-law can take care of me, and my grandchildren can give me water." Women never complain in the shelter of having to do chores, but yet they realize that if they were in their village living the "normal" life of older women as their mothers and grandmothers

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did, they would be surrounded by children and enjoy some kind of retirement they deserved. Yet instead of that, they have to live separated from their families and banished by the society, and live in a place where they are left to die; in French, we would call it a *mouroir*, a word carrying many connotations including the idea of despair, loneliness, and abandonment. I was taken aback by the silence in the shelters in Ouagadougou. In contrast, I had previously experienced the lively atmosphere of villages where one could always hear people laughing and talking, the sound of music emanating from place to place, and children playing.

The exclusion of WAoW appears as an abnormal phenomenon in the Mossi tradition; however, it can also be considered as a symbolic force of normalization. Bourdieu explains that "every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness (1977:164)."

By accusing older women of witchcraft and excluding them from their villages, the Mossi society condemns these women to a life sentence, one that is very difficult to endure.

9.4. Lived experience of women accused of witchcraft

According to Desjarlais, "the concept of experience is one of the most problematic in contemporary anthropology, with the problem relating - at least in part - to the rhetorical and analytic needs it serves" (1994:886). Yet, without such experiential approaches, cultural analysis remains superficial.

The trauma and the consequences of a witchcraft accusation followed by exclusion from the village are severe and significant. Yet when first visiting the women at their shelter, even though their fate and their fragile appearance would touch you, women may not show or display

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emotions unless you start to engage in more in-depth conversation. The accusation itself triggers many emotions starting by fear:

> I was really panicked. The fear was great, and I was shaking. First, the body hits [*siongho* ritual] the co-wife of the mother of the deceased child who hanged herself in the bush. We were three women that day. The second escaped into the bush. I was left alone, and after they came to tell me to leave, they did not want to find out the truth. Since the others were no longer there, I had to leave. I went to my parents' home, but they refused to keep me because their aunt was also banished, and the family refused to take her. If they keep me, the ancestors will punish them.

Expressing emotions with words is not always easy for these women, but when asked about their feelings at the time of their accusations, most of them would say that it caused deep *douleur* (pain, sorrow, grief) and they still could feel that pain years after the events:

> The problem is not shame but pain…It's like a fire in my heart. When I was in the village, I did not always dress nicely, but I was happy. Here I have clothes, but I am not happy. My heart is hurt; there is a fire that burns. It's pain…I feel pain and shame…It hurts a lot…I feel a deep injustice.

These women have endured all sorts of pain during their lives: The pain of having left their children and not being able to see them, the pain of being ostracized and hated by all the people of the village with whom they have lived most of their life, the double pain of being also denied the right to go back to the village where they were born and being once more accused in that village, the pain of not being able to have "decent" funerals once they will die, the pain of seeing women with whom they have shared their fate dying in the shelters, and physical pain in their body from the hard work they have done all their life.

9.4.1. A lifelong grievance

According to Mauro, "through the diversity of rituals, death results from a specifically African vision, in which it is de-dramatized and perceived as the logical expiry of the path of biology" (2001: 135). Death is part of the daily life of Burkinabe, a part of their habitus. During my 16 months of fieldwork, I saw more people die than I had in my entire life. When death

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becomes common, does grievance become common too? Does the pain decrease, or is it part of

the incredible resilience of the Burkinabe? Seventy percent of the women in shelters are widows.

Nevertheless, when they talked about widowhood, women mostly spoke about the problem of

losing social support with the death of their husbands. However, we should not underestimate the

grief of these women based on the number of losses of close people they have had to bear. One

woman talked about the sadness caused by the death of her twin brother:

> When I was born, I had a twin brother who came first, so he was the oldest. But he could
> not walk. I walked before him. It was at the death of our mother that he was able to walk.
> At the time of birth, my mother had gone to pound the millet when she went into labor.
> My brother came out first, then I came, and I fall in a mortar that's why I was called
> Kamanga (mortar). After, I had a little brother. My mum was in the bush when she went
> into labor, and he was born and put in a basket, so his name is Weoogo (bush). My twin
> brother died later after I arrived at the shelter. It is his sons who come to visit me. But
> when I see him, I cry because he reminds me of my brother.

As we have seen in chapter 6, 84 percent of the women in shelters have lost children. When

asked about the number of children that had died, some women were not even sure how many;

one woman told me "a lot of them, I do not remember." It is difficult to imagine, from our

Western perspective, not remembering the death of a child even as a stillborn. Yet, in the

research conducted by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1985) in a Brazilian shantytown, the author

explores "maternal detachment and indifference toward infants and babies judged too weak or

too vulnerable to survive the pernicious conditions of a shantytown life….maternal thinking and

practices are socially produced rather than determined by psychobiological script of innate or

universal emotions…" (292).

To some extent, Burkinabe women are fighting the same battle, or *luta* as it was called in

Scheper-Hughes article; they live in a poor and deprived environment and do not always have

access to health care. However, the cultural background made it slightly different. During my

first research in a Burkinabe orphanage, I came across the case of a child left in the bush; that

child had an intellectual disability. The reasons why the child had been abandoned are unknown. It is not sure whether the disability was the cause of the child's abandonment or whether the disability resulted from the time the child stayed alone in the bush without food and water.

Another story also revealed cultural practices. After a young woman gave birth to a child considered to be the result of an incestuous relationship with a young man from the same village, the baby was entrusted to her grandfather, who was supposed to "take care" of her hence "eliminate the fault." The grandfather could not resign himself to kill that baby and decided to leave her at an orphanage. The mother believed that her child was dead, and no one mentioned that baby every again. However, the baby was adopted by a European family, and once an adult, she came back to find her mother. It was a shock for the mother to learn that her baby was still alive. What this story reveals is that women do not always decide the fate of their babies even though the child might be in good health.

In the Mossi tradition, children who die before being married will not receive traditional funerals because it is believed that they will come back and that they will be born to another woman (Dolobson 1932). They believe in the reincarnation of babies. Similarly, Bazie gives the example of the *Tampouré*, the belief that a dead newborn who may have been taken by genies or witches can come back and be reborn. The family will mark the baby with specific scarifications that will help to recognize her when she will be born again, and this will prevent the baby from being recaptured by evil spirits so that she can survive. *Tampouré* means garbage dump; the child will be taken all over the village in a box as if she was garbage so that the genies or witches will think that she has no value and will not capture the baby again (Bazie 2011). During interviews, I realized that one of the women at the shelter was called Niama; that was not her name. My translator explained that Niama was a Dyula word that had the same significance as

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Tampouré. It turned out that Niama had some intellectual disability and did not remember where she came from and what happened to her. She spoke a mix of Mooré and Dyula languages. Furthermore, she had scarifications that could be interpreted like the one done on *Tampoure* children. That anecdote indicates that either Tampouré belief still exists or the name is used to designate persons whose origins are unknown.

In addition, the value of a baby might not be the same depending on its gender. Mossi society gives more importance to males than females who are considered as strangers. Additionally, a woman's survival later in life may depend on her grown-up sons because they are supposed to take care of their older mother later. Therefore, male babies are essential for women, and this is further illustrated by the fact that some women in shelters declared that they had no children because they had no sons, and thus even if they had daughters, but because these daughters were married, they had left the village. A woman's status will also depend on the number of her children after being married. It is even more recurrent in polygamist households where women compete for their situation. This competition is emphasized by the many stories of women accused of witchcraft after the death of a co-wife's child. Interestingly, it is accepted that a child may leave its parents to go to live with other members of the family who may be able to offer more opportunities to the child, such as school. At times, a child may live with an older family member just to keep them company, as was the case of a woman who left the shelter to live independently in a *non-loti* neighborhood with her granddaughter. Once a child is weaned, she joins the multitude of children of the extended family and village.

These few examples illustrate the assumption that the death of a baby has various emotional and social consequences. Accusations of witchcraft resulting from the loss of a child, as it is the case for most of the women in the shelters, contradict the theory of indifference of

mothers after the death of a child. Yet, after asking some of the women at the shelters if anyone

had been accused of witchcraft after the death of their children, they all responded that it did not

happen. So why, in some cases, does the death of a child cause such turmoil that someone is

going to be accused of witchcraft and banished? Do children have different values other than the

ones related to their gender? Delobsom's two categories of children can explain it: the ordinary

child may have an ordinary death, whereas the death of a "requested" (desired) child cannot be

normal. Parents who have difficulties having children may consult a traditional healer who will

perform sacrifices and other rituals to help them get children. The story that has previously been

used can also illustrate that assumption:

> My oldest son had no children. I went to ask the masks (fetishes) to help him, and four
> years later, he had a wife and children. It happened that one of his children died, and he
> accused me. Yet he did not repay the debt of the sacrifice, which consists of a dog and
> dolo. They carried the *siongho,* and it hit my house. But the masks people said that it is
> not witchcraft but that the fate of the children was related to my request.

We may also question why, since it is the family of the deceased that is going to instigate the

accusation, the death of a child triggers such reactions. It suggests that death has caused

profound grieving, and, in the process, the griever is in search of the cause of the fatality that can

then result in irrational explanations. In other cases, the death of a child might be an opportunity

to get rid of an unwanted person among the relatives and though for various reasons (see chapter

6).

The women at the shelters were anxious about the fate of their younger children who

were left behind. They were very concerned about their well-being, and some women cried when

we brought up the topic. Therefore, the pain caused by a witchcraft accusation varies, and it is

essential to consider which aspect of exclusion is the most excruciating: "Death is something

natural and has always existed, but widows can look after their children and raise them properly.

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But if we are banished, the children are left to fend for themselves. Nobody will take care of our children." Many women expressed the pain and the suffering of having had to abandon their children. Many of them have not seen their children since they have been excluded.

The detachment and indifference women seem to display in circumstances where Westerners would expect deep and violent emotions, are the forced behaviors impose on them by their habitus. The symbolic violence exerted on them forces them to repress their feelings, and what may look like indifference is, in fact, repressed emotions that can additionally affect them and perhaps explain the feelings of frustration and jealousy that can result.

9.5. Trauma caused by accusations and exclusions

As underlined by Houllé et al. (2017), there is "very strong interpersonal variability of psychological and psychiatric consequences after a trauma" (2017:121), and the cultural dimension of risk related to post-traumatic stress disorder has not been adequately taken into consideration:

> However, dominant medical and psychopathological models assume that trauma is a universal human experience, due to the presence of traumatic stressors involving the mobilization of the emotive brain center patterns that imply the existence of a psychic universality (2017: 122 translated by the author).

There are cultural and social inequalities between individuals facing traumatic shock that must be taken into account.

For instance, in Africa, nightmares following the murder of a related individual would not be systematically felt like an overwhelming experience. Indeed, in the case where the individual would have witnessed the crime, the nightmare would be positively perceived as a way to enter in contact with the deceased (Houllé 2017). According to Houllé et al., it is essential

to understand the meaning of trauma from a phenomenological perspective. The experience becomes traumatic because of the absence of significance for the subject who faces an unutterable shock in a given socio-cultural context and at a particular moment in his life:

> Because the subject is marked by a history, a genealogy, haunted by an imaginary social body and symbolic… which confers on it an identity through which the duality of the singular and the collective is replayed continuously. To speak of a socialized psyche does not mean, of course, that the mechanisms that govern the mind and social functioning are the same, but that there are intricacies between the psychological and the social dimensions…For this reason, experience may have a traumatic effect with the loss of the internal cultural framework from which the external reality has been decoded. However, this cultural framework can be the object of destructive acts designed to destroy the individual or even the whole of a community. (Houllé et al. 2017: 124-125 translated by the author)

In any case, an accusation of witchcraft will cause trauma to the victim. Being accused of witchcraft is an indelible mark that women have to carry all their life. Even if they may have the chance to be reinserted in their village, they will still support the stigma of that infamy and would be afraid of being accused again: "I want so much to go back and live with my children, but I am so afraid of being accused again! That would be dreadful."

