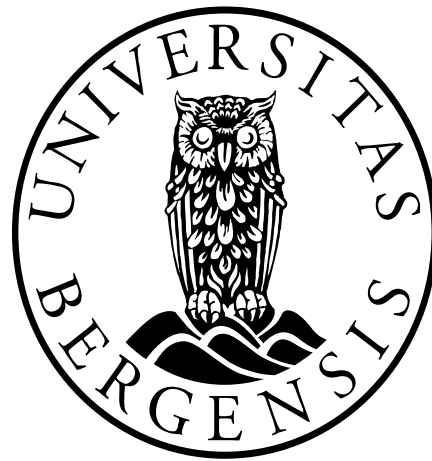


LIFE IN A WITCH CAMP

EXPERIENCES OF RESIDENTS IN THE GNANI WITCH CAMP IN GHANA

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

SPRING 2013

FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT

DEDICATION

To my parents and siblings with love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervisor Cecilie Ødegaard for her tireless efforts which led to the completion of this work. Without her various forms of supervisory roles, this work would have been a dream in the pipeline. I equally thank Marit Tjomsland and Haldis Haukanes for their good counsel and motivation. The efforts of all the administrative staff of the GAD Programme are highly appreciated too. Tons of gratitude also goes to Victor Chimhutu and Padmaja Barua (PhD candidates) for their encouragement. I would equally like to thank Dr. Mavis Dako-Gyeke of the University of Ghana for her mentorship. Also, the contributions of all my colleagues in the GAD Programme, especially regarding their positive criticisms during presentations, were so immense that I say thank you all. Gloria Abena Ampim especially deserves mention, for not only welcoming me to Bergen, but for always being prepared and determined to share useful information when necessary. I will also like to express my gratitude to Sualihu of the Yendi office of the Department of Social Welfare, for agreeing to be my Research Assistant. Also, thank you Adam Lamnatu, Abass Yakubu and Safia Musah for your useful information and suggestions. It will be ingratitude if I fail to acknowledge the contributions of the residents of the Gnani witch camp and all other relevant actors for agreeing to share their lives and experiences with me. Thanks to all of you.

I planned to allow you to proof read this thesis but little did I know that you were not going to live up to see the completion of it. Latifu Gafaru (alias Joe Lartey), you responded to the call of death on 1st March 2013. As I pray for you to be granted Jannah (paradise), I cannot forget your immense contributions in my life. Thank you posthumously my friend, comrade, role model and ‘twin’ brother. Your memory shall forever remain indelible in my life. To Mahama Amidu Latifa, thank you for your patience. The contributions and support of people like Adam Mohammed Anwar Sadat, Achaligabe Akanbasian Colson, Alhassan Abdul Rashid, Ummu Ibrahim, Duut Bonchel Abdulai, Alhaji MND Jawula, Mohammed Yakubu Okperee, Kawawa Show, Habib, Asuro, Abiola and Duga-a are as well acknowledged and greatly appreciated. To all other people, whose names I have not mentioned here, but who have been supportive in the writing of this thesis and in my life in its entirety, I say a big thank you to all of you.

Finally, to Allah is the Glory for His guidance and direction.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAG	ActionAid Ghana
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
CHRAG	Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
USA	United States of America
WFP	World Food Programme

ABSTRACT

One of the features of Ghanaian culture, which also form the worldviews of many Ghanaians, is the belief in and practice of witchcraft. Beliefs in and practices of witchcraft in Ghana cut across the geographical north as well as the geographical south. Thus, almost all the various ethnic groups in Ghana believe in and practice one form of witchcraft or another. The phenomenon is so entrenched to the extent that some communities have been classified as ‘witch camps’ in the northern region of Ghana. Reports of the number of camps are varied, but they are believed to be over six. At these communities, men and women, believed to have bewitched others, are kept under the leadership of a traditional authority. Even though the phenomenon has existed for many years or even centuries, it only attracted media and public attention in the recent past. This recent attention or focus has been based on the assumption, perception or even believe that alleged witches and wizards residing in these communities are living under bad conditions. There has also been the argument that the fundamental rights and freedoms of the residents of these camps are being abused. Using a qualitative research design, this study explores the experiences of the residents of one of the camps; the Gnani witch’s camp. A total of fifteen residents of the camp, made up of thirteen women (alleged witches) and two men (alleged wizards) as well as six relevant actors constituted the informants for the study. In-depth interviews and observations were undertaken to collect data from these informants. Exploring, among other issues, the nature of people’s movement to the camp as well as their social positions, this study revealed that contrary to public perception, the camp serves as a refuge for alleged witches and wizards and not a ‘prison’ or a ‘sanctuary’ as is the assumption in public cycles. Additionally, even though all the alleged witches and wizards reportedly noted that they were innocent of the accusations and were exorcised and cleansed, they nonetheless chose to remain in the camp instead of going back to their original communities. This thesis explores the various reasons for this, including the fear of being stigmatized, fear of fresh attacks and the unquestionable stance of traditional rulers or chiefs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1:1 Background of the Study

When the witch camps phenomenon attracted wider public focus in the recent past, the general idea and assumptions were that the residents of these camps were being victimised. Other arguments were that these ‘victims’ were being classified as second class citizens, without inherent fundamental rights and freedoms. Other sentiments expressed by people in both the print and electronic media were that these communities are synonymous to prisons and should therefore be closed down and people punished for running illegal ‘prisons’. Equally, other people and groups raised the question of why women were largely the ‘victims’ of this practice. From the perspectives generally expressed, the witch camps phenomenon was a slap on the conscience of Ghana; as such, a difficult and challenging social problem requiring urgent attention. As a response to these sentiments, the government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs, announced in 2011 that the intention of the government was to close down these camps. Though there are several of these camps across the northern region of Ghana, the focus of this thesis is exploring the lives and experiences of residents of one of the camps; the Gnani witch camp in the Yendi Municipal area.