The psychological consequences of the trauma relating to an accusation can be measured by the stories and the words women use to describe it. Yet women would not necessarily see the psychiatric nurse. It is not in their culture; many of the women do not understand the idea of psychology. I have conversed with women who told me that it was challenging for them to talk about their accusations because it brings them a lot of bad memories and makes them cry. One of them explained, "you can see that during the day we talk, and we laugh, but at night I cannot sleep, and I'm crying." Another one said, "it's not easy, at night I wake up and I cannot go back to sleep. I think of my children, they are still very young, my last one is only two years old, and some days I do not have the strength to do anything." All women expressed grief and pain, "When I left the village, I thought about suicide and did not think I could reach the city. I

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thought about dying, but as people lied about me, I figured I must stay alive for the truth to come out."

> Sana told me an unfortunate story that emphasizes the trauma lived by these women:
>
> A woman whose grandson had an accident and died was accused of witchcraft and expelled from her village. She arrived at the center. Every day the old woman lamented and refused to eat, and she eventually died. Her son came to take her corpse to bury her.

I have observed another case of the trauma caused by an accusation during the projection of a documentary made by a Burkinabe artist at the shelter Cour de Solidarité. I met the artist who gave me the video to show it to the women at the shelter. In the documentary, the artist had fictionally reenacted the ritual of the *siongho* (the carrying of the dead person to debunk a witch). When watching the video, two women shouted when they saw the scene. I did not expect such a strong reaction from them, but it clearly emphasizes how traumatic the ritual was for these women.

Women are also concerned about their own death. It must be emphasized that living surrounded exclusively by older people gives rise to morbid thoughts among women, and it reinforces the idea of the centers as hospices. Despite the rate of conversion Christianity, death in the shelters can be lived with anguish because residents are aware that their deaths will not give rise to the pomp of traditional funerals. Excluded during their lifetime, the elderly cannot hope to integrate into the pantheon of the dead of the village.

From a Western perspective, it is difficult to measure the degree to which an accusation of witchcraft can cause humiliation. Ouédraogo's survey shows that 100 percent of accused women have suffered humiliation, insults, and dishonor in various forms because of the accusation and the attitude of some members of the community (2006). Humiliation might not only concern the victim of the accusation but additionally her family as we can see below.

With my translator, we realized how difficult it was for these women to talk about their traumatic experiences of their accusations of witchcraft and their social exclusion. Given all the consequences of an allegation that is designed to destroy individuals (and it is very effective considering also the number of suicides committed after accusations as explained in chapter 6), we can consider these accusations among the worst form of oppression that could happen to an older woman.

9.6. Resistance or submission?

Once these women have been banished, it may help to understand the degree of agency they develop and what resistance they acquire. According to Foucault, "where there is power, there is resistance" (1978:95). Yet, Abu-Lughod (1990) warns anthropologists about the "tendency to romanticize" resistance and to overlook the reality of power; she argues that "resistance should be used as a diagnostic of power" (1990:42). Abu-Lughod (1990) proposes to invert Foucault's argument: "where there is resistance, there is power, which is less problematic and potentially more fruitful for ethnographic analysis because it enables us to move away from abstract theories of power . . ." (1990:42). Furthermore, she suggests a change in the way resistance is conceived, arguing that the *form* of resistance can provide indications of the type of power people are subjected to. She asserts that this new approach can give more information on historical changes in the structure and forms of power.

How much resistance have women been able to use to oppose to their accusers? Those who have tried to resist their fate have failed, "I complained to the police, but the people of the village did everything to not respond to the summons"; another woman explained, "I denied in vain; they told me to leave the village." Women are too fragile and vulnerable to be able to

confront all the villagers who want them gone. Yet if there is little resistance, does it indicate that

the power is so prevailing that all forms of resistance are useless? Or does the power impact only

individuals who may not be able to resist and have learned helplessness?

Contrary to some feminist theorists like Lauretis, who suggests that "the subject actively

chooses dislocation and the experience of marginalization." (Mahoney and Yngvesson 1992:48)

Mahoney and Yngvesson believe that "given identities are not dislodged so easily…it does not

explain how it is that some actors are able to manipulate their location in the landscape of

marginal identities, whereas others cling tenaciously to the security of those that are given"

(1992:48). After having lived most of their lives in communities where their identities have been

imposed on them, WAoW's references suddenly become blurred because of such a powerful

accusation made by powerful actors. When the older men of the village make a decision, there is

nothing women can do:

> It was at the death of my husband's little brother that I was expelled from the village a
> year ago. I first fled, and one of my children found me in the bush. He went to talk to the
> old people before I could go back to my house, but they refused that I set foot in the
> village. I was then welcomed by a brother who unfortunately died. I lived with one of his
> sons, and one day a village elder told me to leave that I am a witch. He informed the
> whole village, and the people got up against me and wanted to kill me.

It is almost impossible to oppose the Mossi hierarchy.

Nonetheless, an important question arises: have the accused women tried to oppose that

hierarchy, and refused to conform to the rules before their accusation? That would explain why

they have been out-cast. Based on the events that happened during the transfer from the

Delwendé shelter to the new location, it seems evident that some women have the capacity to

resist (Chapter 6.1.2.). A small group of women became violent toward the manager of the

shelter. For instance, during the altercation between the *naaba* of Sakoula and a woman from

Delwendé (a woman dared to address the *naaba* of Sakoula to complain and express their

discontent about the new location of the shelter), women have demonstrated that they can resist and show their discontent. Some of the women are more vindictive and stronger than we may expect, even if they will have to submit to higher hierarchy eventually. Nevertheless, the number of women who may have the force and the character to resist is minimal.

9.7. Are strong women punished?

After interacting with the women in the shelters, it became evident that women had as diverse personalities as we may find in the general population of older women in Burkina Faso. At the very first encounter, underlying personality traits already appeared; some women were shy and very polite, they would have a low voice, and would mostly talk with their eyes lowered as they have been taught. Other women were bolder; they would look right into your eyes, and they would express their indignation about their fate. Others would not want to talk at all. These differences are further evident when you observe their relationships (see section 9.9).

An important question that needs to be addressed is relative to women's behavior in their village before being accused. Have these women transgressed the Mossi social norms imposed on them and behaved in a manner that is incongruous with their habitus?

One woman arrived at the shelter with her daughters who complained that their mother always had disputes and quarrels wherever she went. She had been accused of witchcraft, and she could not go back to her village. She may have been accused of witchcraft because of her quarrelsome character. Still, it is difficult to ascertain since the principal causes of an accusation are never clearly admitted by the accusers. The manager of the shelter accepted to host the woman, but she warned her that she would not tolerate any bad behavior and disputes. During the year I spent doing my research, the woman had adopted a calm and more peaceful attitude at

the shelter where she did not have to confront the same problems and frustrations than in her village. The manager of the Cour de Solidarité was very strict with the women and maintained an overall friendly atmosphere at the shelter because she also had a great sense of humor; the women readily accepted her authority. Therefore, even women with strong personalities find ways to live in peace in the shelters. It might be their villages' environment that pushes women to be frustrated and, consequently, to engage in conflicts.

A married woman who chooses to elope with a man may also have to pay for her choice. Not all the women at the shelter had had a calm and tidy life. Among the women in the shelter, very few of them have chosen to elope and live with another man. One of them, Bani, a woman who sought refuge in one of the shelters, was forcibly married, and after four children and years of living with her husband, she left him and returned to her native village to live with another man with whom she had three more children. When she was accused of witchcraft, Bani left the town with her youngest child, who was less than a year old. Once she arrived at the shelter, the manager told her that children are not allowed to live there; she returned the child to the father. The Mossi society does not accept women who do not follow the rules. When Bani left her first husband, she also had to leave her children behind because she had no other choice; it is the price a woman has to pay if she wants to go away. Children belong to the father and the father's family, and women have no rights to them. When women become widows, and in order for them to stay with their children, many accept to follow the levirate rule and marry their brother-in-law or any other male in the family. Widows who refuse to remarry yet want to stay in the village with their children do not conform to the tradition and may then become a possible target of accusation, which was the case for two women at the shelter.

There are many reasons why a woman might be indicted. As many of the women in the shelter have underlined, jealousy is one of the major factors; choosing the man with whom they want to live and daring to rebel against tradition may cause other women in the village to be jealous. They would then take any occasion to spread the rumor of witchcraft.

Women in the shelter do not seem to realize that the jealousy of other women may be an expression of their frustrations. They also do not comprehend that other reasons may have caused their banishment; men who accuse them want to make an example out of the situation to prevent other women of the village from rebelling. The following story is an example.

> My little sister, who was "promised" to a man of my husband's village, ran away and went to seek refuge in a Protestant church to avoid a forced marriage. They said that I was the one who gave her that idea. It caused a conflict between my husband and the family of the fiancé, and they decided that they would swear on the fetishes (Tinsé) to resolve the problem. After that, people from both sides died. This is why they told me that I caused all that, and I was excluded from the village".

Since an accusation of witchcraft followed by exclusion is maybe the worst condemnation a woman may endure, it is undoubtedly an efficient warning for any woman who may consider rebelling or eloping. Women in the shelter do not quite realize how their situation is a result of the overall status of women in Mossi society because they do not have other examples to compare. When I told the women that I did not have a husband, they said that I had to find one, and they even tried to arrange something for me with a "white" man who sometimes comes to visit them. It indicates that for them, everything has to go in a specific order; as a white woman, I must be married to a white man, and my role is to reproduce; they often told me that I should have more than three children! The force of the habitus can be observed in these comments.

When talking about their husbands, women in the shelters said that all they expect from their husbands is that they take care of them. They never mentioned the fact that they loved their

husbands or that their husbands loved them. For these women, there is not such a thing as true love; none of them chose their husbands. However, they try to maintain their relationship and make the most out of their situation. It is when the husband dies that they become vulnerable. Furthermore, contrary to Bani, leaving their husbands and going back to their home village is not an option for many women because their own family will not accept a woman who has chosen to leave her husband or who was repudiated. Therefore, they do not see where they could go and how they could survive without the support of a man. They accept their fate with a sort of fatalism.

Only one woman told me that her husband beat her, she was a woman with a strong personality, but unfortunately, she passed away during the time I was there, and I could not talk further about that subject. Being beaten is not uncommon for women in Burkina Faso, and for many of them, it would not be considered as abnormal and wrong. According to a study conducted in 2016 (SIGI Burkina Faso), 37 percent of women have experienced domestic violence. However, these numbers are questionable, and further investigation should be conducted to understand and analyze women's perspectives on that subject. Since violence and symbolic violence among the Mossi is widespread, domestic violence might also be accepted as a normal aspect of women's life or a habitus that they would not consider as abnormal, therefore, and they would not report it.

9.8. Fatalism and resilience

9.8.1. Resilience

Their difficult life, the trauma of their accusation, the rejection, and their journey to reach a shelter and start a new life are extreme challenges for older women and requires strength and

an incredible degree of resilience. The concept of resilience necessitates a definition that can

satisfy the specific case of WAoW. According to Allen et al.:

> Resilience has been defined as a dynamic process of maintaining positive adaptation and effective coping strategies in the face of adversity. Although most scholars and members of the general public have an intuitive understanding of resilience, ambiguities in definition, measurement, and application contribute to scientific criticism regarding the usefulness of resilience as a theoretical construct…..One of the primary criticisms regarding literature on resilience is a lack of clarity in the definition, specifically confusion between resilience as a dynamic process and resiliency, or ego-resiliency, as an individual characteristic or trait…The most common definition of resilience is a dynamic *process* of adaptation to adversity (2011:1-2)

Furthermore, the cultural aspect of resilience among older people has not yet been extensively

examined (Yee-Melichar 2011), and the case of WAoW can reveal differences in the expression

of resilience. Research has indicated that older adults have more life experiences that help them

to cope better with adversities. However, even though resilient individuals may regain a

satisfactory level of functioning after trauma, they may not recover the same level as before the

shock (Allen et al. 2011). Other research has indicated that older adults who are resilient have a

propensity to be more satisfied with their life and health despite disease and disability. Women in

shelters never complain about their living conditions, and few of them would say that they have

health problems other than eye issues or leg pain that they attribute to their age.