Every society has its belief systems and practices that guide individual and group behaviour and conduct. Guided by standard acceptance and practice, these beliefs and practices largely form the worldviews of various societies. One system of belief and practice that is widespread, but also involving cultural specific and historical elements and variations, is the belief in and practice of witchcraft. While witchcraft is noted to be, or to have been practiced by most societies at some points in time, global history about witchcraft has been described by Ruickbie (2006: 116) as long and uneven. Also, although, belief in and practice of witchcraft is universal in outlook, Zuesse (1971: 211) argues that research on witchcraft have largely been focused on Africa. This is understandably so because witchcraft has been central to the day to day experiences of the people of Africa and permeates every aspect of life in many contexts in, especially sub-Saharan Africa (Harries, 2010: 140). Palmer (2010: 13) asserts that although most cultures of the world have their own versions of witchcraft,

none is so tied to a place and people's identity as African witchcraft. Similarly, Evans-Pritchard (1967: 18), in his classical study of witchcraft and sorcery among the Azande, describes witchcraft as a ubiquitous concept playing a critical role in the entire lives and activities of the Azande; in agriculture, fishing, hunting and in both domestic and communal activities. Today, these beliefs and practices continue to play an important role in the lives of a significant number of African communities (Petrus, 2011:1). In Ghana, Adinkrah (2004: 334) notes that belief in and practices of witchcraft among Ghanaians are pervasive and entrenched. According to Adinkrah (2011: 744), all the ethnic groups in Ghana believe in one form of witchcraft. Although there are no precise figures/statistics on witchcraft beliefs and practices in Ghana, estimates put the proportion of the Ghanaian population professing beliefs in witchcraft at around 90% (King, 2009; Onyinah, 2009 in Adinkrah, 2011: 734). In Ghana, it is important to emphasize that there are some differences in the belief in and practice of witchcraft among various ethnic groups. For instance, among the Ewe and most ethnic groups of northern Ghana, such as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Gurushi, among others, it is believed that a witch can bewitch not only members of blood related kin but non-blood related persons as well. Thus, a witch can bewitch an extended family relative, neighbour or even a stranger (Adinkrah, 2004: 335). However, in the case of most of the Akan-speaking groups, such as the Ashanti, Fante, Agona, Akuapem, among others, a person can only be bewitched by maternal kin (Adinkrah, 2004: 335).

It has also been argued that there are two major reasons why people acquire and practice witchcraft. In the first instance, it is asserted that some witches acquire their powers for good intents, such as to protect themselves and their families from other witches and demonic forces. Some have also asserted that the acquisition of witchcraft powers is intended for individual gratification, such as a rise in social status. This assertion implies that people either acquire or inherit witchcraft powers for positive or good reasons. Stewart and Strathern (2004: 3) describe this positive aspect and interpretation of the use of witchcraft powers as a functionalist approach which centre on the maintenance of social order. This group of witches are however believed to be few in Ghana (Adinkrah, 2011: 744). On the other hand, it has also been argued that some other people either inherit or acquire witchcraft powers for bad or negative purposes. Thus, witchcraft is viewed and used as forms of magical as well as surreal acts perpetrated by individuals to harm others (Lyons, 1998: 345). This negative conceptualisation of witchcraft forms a large part of the worldviews of many Ghanaians and

the belief in and practice of witchcraft in Ghana. Described as maleficent witches by Adinkrah (2011: 744), this second group of witches are blamed for several misfortunes in the lives of other people, such as sexual impotence, sterility, miscarriages, asthma, alcoholism, motor vehicle accidents, among other misfortunes. “Unseen, unbidden, and unconcerned with class division, income levels, or educational achievements, the belief in witchcraft brings sickness, death, and destruction to livelihoods and family bonds, requiring only the slightest exposure to spread from family to family” (Palmer, 2010: 13).

The reasons for witchcraft acquisition and practice, as outlined above lead us to the different treatment of men and women believed to possess the powers of witchcraft. For instance, Lyons (1998: 346) notes that though both men and women may practice witchcraft, they are not both treated alike. Similarly, Apter (1993, in Lyons, 1998: 346) asserts that though both men and women can practice witchcraft, women are more frequently accused. Women accused of witchcraft seem to use it for bad purposes, are most often punished more harshly, ostracized, even killed, while male witches use witchcraft to gain and keep political power (Rowlands and Warnier, 1988 in Lyons, 1998: 346) as well as the construction of social order (Gottlieb, 1989 in Lyons, 1998: 346). Again, a study by HelpAge International (2010: 5) asserts that accused women are subjected to psychological trauma, physical harm, and social exclusion, impoverishment through loss of property and assets, and ultimately banishment from their communities. Hence, generally, the possession and practice of witchcraft by women is seen as personal, antisocial, evil as well as destructive (Gottlieb, 1989 in Lyons, 1998: 346). On the other hand, men with witchcraft powers use it for social good, such as the protection of their families. Finally, there is another variation which seeks to summarise the reasons behind this differentiation between men and women. In their study, Nathan, Kelkar and Xiaogang (1998: 61) found that witch-hunting was a reserved of men in India and China, with women largely as the victims and living under constant threats of being declared as witches and turned into a source of evil. According to Nathan, Kelkar and Xiaogang, witch-hunting, especially among the Santhal is related to attempts to institute certain gender roles and norms that were different from what existed before then. With the status as witch finders, men’s authority over women was thus established and confirmed. Nathan, Kelkar and Xiaogang (1998: 61) conclude that “such an ideology is certainly conducive to the social process of controlling women. The threat of being declared a witch will help to restrict non-conformism or deviance from the rules that are being established”.

1.2 Problem Statement

With alleged witches and their activities largely viewed as evil, there are different ways by which various societies and communities respond to these ‘evil’ people and their ‘evil’ deeds. These methods vary across different ethnic and communal groups in Ghana. However, as Adinkrah (2011: 744) notes, with the activities of witches largely seen as evil, there is a general practice of dealing stringently with them, when caught. Adinkrah emphasizes that to be completely exorcised, alleged witches must confess their witchcraft activities, reveal the source of their witchcraft powers, as well as surrender the witchcraft substance to an exorcist for destruction. In some parts of the northern region of Ghana, ways and manner by which alleged witches and wizards should be dealt with or treated, has resulted in the existence of certain communities, referred to as witch camps. At these colonies, as Palmer (2010: 6) describes the camps, rituals are carried out to cleanse alleged witches and wizards of their magic. Even though some of these camps have existed for years, and even centuries, they were not given wider public attention by people until recently. In terms of the number of camps in the region, there seem to be no precise data. The non-existence of specific and reliable data is ostensibly due to the little focus, especially in research, that the phenomenon has attracted over the years. The present study was concentrated in one of the camps, that is, the Gnani camp, located within the Yendi Municipality of the northern region. The selection of the Gnani camp was seen as appropriate because in the first instance, the little public and media attention appear to be centred on the other camps, especially the Gambaga camp. Also, the selection was informed by the fact that the Gnani camp is said to be the largest camp in terms of population and one of the camps where both men (alleged wizards) and women (alleged witches) live. This research particularly focuses on how gender and other social positional factors play various roles in the process related to witchcraft accusations and the treatment of alleged witches and wizards thereafter. In Ghana and other parts of Africa, extended family networks are very significant in the provision of needs such as food and health care, among others. With the alleged witches and wizards now far removed from this network of families and other relations, the ways in which they are able to access these basic services at this new environment, receives particular attention in this research work. Finally, this research touches on how alleged witches and wizards are able to maintain and create relationships in the camp. This is important because issues of social relationship are important since it may determine how they are able to cope with life in the camp.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main Research Questions

- (1) What is the significance of moving to the camp for the lives of alleged witches and wizards?
- (2) What is the significance of gender and social positioning for how alleged witches and wizards deal with accusations and life in the camp?

1.3.3 Specific Research Questions

- (1) What reasons account for the movement of alleged witches and wizards to the camp?
- (2) How are alleged witches and wizards received and treated when they arrive in the camp?
- (3) What characterises the relationship between the residents of the camp and the traditional authority, kin and kith, other community members and amongst themselves?
- (4) What is the significance of people's social positioning in the process of being accused and attempting to defend themselves?
- (5) How are issues of social justice such as health, food and water and sanitation addressed in the camp, and what reasons are responsible for alleged witches and wizards staying in the camp despite the fact that they may be qualified to move out of the camp after being exorcised and cleansed?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In Ghana, a significant number of women, like women in other areas of the world, have at one point in their lives suffered from one form of violence and abuses. These violence and abuses are either overt or covert. While some of these violence and abuses have attracted public and policy attention, others have not. For instance, certain cultural practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), widowhood rites and Trokosi¹ have all been made criminal by the laws of Ghana through wider public focus and condemnation. The passage of

¹ This is a cultural practice whereby young girls are kept at certain shrines to atone for the crimes or misdeeds of their parents. It is largely practiced in the Volta Region of Ghana.

the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 723) further gave a wider boost on the rights of women, especially at the domestic level, believed to be where most violence and abuses occur. Although frowned upon by the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana (Articles 16 (1) and 15 (1) among others), the phenomenon of people, largely women, being kept at various witch camps in Ghana has not received extensive public focus, compared to the other forms of gender related issues as initially highlighted. Thus, it remains an unresolved social problem. The main purpose for which this research is significant is therefore to draw public attention and awareness on the need to respond to this practice. Closely related to this have been calls by various individuals, groups, national institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for the witch camps, including the Gnani one to be closed down. These calls have however not received extensive focus. Therefore, the calls have not resulted in any significant change, since the practice still exists in modern day Ghana, taunted globally as the epic centre of democracy on the continent of Africa. It was therefore significant to explore why this complex social problem still exist despite these calls. Finally, with the phenomenon receiving little research focus, this study will contribute to knowledge about witchcraft and the witch camps' phenomenon, based on fieldwork, participant observations as well as knowledge about the everyday lives and personal histories of the residents of the camp.

1.5 The Research Setting: Brief Profile of Ghana and the Gnani Witch Camp

A former British colony, Ghana is one of the countries located in the west coast of Africa and one of the first countries, south of the Sahara, to have gained self-rule in 1957. In terms of population, final results from a 2010 Population and Housing Census, released by the Ghana Statistical Service (2012: 2), put Ghana's population at 24, 658, 823. This population is made up of different ethnic groups. Thus, as Adinkrah (2011: 742) emphasizes, the population of Ghana is ethnically, linguistically and religiously heterogeneous. While Arthur (2009: 50) put the ethnicity composition at about ninety, Hauer (2004: 26) put the figure at about one hundred. However, the various ethnic groups have been grouped into five major categories depending on shared histories and cultures. These groups are the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe (Hauer, 2004: 26). A large section of the population (60%) resides in rural areas and agriculture (60%) remains the major sector employing a greater segment of people (Agyeman, Nuamah and Oduro, 2011: 60). Administratively, Ghana is divided into ten regions with the capital located in Accra. The northern region, with

its capital in Tamale, is the largest of the ten regions in terms of landmass, occupying 70,384 square kilometres. This accounts for 29.5 per cent of the total land area of Ghana².

Sometimes referred to as the Gnani-Tindang camp; the Gnani witch camp is located in the Yendi Municipality of the northern region. Traditionally, the Gnani camp is located within the traditional area of the Dagombas, referred to as Dagbon. Historically, Mahama (2004) notes that literature about most ethnic groups in northern Ghana, including Dagombas, is very scarce. Therefore, quite a lot of historical information on the lives and practices of the ethnic Dagomba and Dagbon are built around oral traditions, so are most other ethnic groups in the northern region. As such, the history of the Gnani camp is recollected through oral accounts. The specific year or period when the Gnani camp was established is not known. Oral history has it that the purpose for the establishment of the camp was to seek spiritual protection for the Ya-Na (the overlord of the Dagbon traditional area) and his people. According to ActionAid Ghana (2008: 22), a priest was brought in from Togo to provide spiritual protection to the Ya-Na and his people. The Togo priest was mandated to spiritually assess every visitor to the Ya-Na's palace, to find out whether he or she had good or bad intentions. With the spirits of the camp built around a stone, the priest instructed the overlord to place the stone at the outskirts of Yendi, the traditional capital of Dagbon. Thus, the stone was placed at Gnani. Before the Togo priest could leave, a local priest was appointed and spiritually fortified to undertake the daily activities of the place. With the passage of time, alleged witches and wizards were sent to the Gnani community to ascertain their innocence or guilt. With the rejection by families and community members, they were accepted to live in the camp by the leadership (ActionAid, 2008: 22). Subsequent movement of alleged witches and wizards to the community and the rejection by families and community members resulted in members of the public referring to the community as a witch camp.