9.8.1.1. Physical resilience

Women demonstrated resilience in many forms, such as physical resilience. During my

fieldwork, I saw women lying on the floor, sometimes with just a cloth to protect them from the

rough concrete. During the hot and dry season, the concrete might have brought some coolness,

but it was deplorable to see some older women who were just skin and bones lying on their

concrete deathbeds. Sometimes I had to come very close to make sure they were still alive. I

have seen women surviving in that state for weeks. Some of them eventually passed away. I have

also witnessed women rise back from their near-deaths, and even spinning cotton again. I was amazed by the resilience and the resistance of these women. And I was not alone because even the managers of the shelters were sometimes convinced that some of these women would not survive. Physiological resilience allows an individual to remain healthy despite life-threatening challenges. Several mechanisms have been identified in physiological resilience, such as the catechol-O-methyl transfuse gene that has the effect of moderating physiological and emotional stress response (Allen et al. 2011). Another mechanism, such as sleep, has also proven to have positive impacts on stress. It may explain how older women in shelters may recover from physiological issues by sleeping.

Another example of the physical resilience of these women is their journey to the shelters. After being chased out of their villages, many of the women had nowhere to go, had no money and no belongings, and were on their own. Most of them never went to a big city. They were forced to fend for themselves, whereas previously, they had always depended on their parents, their husband, or children. They continuously lived in a community. Suddenly, they are entirely alone. And yet, these older persons who have been so abruptly expelled from their daily lives have been able to find the resources to come to the shelters located at many hours from their villages and start a new life. Some of the women have walked days to reach the capital; for example, there is more than 100 km between Yako and Ouagadougou. One woman narrated her journey wandering in the bush for two months before getting to the shelter. Another woman explained:

> I escaped into the bush, and in the meantime, I found myself on the Ghanaian border. It is there that a man advised me to return to Ouaga if I don't want to die in the bush. I walked for three days until my feet were swollen, and I could not get up. I managed to get to Ouaga. That's how I found the center.

The women of the shelters are strong, and most are healthy despite living conditions that are not easy. Furthermore, physical resilience cannot be dissociated from psychological resilience, which enhances one another.

9.8.1.2. Psychological resilience

According to Oshio et al.

> Psychological resilience is, however, a complex construct that involves traits, outcomes, and processes related to recovery, and thus it has been defined differently in the context of individuals, families, organizations, societies, and cultures. (2018: 54)

Again, it is not easy to measure the influence of external factors such as social support (see below) and personal factors such as individual traits that contribute to resilience. There have been two approaches regarding resilience: ego-resilience and trait resilience.

> Ego-resiliency refers to the individual's adaptive reserve, a dynamic ability to temporarily change the reactions and perceptions to meet the situational demands of life. Ego-resiliency modifies the level of control in response to the environmental context. Ego-resilient people would reduce or increase behavioral control and expand or narrow attention to regress and progress in the service of the ego (Oshio et al. 2018:54)

Trait resilience is a set of personality characteristics that reinforce individual adaptations (Oshio et al. 2018). Researchers have used various resiliency scales to assess an individual's ability to cope with stressful life events. In the present research, none of the traditional psychological methods have been used to measure WAoW's resilience because resilience tests have to be adapted to specific cultural circumstances. However, based on observations and stories, it is possible to have an overall familiarity with the personality traits of WAoW and, consequently, their resilience skills. Furthermore, Oshio et al. research indicates that "the relationships between ego-resilience and other psycho-social factors may depend on developmental stages or age" (2018:59) and According to Milnac et al., resilience is expected among older people:

> Adapting to the losses associated with later life is an expected part of the aging process. Coping with sudden and severe trauma, by contrast, may not result in the

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same levels of resilience that have been demonstrated by bereavement
researchers, but others have argued that resilience is a common human response
to both significant loss and significant trauma (Milnac et al. 2011: 78)

It is difficult to measure the extent of the trauma caused by an accusation of witchcraft followed by banishment and to understand the coping mechanisms used by these women to overcome adversity. According to Houllé et al. (2017), we should be looking at the concept of trauma, not in terms of the severity of the event, but we should take into account the subject's ability to be resilient and the availability of defenses mechanism that may or may not be mobilized during the confrontation with a traumatic situation. As we have seen earlier, not all women accused of witchcraft displayed the same resilience because some of them committed suicide. However, the women who have made their way to the shelters have a higher level of resistance. Still, not all women in the centers have been able to overcome the shock of the accusation, and a small number of them have developed PTSD. Milnac et al. explain how PTSD and functional resilience can coincide.

In contrast, predictors of PTSD include poor social support, limited education, and
history of mental health problems… In addition to the absence of psychopathology as an
outcome measure following trauma, researchers and clinicians should also consider
functional resilience, the ability to retain day-to-day functional abilities with little
disruption. (Milnac et al. 2011: 78)

Precisely, women who have developed PTSD are still resilient and are maintaining activities like other women. Except for those who have more serious mental health problems or physical problems, most of the women are pursuing their daily chores and occupations.
We should not underestimate resilience among older people just because they are frail or vulnerable. Milnac et al. 2011 suggest that older people develop protective mechanisms that help them to reject negative information about aging (2011:83). However, WAoW are not so concerned about aging, which is instead positive since age brings respect and deference. Their

primary concern is the accusations of witchcraft, which cause humiliation and rejection, and they have developed specific mechanisms to protect their self-perceptions by questioning the reality of witchcraft and by affirming their innocence. To achieve psychological resilience, WAoW have used several kinds of skills and/or personal qualities/traits that may or may not be the same as those described in the literature.

9.8.1.3. Resilience repertoire

An interesting approach in studying resilience among WAoW would be to understand the resilience repertoire used by these women. According to Clark et al. the resilience repertoire is a way to understand the supply of "skills and resources that can be used to moderate "the bad things that happen" in the lives of older adults, to reduce or blunt the negative consequences of those events, or even in some cases to lead to positive growth and development" (2011: 53). Each woman may have a diversity of skills in their repertoire, which they can use in specific circumstances. As explained earlier, WAoW have endured life hardship, and Clark et al. propose that "there is a dimension to resilience suggesting that one's repertoire is a part of their life story or personal narrative, a theme of growing importance and relevance in gerontology generally" (2011: 53)

There are different factors that have been associated with resilience that could be applied to WAoW. According to Resnick:

> These include such things as positive interpersonal relationships, incorporating social connectedness with a willingness to extend oneself to others, strong internal resources, having an optimistic or positive affect, keeping things in perspective, setting goals and taking steps to achieve those goals, high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, determination, and spirituality which includes purpose of life, religiousness or a belief in a higher power, creativity, humor, and a sense of curiosity (2011: 200)

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However, the education of women in the Burkinabe society and the role assigned to them do not encourage girls to develop a high level of self-esteem. Furthermore, women in Burkina Faso have not been taught to be self-reliant, a characteristic found in resilient people (Allen et al. 2011:2). It is though a concept that seems central in Western societies but not as much for African women who learn early in life that they would always have someone to take care of them. It is also the case in shelters where women do not have to worry about getting food or health care; they are more "community-reliant," and they feel safe in the refuges which enhances their resilience. Because of their culture, the factors for resilience are different, and the women do not need high levels of self-esteem and self-reliance to have resilience. Nevertheless, WAoW, who live in *non-loti* neighborhoods, have learned to be independent; therefore, they have developed (or had it before) self-reliance.

Among the skills and qualities necessary to resilience described by Resnick (see above), women in shelters have a high level of self-efficacy. Women quickly find their routines in the shelters. Women who recently arrived in centers rapidly become part of the community and start activities like any other woman. Reproducing their daily activities helps them in the resilience process since these collective actions have comforting effects. Maintaining activities that are sometimes very physical such as cooking, walking to the market, spinning cotton, cleaning, carrying buckets of water demonstrates their strength, their self-efficacy, and consequently their resilience.

Other qualities that have been observed among resilient people are equanimity, and perseverance (Allen et al. 2011:2). Even though women have expressed being extremely disturbed and distressed shortly after being accused of witchcraft, they would regain serenity and calm after reaching the shelter. Calmness and composure were observed after the death of a

woman in the shelters (see below). Perseverance is another quality that women in the refuges have demonstrated. Some women have spent more than 30 years in these places and have carried out their duties without complaining.

Another aspect of these women's personalities and perhaps a general characteristic of Burkinabe is their sense of humor. The Burkinabe easily laugh about many subjects, and it is a good way for them to accept and overcome difficulties; it is also a form of fatalism. As underlined by Milnac et al., "the use of humor was found to be a possible resilient coping style; those who utilized it were better able to capitalize on positive emotions and keep depression from taking hold. (2011:75). Women often laugh in shelters, making jokes about each other. As I mentioned earlier, they made many jokes about my translator, who is Samo.

9.8.1.4. Social support

Researchers have agreed that social support is a common component of resilience. "The only variable that was consistently related to resilience was social support, measured in terms of having people who can be trusted and who will offer help, comfort, and appreciation, especially in a crisis" (Clark et al. 2011: 60). As we have seen earlier about older Mossi women, they expect to receive social assistance as they age. However, when they are excluded from their village, they are losing all the support they previously had. Researchers have shown that loneliness contributes to the decrease of physiological resilience, and the feeling of helplessness and threat is accentuated among lonely persons (Allen et al. 2011). Without quite being aware of it, women have built a new community into which they find support among themselves but also in the people who take care of them and manage the shelters. Women know that they can count on them if they have any health concerns or other problems. Therefore, once they reach the refuge, they find again the comfort of being taking care of and can wholly or partially recover

from their trauma. They do not appear to be lonely. In chapter 7.7., we will see how women have built new forms of social support.

9.8.1.5. Spirituality and resilience

The results of the research show that women who were accused of witchcraft were primarily animist. Yet after arriving at the shelter, many of them convert to Christianity and mostly into Catholicism. One woman explained that when she arrived at Delwendé, the shelter run by Catholic sisters, she was told that if she feels miserable, Jesus could help her. We can infer that women were "gently" offered to choose the Catholic faith. It appears that women decide to convert to Catholicism for various reasons: because they feel obliged to, by opportunism, to fit in, to adapt, and/or be accepted. A woman said, "Thanks to the Virgin Mary, we are here! We eat and have no worries." Overall, the women show fervent involvement in religion and are following all the steps to be baptized.

To what extent does religion contribute to their resilience? This question may be more challenging to answer since the women have shown to often change their faith depending on the circumstances. For instance, many women said that they turned to Protestantism because of health issues. What is certain is that conversion to Catholicism in the shelters helps the women be part of a community and receive the support of that community. Their adaptation to the context of their location, such as their conversion to Catholicism, can be interpreted as an acceptance of their fate and a form of fatalism.

9.8.2. Fatalism or realism?

After staying for 16 months in Burkina Faso and visiting other countries such as Uganda, I have developed an impression of African fatalism. Many scholars have observed this phenomenon and explained it in various ways, such as the concept of Afro-pessimism, which

first concerned African-Americans (Sexton 2016). The idea of Afro-pessimism has later been

used to explain development failure in Africa:

> Afro-pessimism refers to the perception of sub-Saharan Africa as a region too riddled with problems for good governance and economic development. The term gained currency in the 1980s when many Africanists in Western creditor countries believed that there was no hope for consolidating democracy and achieving sustainable economic development in the region. The earliest use in print of the word was in a 1988 article from the Xinhua News Agency in which Michel Aurillac's minister of cooperation, criticized the prevailing pessimism in the West about Africa's economic development and cautioned against what he referred to as an "Afro-pessimism" on the part of some creditors (Encyclopedia)

However, the concept of Afro-pessimism has become highly controversial (Sexton 2016) and

cannot withstand elaborate criticism. Furthermore, based on observations and lengthy

discussions with Burkinabe and people in other African countries, it has become clear that Afro-

pessimism is not a satisfying framework to explain what I would instead call Afro-philosophy.

People are not necessarily pessimistic but somewhat fatalistic. As I will further explain, it is a

philosophy of life that helps them to overcome hardship and pursue their arduous lives.

The idea of fatalism is not new in the literature, but had earlier ethnocentric connotations

and tended to overgeneralize as emphasized by Acevedo,

> Culturalists…have argued that fatalism is a general characteristic of traditional value systems that are unreceptive to processes of modernization and economic development….Africa, except for the southern tip of the continent, appears to belong entirely to the category of societies with weak control over uncertainty… fatalistic worldviews not only develop in response to the type of structural forces that Durkheim identified but also as a result of widely held belief systems that lead adherents to accept life's outcomes" (2008:1713-1714).