² Government of Ghana official website (www.ghana.gov.gh, retrieved on 26/04/2013).

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

What characterizes the lives of people who have been accused of witchcraft at their various communities and later been identified to be innocent of the accusations after going through the traditional process of identification, exorcism and cleansing? Why do many of them choose to remain in the camp after being declared innocent? These are some of the questions which one of the theoretical frameworks which guides this study; that is, the stigma theory, will cover. What roles do the power relations of people in the society play in the treatment of people accused of witchcraft and in the handling of witchcraft-related issues? How do the power relations between people as well as the social positions of accused persons affect people's opportunities to defend themselves when they are labeled? What are these power relations? Are there variations in these power relations? If there are, what are their features and how are they interrelated? These are, but some of the few questions which the second theoretical framework which informs this study seeks to answer. I am hereby referring to intersectional theory.

2.2 Stigma Theory

Ervin Goffman is credited for the development of the stigma theory. He "inspired a profusion of research on the nature, sources, and consequences of stigma" (Link and Phelan, 2001: 363). Goffman (1963: 1) traces the origin of the concept of stigma to the Greeks. He notes that the Greeks "originated the term stigma to refer to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was a slave, a criminal, or a traitor — a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places". Referring to some stigma-related concepts, such as a failing, a shortcoming and a handicap, Goffman posits that these signs are discrepancies and are extensively discrediting in the sense that it sets those people apart from others. Thus, a stigma is used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting (1963: 2) and a stigmatized person is described as a person who possesses an attribute that others see as negative, unfavorable, or in some instances unacceptable (Westbrook, Bauman and Shinnar, 1992: 633-634). To be able to stigmatize, Gilmore and

Somerville (1994: 1341) argue that the person or group of persons to be stigmatized has to be identified. Thus, they must be made recognizable through certain features which are adopted to stigmatize them. Gilmore and Somerville further posit that the recognition most often involves some distinguishing or identifying characteristics or traits. Link and Phelan (2001: 367) are also of the opinion that dominant cultural beliefs link labeled persons to undesirable characteristics; to negative stereotypes. Thus, stigmatized people are placed in distinct categories in order to accomplish some degree of separation of “us” from “them” (Link and Phelan, 2001: 367). They are considered as bad and should therefore be despised and avoided (Campbell, Nair, Maimane and Sibiyi, 2005: 8). They may also experience status loss and discrimination that may lead to unequal outcomes (Link and Phelan, 2001: 367). This status loss and discrimination includes structural discrimination, for instance when institutional practices disadvantage stigmatized groups (Yang, et’al, 2007: 1525). Thus, this social disapproval is one of the central tenets and hallmarks of stigma and of stigma theory (Westbrook, Bauman and Shinnar, 1992: 634).

Goffman (1963) identifies three types of stigma. These are stigma of character traits, physical stigma/abominations of the body and the stigma of group identity/tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion. Goffman’s pioneering work is more general and largely focuses on how it feels to be a stigmatized individual as well as how to deal with stigmatization. Goffman’s theory of stigmatization, Westbrook, Bauman and Shinnar (1992: 633) argue, was postulated to explain the behavior, perceptions as well as beliefs, and development of the social and psychological self of stigmatized persons. The purpose for which the stigma theory is adopted for this study is not to dilate on all the three categories of stigma as Goffman offers or the different facets of stigma as applied within different disciplines, but to illustrate how stigmatization is created by structural power. Parker and Aggleton (2003: 18) for instance argue that stigmatization is part of complex struggles for power that form an essential feature of social life. Also, common concepts in stigma theory such as labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination are described by Link and Phelan (2001: 367) as elements which work together in a coordinated function, situated around the influence of power that allow stigma to unfold. Relating stigmatization to the exercise of power, Gilmore and Somerville (1994: 1342) posit that stigmatization is an exercise of power over those stigmatized and a manifestation of utter disrespect for them. Stigmatized people are devalued and people who are devalued are more likely to suffer further stigmatization. Thus, this

reinforces or augments pre-existing devaluation (Gilmore and Somerville, 1994: 1344). In view of this, “stigmatization is entirely contingent on access to social, economic, and political power that allows the identification of differentness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labeled persons into distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination” (Link and Phelan, 2001: 367). By this, stigma is seen or conceptualized as processual and is created by structural power (Yang, et’al., 2007: 1525). This study illustrates that people accused of witchcraft fear or suffer from different forms of stigmatization. This fear partly arises out of the powerlessness of accused witches and wizards. I argue that one of the long term effects of accusing and labeling people as witches and wizards is the loss of social status. Their powerlessness may partly be seen from their inability to have control over their lives and over the accusations. Thus, once they are labeled and stigmatized, they may grudgingly and resignedly accept their circumstances. They are likely to remain at that lower ebb of society, as those who possess enormous powers may continuously work against them in order to maximize the utility that comes with power.

Link and Phelan (2001: 365) raise two important challenges which confront the theory of stigma in general. In the first place, Link and Phelan (2001: 365) argue that in some disciplines, some social scientists, who do not belong to stigmatized groups, and who study stigma, sometimes do so from the vantage point of theories that are uninformed by the lived experience of the people they study (also see Kleinman et al, 1995; Schneider, 1988). Specifically, Schneider (1988 in Link and Phelan, 2001: 365) posits that “most able-bodied experts” give priority “to their scientific theories and research techniques rather than to the words and perceptions of the people they study”. In this study, the lived experiences of the informants regarding stigma is elicited. This enables informants to share their own experiences regarding stigma and other related matters. The second challenge which Link and Phelan (2001: 365) raise is what they refer to as the individualistic focus of stigma. Oliver (1992 in Link and Phelan, 2001: 365) for instance argues that one of the central tenets of stigma research has been built around the perceptions of individuals and the consequences of such perceptions for micro-level interactions. By this assumption, it neglects mezzo and macro level interactions. What must be noted however is the fact that stigmatized individuals are affected by mezzo and macro level interactions as well. This is because the actions and activities of forces and institutions within the mezzo and macro level environments directly or indirectly affect and impact the lives of stigmatized people. For instance, it is through the

activities of community members as well as the ideologies of these communities that witchcraft accusations start and fester. Also, the actions of the state (macro-level environment) such as in the area of legislation and policies towards victims of witchcraft and witchcraft related violence, is essential in the handling of witchcraft accusations as well as the protection of the human and fundamental rights and freedoms of accused persons. Guided by this, not only are the perceptions of individuals elicited in this study, but also, the perceptions of people and institutions within the mezzo and macro level environments, such as community-based organizations and state-based institutions are elicited as well. By doing this, it is envisaged that the activities of actors within the mezzo and macro level environments may go a long way to affect how policies and programs are initiated and implemented in response to witchcraft accusations and its related consequences, one of which is stigmatization.