David Lockwood argues,

> There is after all an important difference between fatalistic beliefs that stem from the individual's realization that he is personally in the grip of circumstances over which he has no control and fatalistic beliefs that are the result of his socialization into an ideology that provides a comprehensive account of *why* circumstances are beyond his (or anyone else's) control." (1992:44)

Elder proposes two distinct forms of fatalism: empirical fatalism and theological fatalism.

Empirical fatalism refers to Durkheim's idea of an internalized feeling of powerlessness,

> fatalistic orientation as one in which individuals internalize a belief that life's outcomes are "determined by factors over which [they] have little influence, and [the] acceptance of this state of affairs as being correct, natural or just (Elder 1966:228.)

On the other hand, Elder goes on to propose a second category of fatalism that is less reliant on

the disposition of an oppressive social structure, and that is more associated with specific cultural

belief systems. What Elder calls "theological fatalism" represents a move away from Durkheim

and towards Weber's idea of "well-rounded, metaphysically-satisfying conception of the world"

(2008: 1715).

Fatalism has been observed in different countries and diverse circumstances such as in

Nigeria, for instance:

> Nigerian leaders, both past and present, exhibit a fatalistic orientation, have highly dependent mentality, and lack a sense of personal and group self-efficacy. Consequently, their collective leadership style continues to stall the country's development" (Ukaegbu 2007:161).

For Ukaegbu, Nigerian leaders have a propensity "to feel hopeless and act helpless when

confronted with problems of critical national importance" (2007:161). Fatalism then leads to

resignation, defeatism, and submissive attitudes. Similarly, Bista also attributes the Nepali failure

to develop to fatalism and cast systems (Ukaegbu 2007). According to Ukaegbu, fatalism is

embedded in the cultures of Nigeria. Yet, according to the author, fatalism may also be a

manifestation of the culture of poverty, and "psychological dependence infused by colonialism

remains a debilitating phenomenon in the cognitions of political actors in the post-colonial state"

(2007: 164).

One of the phrases that the Burkinabe say most frequently is "c'est pas facile" (it is not

easy), and I have come to understand what they meant and have found myself to use it. When I

first arrived in Burkina Faso, I had big ideas, big hopes that maybe I will be able to find some solutions to resolve the problem of unfair accusations of witchcraft. I worked for months on a project. And yet, each time I had an idea, it was annihilated by the reality of life in Burkina to the point that I myself became a little discouraged. For instance, I suggested the creation of an association of WAoW's children for them to have a voice and to be able to see their mothers. Still, even though the children with whom I talked were interested in the project, none of them felt strong enough to conduct that project and gave many excuses to maintain the status quo. The difficulties of life in the country can make people become fatalistic - a socioeconomic fatalism. It is not pessimism because people still have hope about their future, but it is a way of accepting life circumstances, difficulties, and obstacles that help to live. As stated by Henningesen,

> Fatalism would prove in the majority of cases to be applied retrospectively…when man is in situations where all attempts to find a solution (through prayer, magic, or rational cunning) have failed, he has only one thing left: to resign himself and put up with his destiny (1967: 186)

Therefore, the so-called fatalism might rather be realism or a philosophy of life that is helping in the process of resilience. It is a way to cope with the painful realities of life without becoming depressed and without giving up. It is a fatalism about past and present events, but not about the future, even when the future can look difficult. It is a mechanism that helps to cope with all the hardship.

9.8.3. Fatalism and resilience, or fatalistic resilience

Few of the women accused of witchcraft had the courage, the strength, or even the idea to oppose their accusers (who were mostly men) and contest their sentences. They feel powerless, and most women have a way to accept their fate that could be compared to fatalism.

> I find myself alone defenseless, which is why I was accused. I had ten days of walking to get here. When I was banished, I went to my parents' house, but since they are in the same village, they said they could not keep me there. My husband had even said that it is

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in the territory of his ancestors. I put myself in the hands of God to take the road to Ouagadougou, where I never went before.

Another woman explained,

After the death of my husband, I stayed in the village. One day a child became sick. The inhabitants accused me of being at the origin of this disease. So I decided to go to my native village, thinking I would get some help. My parents went to visit the sick child. When they arrived at the village, they saw the child having fun with friends, which means that the child was cured. But it did not change the opinion of the villagers on the contrary: they said that it was because I left the village that the child was cured.

The last example emphasizes how women are forced to give up in the worst case of injustice. It shows that they do not agree with the accusation, but have no choice but to accept the verdict and support their fate. Similarly, they understand why their husband and children cannot defend them. "When you are excluded, your husband and your children are not happy, but as the village does not belong to them, they have no choice, they are forced to suffer."

Women in shelters have accepted the most flagrant injustice causing trauma and exclusion. However, they have a philosophy of enduring events and putting them into perspective. Among the resilient qualities, acceptance of changes (Resnick 2011) is a trait that is commonly noted among older adults. Women in shelters have demonstrated this ability. "I often think, where would I be now if I were still in the village? In the fields? At the well? I do not complain about my situation, but I am grateful." Fatalistic resilience can also be the result of symbolic violence and part of the habitus of women. Because of the symbolic violence imposed by highly hierarchic patriarchy, women have little chance to rebel against an oppressive system that they do not discern because it is hidden in the habitus; it is the norm. Their best chance to survive and have a bearable life is to be resilient. Fatalistic resilience is imposed on them. It may, therefore, explain the impression of fatalism that inspires their submissiveness, when, in fact, it is the norm for them, and resilience is a defense mechanism.

Besides their acceptance and "fatalism," there is optimism among women in the shelters. Even though some of them are conscious that returning in their village would be almost impossible and would be too difficult for them, they would like to leave the shelter and live in a house in a non-loti neighborhood not too far from their children who could come to visit them. They are not afraid of having to support themselves even though they may not fully measure all the difficulties of that project, as we will see in chapter 9.

9.9. Intersubjectivity and relationship between women

According to Duranti, the concept of human sociality has been ignored by anthropologists (2010), yet "when properly understood, intersubjectivity can constitute an overall theoretical frame for thinking about the ways in which humans interpret, organize, and reproduce particular forms of social life and social cognition" (2010:17).

Upon their arrivals at the shelters, women are directed to a room; they do not choose their roommates, and they have to learn how to get along with them. Managers still try to match the roommates even though they do not know the personality of the newcomer. Since the number of women in the shelters has decreased, there is more space in both locations. In Cour de Solidarité, some women stay alone in their room, which is sometimes because of their personality but often because the roommate has left for reinsertion or has died. In both cases, it is difficult for the woman who stayed behind. Some women have lived together for decades, and when one of them leaves, they are losing social support.

9.9.1. Hierarchy in the shelters

The social organization in the housing is much different from the organization in a village since there are no men to impose rules and no children to take care of. However, the women in

the shelters have reproduced some aspects of their previous lives. I did not expect to see the powerful hierarchy of the Mossi reproduced in the centers. And yet, these women who finally were freed from the domination of their families, replicated a form of hierarchy as if it was a natural function or a habitus. It was not necessarily the older women who were the leaders of the room instead, the authority was established according to the time spent in the shelter; the newly arrived had to submit to the women who came before; it may be the same in a polygynous household. There are several levels of hierarchy in Delwendé. In each room, one woman is the leader. I quickly realized this while conducting interviews. Each time my translator and I entered a room, we first had to find out who the leader was in order to ask her for permission to do interviews. If the leader would agree to answer our questions, the other women would also accept; however, if the leader refused, then we had to leave the room because none of the women would then agree to talk. In some cases, if we were able to meet outside the chamber, women would then accept to discuss. We had to be very careful not to upset the leader by not identifying her. We first made some mistakes, but after a while, we adapted. When we entered a room, we had to be attentive to some specific signs; women in the room would all look in the same direction and to the same person. Some would show us with whom to start with a simple head motion in the direction of the leader.

Despite the fact that women organized their own hierarchy, there had been some critical changes in leadership at Delwendé imposed by the sisters in charge of the shelter. Before they moved into the new housing in 2016, there was one woman who was the chief of all the women at Delwendé; she was their spokesperson. However, the sisters observed that the head diverted some of the donations to her profit. Therefore, the sisters took advantage of the move to change the hierarchy by using a democratic approach. They ask all the women to designate one leader

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per building; there are six buildings with five rooms in each. It took a long time, almost two years before they finally reached a consensus and had these 6 leaders appointed. It will take more time to find out if the new hierarchy is functioning.

There is also a garden work hierarchy; only some women can work in the garden at Delwendé. When Delwendé was still located in Ouagadougou, women had more access to gardening outside the shelter and around the barrage. After 2016, the garden size was reduced, and only some women could work on it.

9.9.2. Relationship between women

As stated previously, Mossi women expect and need social support in their lives because they have always lived this way; it is an essential aspect of their culture and a component of their habitus. It is quite challenging to have an idea about the relationship between the women after the first visit. It takes time and getting used to their lives to observe these little details, which inform us about their relationships. The size of the shelters and their configuration, along with the number of women in each room make the relationship between the women very different. At Delwendé, the number of women in each room is higher, which changes the group dynamic. It makes it also more difficult for all the women to get along. Delwendé is more extensive, and the distance between the different buildings is significant, so women have no contact with each other's from one building to the other. Even when they come together during assembly for Mass, for instance, each of the women brings a small stool and congregate in groups corresponding to their buildings. On the other hand, the Cour de Solidarité is a smaller shelter with fewer women who are much more in contact with each other and form a more homogenous community.

I have observed the good relationships women have formed in these shelters, where several of them have spent more than 30 years. The women told me, "in the center, we take care

of each other, and we are all friends…When we receive the visit of children, we all rejoice even if they are not our children; It's like a big family. If we were witches, wouldn't we kill those kids?" Another example of the idea of the big family was shown during a visit to a woman who was reinserted. The woman asked, "how is the family doing?" When her interlocutor asked which family she was talking about, the women answered that it was the women in the shelters. Therefore, women see the community as a family. Furthermore, some of the women from the two locations know each other. That was confirmed by the fact that some women from Delwendé came to pay homage at the death of a woman from Cour de Solidarité, as explained in the next chapter. There are family ties between some women in different shelters. Some are co-wives and have been accused separately. They are also from the same areas, sometimes from the same villages; therefore, they already have shared life experiences.

Women take care of each other; I observed women washing the older ones who could not get up anymore and giving water to those who were lying. One woman explained that they take turns cooking, but if they want something special they do it themselves in front of their house, "Yesterday, I made the *tô* [millet porridge] and shared with the women in the room."

But life in the shelter is not always as we say in French "un long fleuve tranquille" (a long calm river), and disputes and conflicts sometimes emerge even though these conflicts are quickly settled. For instance, during fieldwork, a woman in a room reacted very strangely when we asked to interview her, and she seemed very upset. We learned later that there was tension in the room between the women and the woman we were talking to was in a bad mood that day because she was interrupted while working. During a visit to Sakoula, we assisted in a dispute between women in the shelter. One woman accused another of making a sacrifice by dropping a piece of kola nut on an anthill. The accused woman answered that she just wanted to share her

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kola with the ants. The other woman replies that when she makes *tô* (a porridge made with millet), she does not share it with the ants, so why would she share her kola? She advised her to go get the kola because others should not discover it. She also mentioned that now that they are all Catholic, they are not supposed to do things like that. The women have arguments and disputes, but they are also wise, "We get along well with each other. If we quarrel, how could we live together? Each of us tries to make efforts to get along and help each other. If we quarreled, we could be criticized." I have assisted an occurrence during which women have been reprehended by the manager after having a loud dispute regarding a bucket of water.

Nevertheless, during the 16 months of my research, I have never heard women yelling at each other. It does not necessarily mean that they all get along, but since these women have learned early in life to accept their situation, they also have accepted their new community with the idea that they have no other choice.

9.9.3. Intersubjectivity related to death

The most poignant example of the relationship between women in shelters that I have observed was during two of their deaths. Friday, September 29th, 2018, Fraka passed away at 7:30 pm. The manager called me at night to let me know. I learned that since the previous day, Fraka was not doing well; she was delusional. The following day she fell into a coma. Women of the center were sitting outside in front of her room, waiting for her to pass away. Finally, at the end of the day, she died. Fraka was handicapped, and she could barely move during the last weeks of her life. She had developed bedsores that were starting to rot, and there were maggots on her wounds. The smell was terrible. The women could not wash her as they usually do; they could just scrape the rotten skin. When the social services came to pick her up, there was liquid running out from her body.

Five days after the death of Fraka, I received a call from the manager of Cour de Solidarité, who told me that another woman had died that morning at 9 am. It was Bita, an old and frail woman; she wore thick glasses and had a hearing impairment. She had been at the center for 24 years. Whenever you would enter the Cour de Solidarité, you would see her sitting on the floor outside her room and spinning cotton. She had become an icon of the court. She was shy, and we rarely heard her voice. She was small and slender; there was only skin left on her bones. When I shook her hand, I was afraid to break her, but she would keep my hand for the entire time she needed to say all the blessings. Not an ounce of wickedness appeared on her face.

I left home as soon as I learned about her death to pay her the last homage. On my way, I crossed four women from the center who were rushing back from the market because of the event. When I arrived, the atmosphere was oppressive; women were looking sad and anxious. It was the second death in a week. They were all sitting close together, bringing support to each other. I went to greet each one, and they were all looking very distressed and gloomy. I did not know what to say, but I just shook their hands a little longer, showing my sadness and my support. I went to greet the manager, and we went to sit with the women. Women who were working in the fields were also called back, and a delegation of women came from Delwendé. I learned later that one woman from Delwendé was a relative of the deceased. The defunct woman was lying in her room, covered with a withe shroud. The residents were waiting for the nurse to make the death certificate before they could start their rituals. We could hear a woman crying loudly. It was heartbreaking. Meanwhile, I saw women chewing wood sticks (I have not been able to find out the variety of wood), but I learned that women were chomping it so that they would not feel nauseous during the ritual if the dead body smelt too bad.

After the paperwork was done, the ritual could start. Four women put the body on a metal stretcher and brought it in the courtyard were a wooden tray had been prepared. The tray looked like an elevated bathtub. A woman climbed in the tray and sat on the rim while a small group women was surrounding the tray to assist with the cleaning of the body. They put the body between the legs of the woman sitting on the rim (she was the relative of the deceased) to maintain the body in a sitting position. A woman started to shave the head of the dead body with a razor while another woman put water on the head. Afterward, they washed the body with soap and water. There were about 15 women around the body, and all the others were either sitting or standing a little farther.

After the cleaning was done, they laid the body on its left side on top of the stretcher, covered it with the white shroud, and went back to the deceased's room. There, the roommates put clothes on the body and entirely covered the corpse except for the face. A piece of fabric was maintaining the jaw. I could then enter the room to pay homage to the deceased. Not all the women went to the room, but they were all sitting around outside. The group of Delwendé was all sitting together on mats. After a while, women started to pray. Many were on their knees. After the homage ended, women entered the room to wrap the body in a straw mat [like the siongho], and they transported the body under the large porch in the middle of the shelter. Women brought benches, and the religious ceremony started. All of the Catholic women sat in the front, close to the body, whereas the Protestant women sat in the back of the courtyard, not participating in the ceremony but wanting to be there. Women started to pray and sing. After a while, a priest came to officiate. The ceremony took forever (an hour and a half). Later, two men from the social services came to take the body since the poor old woman did not have any family to take care of her body. The men were wearing dirty work clothes. Women were following the

body to the car, clapping slowly in their hands and making noises with their tongue. The men put the body in a sort of commercial car and closed the door. This was it! The body will go to the morgue, and she will be buried later by prisoners. Nobody will attend the burial. This aspect of the funeral is hard to accept for the women in shelters because it does not follow the traditional ritual that would allow them to join the pantheon of their ancestors. Traditionally, Mossi have two separate funerals: one following the death, including the burial that can last three days. The second funerals or the "big" funerals are celebrated a year later with all the members of the extended family and the people from the village. All the rituals will allow the soul of the deceased to join the ancestors. Even though WAoW have converted to Catholicism, they still want to have proper funerals.

After the deceased woman left the shelter, the women were still sitting all together. During that event, I could observe the relationships between them. Everybody was very calm, and each woman was affected. They showed solidarity, empathy, and support for each other. They are forming a big family.

Women in shelters have built new communities; they have brought to each other the social support they need. It may help to be surrounded by people who have had the same experience and who, therefore, will not be judgmental. They do not have to hide their stories and feel shameful about what happened to them. WAoW share their stories and talk about their accusations to each other. They do not need to talk about the intensity of the trauma because they know that each of them had lived the same ordeal. This aspect of the relationship between women illustrates "participation sense-making," a theory proposed by De Jaehger and Di Paolo suggesting that "there is a cognitive aspect in intersubjectivity and people engage in active social processes that help them to understand each other" (Gallagher 2009: 298). Besides the support

women receive from each other, they can also count on the support of the managers. At the Cour de Solidarité, I have observed that women do not like it when the manager is away. It was not the case at Delwendé, where the relationship between the managers and the women was more distant, but they all know that the managers are supporting them. Nobody outside the shelters would give them the same empathy, understanding, and support than the ones they receive from their peers inside the refuge.

9.10. Symbolic violence and witchcraft accusation

Among the multiple questions that the case of WAoW raised, one persistently and relentlessly remained a focal inquiry during almost all interviews; why are the Mossi so violent against older women from their own families? Similarly, why would alleged witches want to kill anyone and particularly children among their relatives? Analyzing the root of this violence is a first and essential step before being able to fight against the phenomenon of social exclusion.

To these previous questions, most people only had superficial answers and did not address deeper structural problems related to the Mossi society. For instance, according to Gere, an informant from Pilimpikou,

> There can be only one male sorcerer in a neighborhood, but there are many women witches. If women are the primary victims of witchcraft accusations, it is because women are mean and meaner than men. Women hate each other. When a woman gives birth to many children who will become successful, other women become jealous, and they might "do something" [put a spell, or do some witchcraft], and she will not survive a week! When a man has many wives, and one is a witch, the others may as well be witches. A man should always take turns when he has many wives [visit all his wives regularly and equally]; otherwise, the jealousy might become salient.

Mem from Yako emphasized, "even their children do not come to visit their mothers in the shelters because they know that their mothers are bad."

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When asked about the reasons for all the hatred in Pilimpikou, the *naaba* answered, "It's pure meanness. When people see that you want to develop the village and help the old people, they will eliminate you." The Laarle *Naaba* also gave a similar answer, "witchcraft in itself does not impede development in our cities, but jealousy and wickedness do. People are very mean and very jealous. So the fight should go towards that." Mem made the same analogy, "when you have nothing, and your neighbor has something [wealth] he could help you, but instead, you are so jealous that you will make sure that he will end up having nothing like you!"

Nevertheless, women are not the only ones that are hostile. As explained by Mem,

> The problem is that young people are mean now; some of them are willing to kill people for nothing. Who poisons, who kills? It happens! As I always say, we always look at the side of women, but some boys are doing bad things!

When asked why women would kill their own child, Mem answered, "there is a will to hurt! And that's the initial problem. It does not matter the means used! The real problem initially is this desire to hurt!"

All these explanations are not sufficient to explain the roots of the problem of hatred and related violence. Witchcraft accusations follow the same scheme of symbolic violence as for female genital cutting (chapter 3). It starts with deception. People are led to believe that a death is abnormal and rather than looking at the real causes of the death of a younger person (which could actually help to avoid other fatalities in case of an epidemic), they will look at a possible metaphysical cause and will then look for a culprit. A ritual will be used to formalize the accusation and make it seem true and unquestionable; the exclusion of the "culprit" is then inescapable.

Furthermore, most of the rituals are led by men; therefore, witchcraft accusations are the symbolic forces of masculine domination.

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9.11. Conclusion

Burkinabe women suffer from multiple forms of symbolic violence throughout their lives, and a witchcraft accusation at the twilight of their life is the ultimate one. Being an older widow puts them in a position of extreme vulnerability to such violence. Because they have little support from their family on either side (in-laws or parents), the population finds it easy to chase them away and exclude them without remorse and empathy. They are themselves subjected to the same forces that compel them to accept the occurrences and find these forms of violence ordinary. It is only when all these forces are unveiled/revealed that a real prevention program can be designed and implemented.

CHAPTER 10: FIGHT AGAINST WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will focus on the analysis of current programs that aim to decrease the number of women excluded from their village and the rehabilitation of women living in shelters. The reinsertion is a long and expensive process that, based on those factors, I will propose some recommendations that could serve as the basis of new prevention programs.

10.1 Rehabilitation of women accused of witchcraft: hope and concerns

In his research, Ouédraogo reported that 52.2 percent of excluded people no longer want to return to their homes or villages, and 55.4 percent wish to stay in the shelters (Ouédraogo 2006). These numbers have changed since 2006 because, during interviews, 71 percent of women said they want to be reinserted, yet not necessarily in the village where they have been accused. Fifteen percent of women wish to be reinserted in their native town. Almost half (48 percent) indicated that they would rather live with their children where ever they are. Finally, 37 percent were not sure exactly where they would like to be reinserted. Only 29 percent do not wish to leave the shelter because, for most of them, they do not have any family members who could take care of them, or because they have stayed so long in the shelters that they do not want to change their lives.

Women in the shelters are free to leave the shelter if their relatives (often their children) want them to come back and can offer a secure place for them to live. There have been cases like that, but during the 16 months of fieldwork, most of the cases of women who left the shelter resulted in the process of reinsertion.

10.1.1. Reinsertion process

The process of reinserting or rehabilitating a woman living in a center takes a long time and is expensive. The major actor in such a process is the *parajuriste* (paralegal). A *parajuriste* is a mediator, volunteering for the organization Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix (CJP). Each *parajuriste* is affected to a specific area where he or she also lives and therefore has a good social network within that particular region and knows the context and the circumstances of witchcraft accusation. The *parajuristes* will first discuss with the women in the shelters to see which one would have more chances to be reinserted, according to the social support she may have outside the refuge, such as her children or other members of her family. The *parajuristes* will then start a long process of mediation in the villages where WAoW wish to go back. Once the villagers have given the consent of the return of a WAoW, a place has to be found to build a house for the woman before being reinserted. Most of the time, the house is constructed at the periphery of the village. The woman will receive some subsistence food on the day of her arrival.

The cost of reinsertion is high. According to the representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights, the minimum price is 500,000 francs CFA (900 USD), which is a very considerable amount. When addressing the problem of the cost with a member of the CJP (Commission Justice et Paix) who are active actors in the reinsertion process, they believe that the price is much higher because they did not take into account the cost of the long mediations conducted before the reinsertion. Even though the *parajuristes* are barely paid because it is supposed to be

volunteer work, their transportation is reimbursed. The donation made by the CJP during reinsertion (see the following paragraph) is not included in the rehabilitation estimation cost. Therefore, it can be inferred that they have no accurate data about the budget of each reinsertion, and it is a significant concern when it comes to evaluate a program and conceive new reinsertion programs.

10.1.2. Story of a reinsertion

Cora, a woman who resided at the Cour de Solidarité shelter since 2005, was reinserted in her brothers' village in October 2017. The brothers pretend that they had not heard from their sister for more than 30 years and thought she was dead. The *parajuriste* found the brothers and conducted the mediation.

On the day of the reinsertion, we went to pick up Cora at the shelter. All her belongings were ready to be picked up and loaded in the two pickup trucks. Two persons from the Ministry of Human Rights, two others from the Commission Justice et Paix, one of the managers of the shelter, and I escorted the woman to her new residence; a reinsertion is an important event. A large number of women gathered at the entrance of the shelter that day. The roommate of the leaving resident asked to accompany her, but for some administrative reasons, it was not possible. We could feel both sadness and excitement because of the departure. Many women in the shelter will never have that opportunity to be reinserted, and they know it. For the woman who is leaving, it is a new life that is starting with a large part of uncertainty about security: food security, health, and personal safety. Therefore, tension and stress were perceptible. I was able to observe the same pattern later during a second reinsertion. The women I had the chance to accompany did not express a lot of happiness and joy.