2.3 Theory of Intersectionality

Intersectionality has been used to imply different things in a variety of disciplines and settings. As a result of this, there cannot be a singular definition for the concept as there is a great deal of diversity in both the way it is theorized as well as how it is applied (Anthias, 2012: 125). Etymologically, the coining of the concept is traced to Crenshaw (1989). Crenshaw's first use of the concept highlights different ways and dimensions by which race and gender interact to shape Black women's employment experiences (Crenshaw 1989: 139). In a more comprehensive application of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) describes structural and political intersectionality. In the former, Crenshaw shows how the intersection of race and gender by women of color makes their experience of domestic violence and rape qualitatively different from white women. On political intersectionality, Crenshaw highlights how the combined effects of feminist and antiracist politics assist in marginalizing violence against women of color (p. 1245). She emphasize that women of color are often located within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas (p. 1252).

Describing intersectionality as mutually constitutive relations among social identities, Shields (2008: 301) notes that intersectionality, as a central tenet of feminist thinking, has transformed how gender is conceptualized in research and specifically as a theory of how gender is discussed. As a theory, intersectionality is traced to second wave feminism (Shields,

2008: 303) and from the writings of women of color in the 1960s and 1970s (Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008: 5). The writings of feminist thinkers of second wave feminism and that of women of color argue that most feminist scholarship at that time was from the perspectives of middle-class, educated, white women, and that an inclusive view of women's position in society should substantively acknowledge the intersections of gender with other significant social identities, especially race (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981 in Shields, 2008: 302-303). Anthias (2012: 126) argues that the matrix of gender, ethnicity and class which constitute multiple identities are very essential in an intersectional approach. Anthias (2012: 126) further notes that these interdependent identities and oppressions arise out of social relations and are demonstrated through practice. This is understandably so because as Shields (2008: 303) argues, "the theoretical foundation for intersectionality grew from the study of the production and reproduction of inequalities, dominance, and oppression". It is equally important to emphasize that literature is replete with avalanche of synonymous terminologies which are used interchangeably to denote intersectionality. Anthias (2012: 126) identifies such concepts to include triple oppression, interconnections, interplay, interlocking systems of oppression, fractured identities, assemblages, overlapping systems as well as simultaneous oppressions. This study illustrates how multiple identities of people such as their ages, gender, levels of education, economic position among others are common features which set the parameters for witchcraft accusations. I illustrate that it is from these features that the production and reproduction of inequalities, dominance and oppression that witchcraft accusations usually occur and fester. Similarly, Shields (2008: 304) posits that "the facts of our lives reveal that there is no single identity category that satisfactorily describes how we respond to our social environment or are responded to by others". In the light of this, this study argues that the way and manner people respond to witchcraft accusations are not precipitated by single categories of people, but multiple factors. Also, the relationship between people accused of witchcraft and other members of the society are either directly or indirectly influenced by multiple factors.

The second factor which makes the theory of intersectionality appropriate for this study is intersectional theory's demonstration of ways in which social inequality and oppression in the domains of power structure are manifested. Collins (2011: 93) notes that the construction of mutual systems of power produces what she refers to as "distinctive social locations" for individuals and groups within them. Collins cites the case of situations

whereby women of color were disempowered and positioned within complex social inequalities differently than white men or white women. One of the central themes on which this study focuses is how power relations in the society is manifested when witchcraft labeling are made. For instance, how are these power relations seen in cases of accusations? Are accused persons given opportunities to be heard? Do power relations determine how these opportunities are guaranteed or not? These are but few power-related questions which this study focuses on and which it seeks to tease out answers to. Explaining various forms of power and dominance, Collins (2000: 274) argues that power is not only concern about dialectical relationship linking, for instance, oppression and activism, but also power is manifested in what she refers to as the *matrix of domination*. By definition, the matrix of domination refers to the overall organization of power in any society. Collins posits that any organization of power in a society is arranged around intersecting forms of domination. How and in which manner these systems merge, Collins argues, are historically and socially specific. This implies that power relations and dominance in every society has specific social and historical roots. Collins (2000: 276) also group power relations or the matrix of domination into four interrelated forms. These are structural, disciplinary, interpersonal and hegemonic power relations. My objective in this study is not to use all the four interrelated domains of power relations, but to explore how two of these power relations apply to witchcraft accusations. These are structural power and interpersonal power relations. In the first instance, Collins (2000: 277) notes that the structural domain of power shows how social institutions are organized to reproduce for instance, women's subordination over time. Thus, these institutions can consist of society's laws, polity, religion, health, housing, education, media, as well as economy among others. How these structural elements are constituted and organized sets the parameters for power relations and dominance. I illustrate in this study that witchcraft accusations in Ghana are organized and are influenced by certain institutions which constitute the structure of society. For example, in the traditional society, the organization of politics at the local level in many communities across Ghana is dominated by men. For example, chiefdoms are largely the preserve of men. Referring to Mamprushis, also of northern Ghana and who share a common ancestor with the Dagombas and virtually similar cultures, Drucker-Brown (1993: 531) argues that Mamprushi women are accused of witchcraft partly because they have no public role in the politico-jural domain. Women primarily perform subordinate and supportive roles in chiefdoms. They draw respect from the

social positions of their husbands (chiefs). As Palmer (2010: 56) notes, if a woman is married to a chief, she feels the respect of her colleagues automatically. Meanwhile it is most often men who occupy these traditional chiefdoms who adjudicate over traditional disputes, including witchcraft accusations, the majority of which accused persons are most often women. In the area of the economy, it is often argued that there is a relationship between witchcraft accusation and poverty. For example, Miguel (2005: 1153) argues that in Tanzania, the link between poverty and witch murders is informed by the fact that most witch killings takes place in poor rural areas largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