On that first reinsertion, I was sitting in the car with Cora, and the poor woman became sick and threw up many times. It was not sure if she was ill because she was not used to traveling by car or because of the high level of stress. She had a little cat in her arms that she had adopted in the shelter and seemed to hold on that kitten as if she sought comfort and security on it.

Once we arrived at the destination, a small hamlet located in the department of Toece, Cora discovered the house that has been built for her. Cora did not choose the location of her habitation that was constructed at the periphery of the village. As for all the reintegrated women, the house was a one-room cubic house made with concrete and covered with corrugated sheets with an iron door and one iron-framed window with no glass. The little property was surrounded by a small wall built following the banco tradition with mud that does not always resist bad weather conditions well. Outside, a small space surrounded by walls served as a latrine. There was no furniture inside the house; the floor was made of concrete. Everything was very rudimentary, yet it resembled the other homes in the village. Cora did not express many emotions. She sat on the ground outside the house for a while, recovering from her difficult car trip and still holding her kitten.

On our arrival, Cora's brothers welcomed us. There were two brothers and two half-brothers (from another mother). All the belongings of the women were unloaded and installed in her house; Cora only watched all these people organizing her belongings in her new home. A representative from each organization made a speech. One of Cora's brother also spoke, but Cora never said a word. We took the traditional photo that will be added later in the administration folder as a reminder of an accomplishment. The woman received 25 000 Francs CFA (45 USD) from the ministry of Human Right plus one bag of rice and one bag of corn, and 20 000 Francs CFA (36 USD) from the CJP plus one bag of rice and ½ bag of corn. The money and the food

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provide a good start for the woman; this will allow her to be financially and materially independent for a while. We then sat all together and started discussing various topics. The organization's representatives all asked that the villagers take care of Cora and protect her; one brother received 10 000 francs as an incentive.

10.1.3. Problems with reinsertion

When a woman has been accused of witchcraft, she knows the trauma, the feeling, the shame, the pain that it involves, and she does not want to experience it again. When she is rehabilitated, she knows that she has a Damocles sword hanging over her head because of her previous witchcraft accusation. Everybody in the village where she will be reinserted will know her story; it is like an indelible mark. The indictment can resurface at any time, and women can be accused again if anything wrong happens in the village.

All reinsertions are not successful. Among the 30 women who have been reinserted between 2016 and 2018, at least two of them came back to the shelter where they lived previously. Tipoko explained,

> When my child brought me to the village, he stayed a few months before returning to Côte d'Ivoire with his wife. I stayed at my parents' house with my mom. But for a moment, I did not feel well, and it made me want to leave the village. I could not sleep, and I wanted to return where I was. I was stressed out, and sometimes I started screaming. I had troubles, and I could not bear it anymore. They wrote to my son to come back because I did not feel good, but until then, he has not come back. I decided to go back to the shelter to retrieve my previous life. I felt that the people in the village were looking for a reason to accuse me of witchcraft again. I preferred to leave the village and come back to Ouaga before it happens.

Another woman was rejected on the day of her arrival. Her roommates at the shelter told her story,

It was her feet that saved her; otherwise, she would have perished. The young
man [who attacked her] took his torch and crushed it in her house. She took her
bag with her money and fled. She heard the roar of motorcycles. She realized that
they were going to catch her. She dropped her bag, but they did not notice it. She
hid in the bushes, and she saw the guys on motorcycles who were looking for her.
Since it was a place she knew well, she waited for them to leave to pick up her
bag and run away. She was walking along the side of the road, and at one point,
she found the bag. And she continued to reach the paved road to find transport;
she came back with her bag.

The women in the shelters were shocked by the story. They said that it does not encourage them

to get reinserted. They said, "if they [the men who attacked the reinserted woman] are severely

punished and imprisoned, it is good; if they are left unpunished, they will do it again."

These two cases illustrate the difficulties of reinsertion and how women may feel

insecure when they are reinserted. Furthermore, they also have to face other challenges once

outside the shelters because they have to worry about food and health.

10.1.4. Visits of rehabilitated women in Yako

Fortunately, some reinsertions are successful, and I had the chance to be invited by the

CJP to go to see women who were reinserted. I visited a woman who was reinserted in the

village with her two sons. She looked happy, and her sons, who were there, were very attentive

and caring towards their mother. If women have their children living with them and supporting

them, reinsertions have much more chances to be successful. When women are rehabilitated

alone, it is not the same story.

Ticri, the second woman we visited, was reinserted in a peripheral neighborhood of

Yako, also called *non-loti*, because the plots or parcels are not officially registered. There is no

electricity and no running water, and these places are not expensive. The Ministry of Human

Rights has financed Ticri's house after the mediations were conducted. Even in these

neighborhoods, people who leave around the future home of a WAoW have to agree on her

move. Ticri left the Delwendé shelter and moved to this new location one year earlier. The access to Ticri's house was perilous. There was no road, and someone had to know the area well to find the place.

Finally, we arrived at the very last house in the neighborhood, located on a small hill with almost no neighbors. The house was isolated. According to the *parajuriste*, there are two tombs of "*fous*" (crazy people) nearby, meaning that the place was for unwanted people. There are no trees; the landscape is arid and dry even though the rain seasons just ended. Ticri lives there in a one-room cubic house similar to the one described earlier. On the floor, some cooking tools, a mattress, bags, and fabrics are scattered. Ticri welcomed us with a smile; she had clean clothes, a pair of plastic pink flip flops, and a necklace with a cross around her neck. She adopted a timid and submissive behavior and talked very little. Before being accused, Ticri lived with her husband and her seven children (she had 11) in a village near to Yaco. Her husband is still alive and lives with his five brothers and another wife. He comes to visit her from time to time. Her children also come sometimes. Unfortunately, the woman did not talk much, and it was difficult to perceive if she was happy or not, and because the visitors were members of the CJP who helped her to get the house, she could not complain about her situation.

Visiting women in the *non-loti* neighborhood of Boussé shed some light on the challenging conditions of women reinserted in those deprived neighborhoods. Whereas women in the shelters rarely complained about their living conditions, women who were reinserted in the *non-loti* areas had much more difficult living conditions. Once they had consumed all the food they had received the first day of their reinsertion, they had to find ways to survive. Some of them were working for farmers, some were spinning cotton, and others made *sumbala*, the traditional condiment that they sell at the market. Overall, these activities do not provide enough

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income to be able to pay for health care and other small expenses. Women who spin cotton have difficulties in finding buyers. Others are too weak and fragile to be able to work in the fields. The isolation of the house can make them vulnerable to thieves. Some women see their children, but many of them do not. They form a little community, and they try to help each other. For these older women, healthcare remains a crucial concern.

10.1.5. The story of Madeleine

I had a special connection with Madeleine, since the first day I met her at the Delwendé shelter. Because she had a daughter who had the same name as me but who never came to visit her, she decided to "adopt" me, and we developed a warm and close relationship. I had my first meal at the shelter with Madeleine. She also became an essential informant. Her granddaughter was living with her. Madeleine had a puppy, even though it was not allowed, but since she was supposed to leave the shelter soon and be rehabilitated, the dog could stay with her. Each time I went to Delwendé, I stopped at her room, she would always sit outside, and she would give me something to eat. We spent a long time talking about the shelter and what was going on because Madeleine was a pillar of the center. She had stayed ten years at Delwendé, and she was the first one who moved to the new shelter in Sakoula; she occupied a strategic room from which she could see who was coming to the shelter and what was happening under the hangar where many events took place. Finally, she knew everyone in the area.

10.1.5.1. Reinsertion of Maman (mom) Madeleine

When I first met Madeleine in September 2017, she told me that she was going to be reinserted. Her sons bought a parcel of land for their mother located next to the Delwendé shelter. The ministry of Human Rights and the CJP built a house on the property. She hoped to

be reinserted before Christmas, but it was her son who had to decide when she should move. She was pleased about the prospect of living in her own home. It is only in March that Madeleine could finally move out of the shelter and settle in her new house. She did not want to listen to the nurse at the shelter who told Madeleine that she should stay there and take advantage of the free health care provided; now that she was out, she had to pay for her medication, and Madeleine had to receive treatment against high blood pressure.

I went to visit her in her new location each time I went to Delwendé. Neighbors and some women from the shelter were often sitting with Madeleine under the tree bordering her house and which offered an agreeable shade. The atmosphere was friendly and peaceful. Madeleine seemed to like her small home, where she lived with her seven-year-old granddaughter, who enjoyed staying with her and helping her doing various chores. Madeleine had plans to build a small shed and develop a small business. I offered her seeds to start an herb garden. Madeleine and I often talked about the importance of education, and we decided that her granddaughter had to go to school, so I made all the arrangements to find a school and enroll her.

10.1.5.2. Madeleine's sad story

When I arrived in Sakoula that day (September 27th, 2018), I did not find Madeleine at her home. I was so used to see her sitting under the tree close by her house that I was already a little anxious; furthermore, the house was closed. A neighbor came and told me that she had been hospitalized since Sunday (five days earlier). Her daughter in law was with her at the hospital Yalgado in Ouagadougou. Her granddaughter was staying with neighbors.

I decided to go to the shelter to find out if I could get more information. One of the women at the shelter had Madeleine's daughter in law's phone number, and we were able to call

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her. The daughter said that Madeleine was going to be discharged since they could not pay for her exams. I decided to go there to find out what happened and to and meet with the daughter in law.

My translator and I met Madeleine's daughter in law in front of the hospital since the hospital limited the number of visitors' entry. She had a sheet stack of prescriptions for exams that she could not afford. My translator and I were finally allowed to enter the hospital [white privilege] and go in the emergency services. I found Madeleine lying on a bed in a room full of other patients (six at all); she was weak, and she was moaning; her belly and legs were swollen. Her daughter forced her to sit to welcome me, but I wanted her to let her lie. Nevertheless, she recognized me, and when later a doctor asked her who I was, she said I was her daughter. A nurse came to help me to understand what was going on. He showed me the prescriptions and explained their purposes. There were lab prescriptions to analyze the liquid she had in her belly and blood tests. There were ultrasound prescriptions for her stomach and her heart. I decided to pay for the analysis so that they could start the exams as soon as possible. Another challenge awaited me. I was lucky enough that the nurse agreed to come with me for the payment because, as I discovered, it was not merely going to an office to pay, but we had to go to all the services concerned to get a doctor's signature on each prescription before I could pay. So I walked all around the hospital with the nurse. Some of the services were already closed (it was before 5 pm), and they told me to come back the next day at 7:30 am. For the lab prescriptions, we had to handle the paper through a squared hole in the building. I could barely see the person at the other end. Again, because I was white and had the nurse accompanying me, I could obtain some of the signatures. I went to pay for the exams for which I had received a doctor's agreement. The cost

for all the medical tests for my adoptive mother was around 75 USD, not that much compared to Western countries, but a fortune for them.

Once I went back to the ER, a new patient was lying next to my *maman*. She was getting worse. The nurse hurried some of the exams, but most of them could only be done the following day. My translator went to give the signed and paid prescription to the doctor's office; it took forever; everything takes forever. Meanwhile, I was sitting there alone next to my mother, who was lying in a bed made of a basic metal frame with a mattress covered with thick plastic. Patients had to bring their own bedsheets that were mostly a *pagne* (a piece of fabric). There was a chamber pot under the bed. The room was decrepit, but it did not smell too bad. Of course, everyone was looking at me like someone who is out of place.

When someone is hospitalized, a member of the family has to stay with the patient to help him/her with all the hygiene care and feeding. Outside the ER, there is a patio where the family members can stay and cook. After 6 pm, all the visitors have to get out of the ER, but some may stay overnight out of necessity. Again, I could stay longer until we could see a doctor. I finally met the intern in charge of the room, and I made sure he ordered the exams for Madeleine.

It was 6:30 pm when I left the hospital. I spent more than two hours trying to pay for the exams and make sure Madeleine would get the tests. Without the help of the nurse, I do not know how I would have been able to achieve that, and I am wondering how the daughter in law could have done it. I left her some money for the exams I could not pay with the hope that she would receive medical care the following day.

10.1.5.3. Epilogue

Saturday morning, I received a call from the daughter in law via a translator (it might have been the son of the neighbor patient). When I asked about my *maman*, he first did not understand the daughter and said that she was ok, but then he told me that she had died. It was a shock. I was affected even more because the day before, I had received a call from the director of the Paspanga shelter telling me that another woman had died (Fraka, the disabled woman). I decided to go to visit Madeleine's family on Sunday.

My translator agreed to take me on his motorcycle to go visiting Madeleine's family who had gathered at her house in Sakoula. I was not sure if the body would still be there, but when we arrived, we learned that Madeleine had been buried the day before. So she went directly from the hospital to the cemetery. They had not been able to do all the exams, and the daughter used the money left to pay for the burial. The two daughters and the son were sitting there at Madeleine's house. I finally met the daughter called Clarisse. Yet, that daughter was very aloof and indifferent. She did not join the other siblings to talk with me. I was not sure about the atmosphere of the place, but my translator told me about his feelings. According to him, the family seems to be relieved that the mom had died. He also said that when we were at the hospital two days ago, the daughter-in-law complained that the children would not come to visit their mother. I raised the question of Madeleine's granddaughter's living arrangement and school enrollment. I had been able to enroll her at the local school, but since the granddaughter was going back with her parents, I was not sure if she will go to school. I offered to pay for her school in their village. I remembered Larissa, the grand-daughter saying that she preferred living with her grandmother than her parents. I remembered Madeleine telling me that her mom often

hit her. I was eventually contacted by the teacher of the school where Larissa was going, and we made arrangements for her to be able to attend school.

The story of Madeleine illustrates the severe conditions of life for women who are reinserted in *non-loti* neighborhoods. Even though WAoW may find the idea of relocating outside the shelter attractive, it is not always in their best interest.

10.2. Prevention programs

The rehabilitation programs have shown mixed results, are time-consuming, and are quite expensive; therefore, the focus should be placed on prevention programs. Many prevention programs have already been launched that could explain the decrease in the number of new arrivals in shelters. However, they have not been efficient enough to eliminate the outcasting of women accused of witchcraft and prevent the outburst of accusations such as the witch craze of Pilimpikou.

10.2.1. Prevention campaigns

In 2006, the Catholic organization Commission Justice et Paix (CJP), decided to work on the eradication of the phenomenon of social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. They contacted the Mogho Naaba, the king of the Mossi, to obtain his support for the campaign they wanted to launch. The Mogho Naaba accepted to support the program because he wanted to show to the public opinion that the traditional chieftaincy is not complicit with such practice. The CJP also mobilized civil society, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, NGOs, which are extremely sensitive to these issues (Ouedraogo 2010).

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It was only on March 6th, 2010, that the CJP, in partnership with the State, with the Ministries of the Promotion of Women, Human Rights, Social Action, and Defense, organized a march against exclusion and violence against women in Ouagadougou. The departure of the movement was given on the ground of the Mogho-Naaba's palace, and he delegated one of his ministers who came to deliver his message (Ouédraogo 2010).

The Mogho-Naba acknowledged the existence of violence and social exclusion of women in general, and particularly of women accused of witchcraft. He recognized that the phenomena were more recurrent in Mossi rural regions. He said that the world was changing and that they can no longer tolerate negative cultural values that violate human rights, which undermine human dignity. He asked that all Burkinabe under his territorial jurisdiction stop all the accusations and all the violence done against women. He asked the customary chiefs who were under his tutelage to put an end to harmful traditions and put an end to all cultural or traditional practices that undermine human rights. He then asked to work and to develop initiatives, so that all the women who were victims of exclusions were reinstated. He finally requested all Burkinabe to promote the values of social justice, truth, love, and tolerance (Ouédraogo 2010).

For the secretary of the CJP, this message was essential, and they edited it in French and Mooré and printed 5000 copies that were to be distributed during campaigns. Has the letter reached the chiefs of villages where accusations are still happening today? The impact of the message still needs to be evaluated. Never the less, since then, the CJP has been a significant and active organization engaged in the fight against social exclusion of WAoW.

In 2012-2016, the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity launched a large program called Plan d'Action National de Lutte Contre l'Exclusion Sociale des Personnes Accusees de Sorcellerie (National Action Plan to Fight Social Exclusion of Individuals Accused

of witchcraft). The overall objective of the program was to create a social environment favorable

to the elimination of social exclusion of persons accused of witchcraft in Burkina Faso. The

project was to develop information and communication programs for 80 percent of the

population of the 45 provinces of Burkina Faso from 2012 to 2016. It also contains a plan to

protect the victims of social exclusion by witchcraft allegations. Over 4000 awareness meetings

were supposed to reach the population, customary authorities, administrative authorities,

politicians, and civil society organizations on social exclusion in Burkina Faso using educational

talks, radio broadcasts, and conferences-debates on social exclusion. This large-scale program

was ambitious. However, the implementation of the program was interrupted because of political

instability, and the changes that occurred in the country at that time. Since the departure of

Compaoré, many plans have been discontinued and even canceled.

Nevertheless, in December 2015, a new program was launched by the Ministry of Justice,

Human Rights, and Civic Promotion: *Feuille de Route de Retrait et de Reinsertion Sociale des*

Personnes Exclues pour Allegation de Sorcellerie (Program of withdrawal and social

reintegration of excluded persons accused of witchcraft). As with the previous program, the new

program which was supposed to end in 2019 included a prevention and a reinsertion component,

but also legal aspects (see chapter 7).

The prevention program included raising public awareness of the effects of social

exclusion, educating vulnerable groups on their rights. The activities were supposed to include

educational talks, public conferences, theater plays, movie projections, radio, and TV spots.

When I met with the persons in charge of the program at the ministry in 2018, it was difficult to

obtain the information on the achievement of the prevention program. They had, however, been

able to reinsert 30 women with the help of the CJP (see section 10.1). During my visits to

Pilimpikou, Yako, and Boussé, I did not hear about any of the prevention activities. It does not mean that they did not happen. However, the position of Pilimpikou's chief on the exclusion of alleged witches (see chapter 8) indicated that the prevention programs were not efficient, or that they were not implemented in the proper locations.

Another critical obstacle in the achievement of a program is funding. Even though the project is accepted and is supposed to be implemented, the financing is not always available. It is a sensitive subject, and I have no explanation on how the program was supposed to be funded, and if the money was available, and where the money is. It would necessitate a thorough investigation. Based on these previous programs, it is difficult to measure their efficiency and impact on the population. It is even more complicated to determine if they affected the decrease in the number of witchcraft accusations. Nevertheless, they can inform about the motivation of Burkinabe to engage in the fight against witchcraft accusations. Most of the prevention programs offered the same approach to prevention programs such as educational talks and public conferences; however, the informants I interviewed had different approaches to the problem, and the question remains: what kind of approach would be the most efficient?

10.2.2. Using witchcraft beliefs to fight against witchcraft

People such as Mem in charge of programs in Yako where witchcraft accusations are the most frequent, recommend using "gris-gris" to fight against witchcraft. Mem always talked about *gris-gris* or amulets used for different kinds of purposes, good or bad. In one village, they have put fetishes that have the power to kill anyone who would try to murder someone. Mem remembered the case of a young man who came to an event and who died four days later. When they carried his body through the *siongho* ritual, nobody was designated for having caused his death. Mem believed that it was the fetish/gris-gris protecting the village that killed him. The

young man came intending to kill someone, and instead, he died himself. In that village, people who want to murder someone by witchcraft are scared. Mem believes that putting such *gris-gris* in communities might be a solution to the problem of exclusion of witches: no more witches because either they are afraid of doing any spell or if they do, they might die.

This witchcraft prevention method is questionable. Should prevention programs use people's beliefs to fight against witchcraft? Would that be using people's credulity? There are contradictions in Mem's argument because he also emphasized that a mighty sorcerer (men in this case) could annihilate the power of the *gris-gris*. Using witchcraft or *gris-gris* to fight witchcraft would not reduce the fear of witchcraft, the suspicion people may have about each other, and might not be a long-term solution. Since the beliefs in witchcraft and other powerful features such as *gris-gris* are unstable and can be questioned after any incident in a village, it cannot be a reliable prevention method.

Prevention is a sensitive but essential issue in the fight against of exclusion of WAoW. There might not be a perfect prevention program, but some aspects of the Mossi society have to be taken into consideration to be able to obtain results (see recommendations in chapter 9).

10.3. Recommendations

During my 16 months of research, I developed a good knowledge of the problems relating to the exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. I have also been able to understand the difficulties related to the reinsertion of WAoW, and the struggles to prevent the phenomena. I have witnessed the life of WAoW in their shelters. I would like to make the following

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recommendations that I hope could help to advance the fight against the oppression of older

women accused of witchcraft and help these women to have a better life.

10.3.1. Recommendation for the shelters

About the shelters, Ouédraogo affirms,

The existence of these structures is problematic; created to relieve human distress
and provide assistance to people in danger; they have become controversial issues
today. Should we continue to welcome women excluded because of witchcraft
and thus encourage the phenomena, because the accusers seem to have no more
scruples to chase people accused of witchcraft? ...People are even more
encouraged to exclude older people because shelters are there to welcome them
(2006, translated by the author).

Despite the limitations, shelters are the best chances for WAoW to recover from witchcraft

accusations and start new lives protected from vigilante justice. These centers offer them a

decent place to live with access to food and healthcare. Many Burkinabe do not have access to

the level of healthcare that women in shelters are receiving. Mental health care could be

ameliorated for women who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders. However, the

number of psychologists and psychiatrists in the country is deficient, and mental health care, in

general, is not very developed, according to a psychologist that I have met. Nevertheless, some

basic psychological training should be proposed to the managers of the shelters who could, in

return, better help the women in the residences.

Furthermore, arrangements should be made to reduce the stigmatization of these shelters.

For instance, there are other shelters in the city that welcome orphans, young women who have

escaped forced marriages, people with psychological or physical disabilities, and street boys.

Mixing the residents from different shelters could help to reduce the stigmatization. Orphans

would benefit from all these abandoned grandmothers who are longing to be surrounded by

children and would give in return the attachment children need. Mixing people from different

ages can also recreate a more inclusive and diverse community where people could help each other. For the street boys (I have visited shelters for these children), it can recreate a form of family they have lost and can give them a new purpose.

10.3.2. Helping women's children

None of the programs have taken into consideration WAoW's children. They are left behind. They have no recourse and no rights. During interviews with WAoW's children, they often discussed the difficulties they had after their mothers were forced to leave the villages. Younger children have no means to visit their mother. They are stigmatized and may not have the same chances to go to school.

Creating an organization for children of women accused of witchcraft would be a good initiative, according to the children with whom I shared the idea. The organization could help to protect their interests, help younger children to visit their mothers, help them to maintain their heritage and go to school, and organize special events to invite children and grandchildren to visit their relatives in the shelters. For the women in the centers, it would also be comforting to know that their children are protected and that they can come to visit them. Now that the shelters have more rooms because of the decrease of the residents, it could be possible to accommodate visitors who could stay for a longer time.

10.3.3. Managing death: facilitating the funeral and burial of residents

During interviews, women have often discussed their concerns about dying in the shelters. Some women have accepted their fate, but others are afraid they will not have a proper burial followed by funerals that is an essential aspect of Burkinabe tradition that is independent of their religious faith. They may still believe that without appropriate funerals, they would never

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be able to join the pantheon of ancestors. The women in the shelters have already witnessed many of them dying. Their bodies were taken to the morgue by employees of the social services, and they were later buried anonymously by strangers in some random places in a cemetery. Knowing that they would not have proper funerals, many women want to be reinserted even though they are conscious that it would be difficult. A woman told me, "I just want to go back to my village, even if I die the same day. My family will be there to organize my funeral."

It would not be too complicated to organize burials and funerals at the shelters that could help women to feel reassured and show them the respect all older persons in Burkina are expecting. Their concerns about their funerals are understandable and should be taken into consideration. The women in the shelters are not too demanding; they accept their life conditions and fate, but dying and being buried following their traditions is their ultimate wish.