It must be emphasized that structural power relations is not quite different from Crenshaw's (1991) discussion of structural intersectionality. On battering for instance, Crenshaw (1991: 1245) argues that most women of color who suffered these physical abuses in the case of the USA were unemployed, underemployed and largely poor. She further notes that these women had to seek protection by seeking for shelter. Other structural conditions which this study discusses relates to general cultural assumptions and access to information. In the case of culture for example, witchcraft forms the world views of many Ghanaians. Thus, the activities of many Ghanaians are informed or explained from within a perspective or lenses of witchcraft. For example, the death of a child may be interpreted to have come from different sources, including witchcraft. Culturally, the death may be interpreted and attributed to the actions and practices of certain persons or groups of persons in the society. Regarding information, I illustrate that most often, when there are even laws or legislations frowning on witchcraft accusations or the treatment of alleged witches, access to them remain a challenge. This is because, usually people who are accused of witchcraft are illiterates who in the first instance may not be aware that such laws exist and secondly, even if they are aware, access to them poses a problem.

Again, in witchcraft accusations, social relations are influential. As Golooba-Mutebi (2005: 947) notes, witchcraft accusations are usually preceded by the emergence of strains in interpersonal relationships, among others. This brings Collins's (2000: 287) interpersonal domain of power into sharp focus. The functions of the interpersonal domain of power, Collins (2000: 287) argues, rests through routinized, day-to-day practices of people towards one another. Thus, this form of power is engendered by the kind of personal relationships people build and maintain with others in their daily lives. Some of these relationships may

include father-mother-children relationships, father-mother-children-other extended family relationships as well as family-neighbor relationships. Such personal relationships are especially influenced by the kinds and levels of interactions people create and maintain with others. Relating this to witchcraft accusations, I illustrate in this study that the relationships between people accused of witchcraft and other members of the society or environment, such as kin and kith as well as neighbours, are significant in accusations. Parker and Aggelton (2003: 5) describe this as the social and cultural phenomenon of witchcraft. I argue that players in these kinds of relationships may easily become targets of witchcraft accusations, especially when people begin to experience difficulties in life (which may sometimes be too sudden) and are unable to unearth logical explanations to them. This makes the belief and practice of witchcraft, Parker and Aggelton (2003: 5) argues, a common phenomenon in Africa where bonds and allegiances to families, village, and neighborhood, and community abound and the lives and conditions of people are interdependent. Also, this study does not only focus on witchcraft as functions of social relationship, it equally looks at the kind of social relationships that exists between residents of the Gnani camp and significant others such as the traditional authority, kin and kith as well as other members of the entire Gnani community.

Finally, it is argued that by adopting an intersectional approach to the analysis of social phenomenon or social problems, the likelihood of promoting social justice and influencing social change is likely high. Shields (2008: 309) emphasizes that intersectional theory based research originated from a point of view with an agenda for positive social change. In discussing all the four domains of power, Collins (2000) standpoint rests on pointing out breaking the jinxes in US history which ensured the oppression of women of color in different domains or settings such as their homes, transport stations and work places. According to Collins, creating an equal society could only be achieved or materialized through justice-based activism. Also, in undertaking the social change agenda of intersectionality, Garry (2011: 828) notes that intersectionality assists by pointing out fruitful as well as complex marginalized locations. However, Garry argues that intersectionality does not do the work for society; it only shows people where to start from. It also proffers various kinds of questions to ask. Making reference to June Jordan's discussion of freedom, Collins (2011: 91) again argues that understanding complex social inequalities are inextricably linked to a social justice framework, or, the intersections of ideas and actions. Apart from

intersections of ideas and actions, Collins (2011: 93) again notes that meeting the needs or ensuring social justice of marginalized groups of people cannot be met by mono-categorical thinking. It will require showing how multiple systems of power affect the lives of the marginalized, not in a prioritized fashion, but instead, in a synergistic fashion. Collins is of the argument that Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional argument expresses a social justice framework which requires more comprehensive analyses of social problems intended to yield more effective social actions in response to social injustices that marginalized groups of people are subjected to in their daily lives. Collins (2011: 93) rhetorically asks, why write this article on women of color and violence at all, if not to provide some insight for social justice initiatives? What the social justice framework, which intersectional theory espouses, seeks to do implies that social justice for the marginalized will require data, access to information and public action. Access to information on the lives and conditions of the marginalized, how socially constructed forms of identities results in marginalization as well as how power relations come to play in all these, may help initiate and implement social justice-based laws, policies and programs. This will not inure to the benefit of the marginalized in society alone but will be for the collective good of other members of the public. This study is premised on the assumption that in the end, the study will help in casting a critical eye on the conditions of people accused of witchcraft, considered largely as a marginalized group of people. By doing this, it is envisaged that their lives and conditions may be improved through social justice-based programs, activities, projects, policies and laws.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the various methods that were adopted to conduct this study. It includes an overview of the study area, selection of informants, methods of data collection, sources of data, ethical considerations and dilemmas, data analysis and some challenges that were encountered in the course of the study.

3.2 Research Design/Strategy

Central to this study was to explore the question of identification of an alleged witch or wizard, social positions, social relationship and everyday lives of residents of the Gnani camp of the northern region of Ghana. Since the research was concerned with the experiences of the residents of the camp, to give informants the opportunity to freely express their views was very essential. Granted this, the research design that was adopted for the study was that of a qualitative approach. This afforded me the opportunity to probe deeper into the responses offered by informants. This is because the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide textual descriptions of how people experience a given issue, phenomenon or situation (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey, 2005: 1). Mack et.al (2005: 1) suggest that qualitative research is effective in identifying intangible issues and is also especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of particular populations. Witchcraft beliefs and practices are part of the culture of people. Witchcraft beliefs such as witches' allegedly flying and operating at night, changing into other creatures among others, are classified as intangible since they cannot be physically touched. In the case of the residents of the Gnani camp, the question of identification and how the residents related amongst themselves as well as with other members of the larger Gnani community all had cultural dimensions which were explored in the study.