10.3.4. Recommendation on prevention programs

Basic questions about prevention programs need to be addressed. Based on previous programs, what were the most effective awareness campaigns? Have past projects been evaluated? Unfortunately, because programs are transferring from one ministry to another, information between the different organizations are not always shared. The evaluation of previous programs should give more details on the following themes.

10.3.4.1. Who should be targeted?

The first campaign launched by the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity in 2012 (Plan d'Action National de Lutte Contre l'Exclusion Sociale des Personnes Accusees de Sorcellerie), targeted the whole population of Burkina Faso. Even though witchcraft and witchcraft accusations occur in many parts of the country, it is only in particular places that those

accusations are followed by exclusion (see the mapping in chapter 5). Therefore, it might not be necessary to have a large-scale prevention program, but focusing the action in specific locations can help reduce the cost of the program and will facilitate the design of a more precise and efficient campaign adapted to the situation.

It is only when these locations have been targeted that the important actors playing a role in witchcraft accusations can be identified. Those actors can both be directly involved in the accusation process, or be opposed to the phenomenon. Still, all those people need to be identified, and their role and influence evaluated.

The next step is to find the people/organizations who will have the best potential to discuss with the major actors of accusations. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Mogho Naaba has a strong influence on the Mossi population. Unfortunately, the Mogho will not be able to lead an awareness campaign because he is confined in a position as the ultimate representative of the Mossi tradition. He has no official power even though he is respected and revered, and yet his situation forces him to compromise both with the population and the government.

Nevertheless, other important actors can be found in each location, such as people who are respected and who have the esteem of the population. The chieftaincy has to be included in the prevention program. Not all chiefs have the same power. The leader or *Naaba* from Nanorro has been able to forbid the use of the *siongho* in his village. It seems then evident that some *Naaba* have enough power to impose new rules, but others have not; therefore, other actors in the village might be more powerful than the chief. Furthermore, to avoid cases such as Pilimpikou, prevention programs should also focus on the younger generation of men, such as the members of the militia (*Kogl-wéogo*), who may lead witch hunts in their villages.

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10.3.4.2. What kind of speech/language should be used during an awareness campaign?

The language used in an awareness program is essential. The local language should be used, hence the Mooré. The real difficulty lies in the choice of arguments that could change the public opinion about excluding alleged witches. Since people have strong beliefs in witchcraft, it seems useless to try to prove that witchcraft does not exist. Furthermore, people are afraid of witchcraft and need to be reassured. Is it possible to conciliate beliefs in witchcraft and the fight against witchcraft accusations? One important step would be to find a solution to stop the use of the *siongho* and truth potion.

10.3.4.3. Protecting vulnerable people

The victims of witchcraft have all a similar profile. Most of them are older widows, who have little social support. It would be easy to identify such women in villages and conduct a preventive/protective program to avoid their exclusion. By doing a support program, these women would be able to be less vulnerable and would learn their rights. The program could help them to be economically empowered, and it would protect them from the population who may be more hesitant to accuse them, knowing that they have strong social support.

10.3.4.4. Enforcing laws

As explained in the previous paragraph, laws exist and have the potential to protect vulnerable women from being wrongly accused. Therefore, the government needs to enforce the law. However, the government has neither the financial means nor the human capacity to implement laws. Thus, the government has to rely on chieftaincy to enforce justice. The government and the local chieftaincy have to work together. It would resolve many other problems as well. Finally, the Mossi king and his ministries still have power among their

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subjects, and they also should be involved more actively in the fight against the social exclusion of WAoW.

10.3.4.5. Reinsertion of women accused of witchcraft

The reinsertion programs have shown promising results, but they could be ameliorated. For instance, women who are going to be reinserted should receive some training to develop income-generating activities that would help her to be independent and be able to pay for health care. Women should be psychologically prepared to go back to the village by visiting the town from time to time before the reinsertion. On the day of reintegration, law enforcement officials should be present to explain to the villagers their duty and expose the laws that will protect women against witchcraft accusations; therefore, both the woman who is reinserted and the population are informed about the regulations.

10.3.4.6. Collaboration between different organizations

After conducting the workshop on social exclusion of WAoW, during which eight different organizations were represented, the most uncomfortable conclusion that I have made from the event is the lack of cooperation between the various organizations involved in support of WAOW. This lack of collaboration causes a waste of time, money, and efficiency.

In 2018, I met with representatives of the Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, and Family who were about to take over the leadership on the issue concerning the social exclusion of WAoW, and possibly create and start a new program. However, the previous program conducted by the Ministry of Human Rights had not ended yet, and it seems like there was no close collaboration between the two organizations. The Ministry of Human Rights had to transmit the file to the ministry of social action. However, as I have been able to observe, even

though people from both departments know each other, the communication between them was inefficient, and people were reticent to collaborate.

These observations were further confirmed when I went to a meeting organized by UNESCO in November 2018. The concerns of the organization for WAoW is not recent; it started in 2013 (UNESCO). During that meeting, the topic focused on researching the social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft. UNESCO was funding a research program ignoring and underestimating research done previously on the subject, such as Albert Ouédraogo 2006's research supported by the Ministry of Social action and National Solidarity, which I was able to access. Ouédraogo research would have been a reliable foundation to use to design a new program of prevention. However, UNESCO decided that they had to invest in their own research. Even when I offered to give the data I had collected on the subject, my offer was ignored. Furthermore, they did not invite the Commission Justice et Paix (CJP) to the meetings even though they knew about their significant implications in rehabilitation programs.

All these organizations have all unique expertise and knowledge on the topic that, if put together, would be a real force to fight against the problem related to WAoW. It is not my role to critique and explain why it is so difficult for all these organizations to work together; however, if everyone put WAoW's interests first, such problems would not arise.

10.3.5. Long term solutions

10.3.5.1. Education

When I asked the women in the shelters if they had been to school, all of them said that they had never gone to school. One said that she would not have been accused of witchcraft if she had an education. Therefore, one of the most effective long-term solutions is to educate the

Burkinabe children, and particularly the girls who have less access to secondary education (high-school), and give them real opportunities.

10.3.5.2. National development strategies and women's economic empowerment

Since secondary instruction is not free, advancing education can only be realistic in a country that is developing. Furthermore, women have to be part of the effort and become active members of the Burkinabe society. Therefore, women should have access to land and other means of production that could give them autonomy and empowerment.

On the other hand, we cannot engage in women's empowerment programs without taking into account men's position, and hostility they may have to any form of women's empowerment. The first step would be for men to understand the benefits they would gain through improvements in educating girls and women and offering them the opportunity of developing income-generating activities.

Another aspect of development that needs to be improved is access to quality health care. With a better health care system, fewer people would die from diseases and accident injuries that could be treated. If the number of deaths decreases, so will the number of witchcraft accusations.

Structural improvement is the role of the government; however, financial and technical support is necessary and non-governmental organizations can subsidize the government effort as it is already the case with many international organizations. In addition, women leadership in the public sector needs to be increased at every level as they are concerned by all the aspects of the public life, from education to health care, and they have to be involved in the decisions that affect them directly.

10.4. Conclusion

Observing a phenomenon such as witchcraft accusations from an outsider perspective brings new elements. Whereas it may appear evident that one can better understand an event he or she has experienced, on the other hand, if that person is too implicated in the culture and is subjected to a high hierarchy and patriarchy, he or she may miss the "big picture." Included in this so-called 'big picture' is the idea of habitus and symbolic violence. Besides the subjective lived experience of these women, accusations of witchcraft directed at older women must also be analyzed based on interwoven complex structures such as socioeconomics, gender, and age that form the habitus of each individual.

WAoW are the most vulnerable population because they have no social support since most of them are widows and have been separated from their children after being expelled from their villages. They have almost no assets and no substantial income to support themselves because they have been deprived of all their belongings after being out-cast; women in communities have practically no access to land. Furthermore, their age and physical condition are a limiting factor to hard work as they used to do when they were younger. These women have suffered the restrictions of a highly patriarchal and hierarchical Mossi society since they were born. They did not receive any education and were forced into marriage. They gave birth to children with no reproductive rights, had to accept their husband's multiple wives in a polygynous household, and had to marry their husband's brother when they became widows. When they finally reached an age where they were supposed to get some respite from their daily hard work and enjoy the slightly higher status of an older woman, some of them endured the worst form of oppression when being accused of witchcraft and expelled from their villages.

The problem related to the social exclusion of WAoW is a complex and sensitive subject. Even though the phenomenon seems to decrease over time, and despite the Burkinabe government's and organizations' efforts, it will take time to completely disappear because it requires profound changes in broader Mossi society. The symbolic violence affecting mainly women is embedded in the Mossi culture and embodied in women's lives to such an extent that they cannot easily discern it. The little agency they have could be improved by higher access to education and economic independence, provided that the men support these changes and understand that they will also benefit from them. Still, men will also have to alter their habitus; the shift in habitus depends on every individual in the society. The Mossi society is in constant transformation as any other society, but hierarchy and patriarchy are holding back development by denying access to higher education and economic means for half of its population, namely the women. We can assume that social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft will disappear at the same time as other forms of gender inequalities and oppressions, but profound changes are necessary to reach that point.

Bourdieu confirms that,

> Only political action that really takes account of all the effects of domination that are exerted through the objective complicity between the structures embodied in both women and men and the structures of the major institutions through which not only the masculine order but the whole social order is enacted and reproduced (starting with the state, structured around the opposition between its male right had and its female left hand, and the educational system, responsible for the effective reproduction of all the principles of vision and division, and itself organized around analogous opposition) will be able, no doubt in the long term and with the aid of the contradictions inherent in various mechanisms or institutions concerned, to contribute to the progressive withering away of masculine domination (2001:117)

Feminism in Burkina Faso, as well as in other African countries, has to be reinvented or revigorated, maybe under a new label that could be embraced by all women but also by men to

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shake up the inertia of habitus and overthrow the established order. Research needs to be conducted to reveal the androcentric unconscious forms of symbolic violence present in almost all societies, especially in patriarchal cultures that also intersect with chronic poverty in developing countries.

How could women accused of witchcraft (WAoW) express themselves in a way that could result in positive changes in their lives? Who will denounce their oppression and injustice if their voices cannot be heard? Who are potentially the best advocates for these women? While Burkinabe women could better understand and inform about the subject, beliefs among the population are powerful, and many women would not take the risk of being associated with the group of accused women. To Spivak's rhetorical question: "Can the subaltern speak?" I would like to offer, "Can others listen?" Who are the "others" who could make a difference in subalterns' lives? Women have to be included into larger discussions and policy changes; they have to take charge of their destiny and impose their rights, but for this to happen, women must first be heard by all available means, and by anyone ready to engage into a long and difficult battle against unequal distribution of gender power. I believe that giving voice to the women accused of witchcraft in Burkina Faso requires giving voice to all Burkinabe women who are suffering countless and constant forms of violence, without stumbling, and with courage and resilience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: IRB Expedited Approval for Initial Review

June 27, 2017

Clarisse Barbier, B.A.
Anthropology
4202 East Fowler Ave, SOC107
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#:   Pro00030806
Title: Social Exclusion of Women accused of Witchcraft in Burkina Faso

Study Approval Period: 6/27/2017 to 6/27/2018

Dear Mrs. Barbier:

On 6/27/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
IRB Protocol_CBarbier1.pdf

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Verbal Consent Form_Version1.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved. The Verbal consent form is not a stamped form.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

Appendix 2: IRB Expedited Approval for Continuing Review

USF
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

6/4/2019

Clarisse Barbier, B.A.
Anthropology
4202 East Fowler Ave, SOC107
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Continuing Review**
IRB#:   CR2_Pro00030806
Title: Social Exclusion of Women accused of Witchcraft in Burkina Faso

Study Approval Period: 6/27/2019

Dear Mrs. Barbier:

On 6/3/2019, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within including those outlined below. **Please note this study is approved under the 2018 version of 45 CFR 46 and you will be asked to confirm ongoing research annually in place of a full Continuing Review. Amendments and Reportable Events must still be submitted per USF HRPP policy.**

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
IRB Protocol_CBarbier1.pdf

The IRB determined that your study qualified for expedited review based on federal expedited category number(s):

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with USF HRPP policies and procedures and as approved by the USF IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB via an Amendment for review and approval. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within