Finally, the qualitative design was seen as appropriate for this study because as Yin (2010: 8) notes, qualitative method enables the study of people in a real-world setting, by discovering how they cope and thrive in those settings. Yin cites contextual conditions such as the social, institutional and environmental conditions within which people's lives take place. Based on the level of contextual richness, these conditions may strongly influence the

everyday lives of people. Hence, by using the qualitative approach for this study, it was possible to discover how the informants, especially the residents of the camp, coped and thrived.

3.3 Selection and Profile of Research Area

Gnani is found in the Yendi Municipality of the Northern Region of Ghana. Located in the eastern part of the Northern Region, Yendi is about 47 kilometers from Tamale, the regional capital. Yendi is also the traditional capital of the Dagombas, the largest ethnic group in the Northern Region. Accordingly, it is the seat of the Yaa-Naa, the Over Lord of Dagbon (Government of Ghana, 2012: 7). Based on the 2010 Population and Housing Census, Yendi is reported to have a population of 199, 592 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012: 10). The estimated population of Gnani is 1,800 (ActionAid, 2008: 21). Like most of the communities in the municipality, the majority of people in the Gnani community are largely subsistent farmers. The Gnani community, in terms of ethnic composition consists of Dagombas and Konkombas as well as other minority ethnicity groups. It must be emphasized that these two ethnic groups are the dominant groups in the eastern corridor of the northern region of Ghana. It was therefore not surprising that a majority of the residents of the Gnani camp were made up of these two ethnic groups. In terms of social services, the Gnani community is hooked to the national electricity grid, except the area housing the alleged witches and wizards. The community also has modern educational facilities such as a primary school and a junior high school. In the area of health care, the area has a health post. There is no portable water supply in the community. Therefore, community members depend on the water source from river Oti which passes through Gnani. Also, sanitation facilities, such as toilets are non-existent. Religiously, the people practice the three dominant religions in Ghana. These are Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

3.4 Preliminary Visits and Selection of Research Assistant

A week was used to visit the Yendi Municipal Assembly to first and foremost introduce myself and the purpose of my intended three months study stay in the area. With this done, three days were used to visit the study community of Gnani itself to acquaint myself with the area as well as make necessary initial contacts. The hiring of a research assistant preceded the visit to the Gnani community. The research assistant was hired at Yendi, the capital of the Municipal capital. He had completed Senior High School and worked with the Municipal

office of the Department of Social Welfare. His works had therefore sent him to several communities within the area, including the Gnani community. He was therefore able to build the first contact with one of the community's members (gatekeeper), who subsequently facilitated the meeting with the traditional authority. He also assisted in organising the various interviews.

3.5 Selection of Informants

Two different groups of people constituted the informants for this study. These were the residents of the camp and relevant actors. A total of fifteen (15) residents of the camp (people who had been accused), made up of thirteen (13) females and two (2) males were selected based on availability and willingness. The differences in number between the females and males is understandably so because an overwhelming number of people living in the camp were women. It must be emphasized that it was difficult to identify the ages of both the male and female residents. This was because; most of them did not have birth certificates. Though efforts were made to encourage them to recollect historical moments, which could be used to estimate their ages, it was quite difficult to do this. Observations I conducted showed that the selected informants were quite old and could probably be over 60 years of age. Related to this, a secondary data source by ActionAid (2008: 22) put the figure at 72% being over 70 years. Though, most of them might have gone to the camp very young, the activities of various NGOs in the camp and in the communities could be responsible for the reduction in the number of young people sent to the camp by their communities. Some of these activities include public awareness creation and education about the rights and fundamental freedoms of the residents.

A total of six (6) relevant actors were selected for the study. The relevant actors were made of people with particular knowledge or information about the camp and who have been actively involved in the activities in the camp. They were selected based on their respective functions relative to the camp. The relevant actors included the traditional authority, a member of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the Yendi Municipality, a caregiver/caretaker, a member of the Municipal Assembly's office of the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAG) and two persons from two Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). These NGOs were ActionAid Ghana and Songtaba (literally translated as 'Lets Help Each Other or One Another'). To take the perspectives of

the various relevant actors was necessary because each of them had an important role to play in the camp. For instance, the traditional authority had the overall administrative responsibility in the camp, including undertaking the processes involved in the identification and cleansing of prospective residents of their witchcraft powers. Also, as a welfare department, the Department of Social Welfare has the mandate of ensuring that the welfare needs of the residents of the camp, especially their basic welfare needs such as food and health, are met. The DSW is also the government agency mandated to implement the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) program. The impact of this program, on the lives of the residents of the camp was one of the important issues captured. Regarding caretakers, their perspectives were also captured because they lived with some of the residents and provided them some level of care and support. Finally, the two NGOs (Songtaba and ActionAid Ghana) have over the years been involved in advocating for program and policy actions by the state and civil society organisations, aiming to enhance the welfare of not only the residents of the Gnani camp, but also the welfare of residents of the other camps in the region. Interviewing personnel from these two organisations was significant because they provided relevant insights for the study, especially on matters related to the conditions in the camp and the livelihood conditions of the residents.

3.6 Sources of Data

Two main data sources were used for the study. These were primary data and secondary data. The primary data constituted the information collected from the field through various semi-structured interviews with the two categories of informants; the female and male residents of the camp and relevant actors. The secondary data was gathered from media reports (print and electronic), books, journal articles and reports by organisations. It was very difficult getting up-to-date information about the camp, especially on issues regarding the number of female and male residents and the number of reintegrated residents. This was because the traditional authority that has administrative responsibility of the camp could not find the document that had the information. It was later observed that lack of education by the head of camp made it quite difficult to keep records. To get information on the number of residents of the camp over the years therefore, I relied on secondary data sources, especially from CHRAG and ActionAid Ghana regarding these issues.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Indepth interviews and non-participant observations constituted the two main methods of data collection that were used during this study. While semi-structured interviews constituted the only method used to collect data from the relevant actors, both indepth interviews and non-participant observations constituted methods adopted to collect information from the residents of the camp. The conduct of the interviews was guided by a semi-structured interview guide. With the topic and research questions already defined, the use of the semi-structured interview guide provided direction and purpose. It at the same time allowed for some level of flexibility during the process of interviewing. Issues covered by the interview guide for the residents of the camp included matters of identification as ‘witches’ or ‘wizards’ in the camp and their relationship with the traditional authority, the relationship with community members as well as kin and kith such as their children and other family members. The purpose was to help access information regarding the identification process conducted to identify alleged witches and wizards and how all these relationships inform the conditions of the residents of the camp. It was also to help identify whether or not their social positions or statuses in society informed their movement either voluntarily or involuntarily to the camp. Other issues covered included social justice matters such as their health, access to basic needs such as food and portable water. It also covered reintegration issues. It also sought to find out about the effects of national interventions in certain policy areas such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programs. As pro-poor policies and programs particularly aim at risk mitigation and poverty alleviation, the purpose was to identify whether or not these interventions are impacting positively or otherwise on the lives and conditions of the informants, that is, the residents of the camp.

Regarding the interview guide for the relevant actors, the major issues focused on the history of the camp and reasons behind its establishment, how people accused of witchcraft were treated prior to the establishment of the camp, the number of people residing in the camp and how they get to the camp. The purpose was to help provide historical information and how these play out regarding witchcraft belief and practices in the camp. There were also matters of basic needs availability such as water, food and health and the essential roles of various government interventions such as the NHIS and LEAP programs. Information provided on the NHIS and LEAP by the relevant actors helped in cross-checking related

information provided by the alleged witches and wizards. In the end, it helped quite well in triangulating the study. Issues such as the nature of residents-traditional authority and community relationships as well as the question of reintegration of residents into their original communities were captured as well. It is important to also emphasize that both groups of informants were given the opportunity to pass general comments. Again, the purpose for doing this was to help cross check and clarify previous information granted. It also offered both groups of informants the opportunity to identify, or even elaborate other issues they thought were quite relevant, not only to the study, but also to the general practice of witchcraft and welfare matters.

The second method was observing the activities and lives of the residents of the camp as a non-participant. Belief and practice of witchcraft being a culturally sensitive issue, there were certain information that could preferably be collected through observations. Issues of relationships and social interactions could best be collected through observations. For instance, how the residents of the camp related and interacted with the traditional authority, their caretakers such as children and grandchildren as well as other community members as well as the relationships among themselves were observed. In addition to this, information about how the residents lived their everyday lives within the camp was collected through observations. In gathering the observation data, some days were set aside for community visits, not to conduct individual interviews, but to ordinarily discuss everyday community and national issues with the people while observing the activities and lives of the alleged witches and wizards. During the period, one of the female residents of the camp unfortunately died. As a result, it afforded me the opportunity to observe most of the activities pertaining to her internment and related funeral rites.

3.8 The Interview Process

For purposes of effective data collection, building a good and trusting relationship between a researcher and informants is very essential. Therefore, it is very useful to have a good rapport with informants. As Smith (1983) notes, rapport building with informants in research is an important determinant for a successful interview since the lack of a trusting relationship between a researcher and informants can compromise data quality. With this assumption in mind and to gain the support and attention of the informants, I built very good rapport with them, bearing in mind that they could show resistance without a trusting relationship. This

was achieved by freely talking and sometimes hugging the resident informants. Hugging was a sign of acceptance and willingness to open up for all the issues I wanted to discuss with them. Time was again made to listen to all individual concerns and problems of the residents of the camp that were not related to the research at all. Regarding the conduct of the various interviews, they were all conducted at mutually agreed times, locations and atmospheres comfortable to both the informants and the researcher. While the interviews with the residents of the camp were conducted under the shades of some trees found within the precincts of the camp; the interviews with the relevant actors, except the caretaker and traditional authority, were conducted in their offices. It was identified due to the observation that most of the residents of the camp felt very uncomfortable being interviewed in their rooms or huts. Most of the interviews with the residents were also conducted in the afternoon. As a result of this, most of them preferred sitting outside their compounds and under the shades of trees to enjoy natural air. They felt more relaxed under the shades. It was also observed that, sitting under the shades of trees was a common feature among all the residents of the camp, the traditional authority and members of the larger community. This observation was not surprising because it is a common practice by people in most rural communities of northern Ghana.

The interviews were also conducted in basic and simple language that was understandable to the informants. Though two local languages, Konkomba and Dagbani are both spoken in the area, the Dagbani language which is widely spoken in the area and understood by all the informants was used as the medium of communication during the interviews with the alleged witches and wizards and two of the relevant actors. These relevant actors were the caretaker and the traditional authority. The interviews were further made quite interactive because of my linguistic competence in Dagbani language. My linguistic competence made it quite easier to obey and respect the basic etiquette of the language and the people. In the case of the interviews with the relevant actors, except the caretaker and traditional authority, English language constituted the medium of communication. With this, informants could express themselves quite freely. Contrary to the expectation of the researcher, all the resident informants did not exhibit any kind of resistance to the interviews and to the use of the tape recorder. They were prepared, willing as well as eager to be interviewed; apparently to tell their stories. What could be deduced was that the activities of the various NGOs in the camp may have contributed in building their non-resistant attitudes to activities such as the conduct of interviews.

3.9 Triangulation

According to Thurmond (2001: 253), triangulation as a concept in social scientific research was derived from construction, surveying, and navigation at sea. Triangulation has since grown to become one of the essential methodological tools used to test the strengths of qualitative research as validity and reliability is to quantitative research. In qualitative research, the purpose of triangulation is to use two or more aspects of research (Polit and Hungler, 1995 in Thurmond, 2001: 253) or a combination of two or more data sources, investigators, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives (Kimchi, Polivka, and Stevenson, 1991 in Thurmond, 2001: 253) to strengthen the design as well as to increase the ability to interpret the findings (Polit and Hungler, 1995 in Thurmond, 2001: 253). In this study therefore, the purpose of the adoption of the two methodological approaches (indepth interviews and observations) and the selection of two different groups of informants (residents of the camp and relevant actors), enhanced triangulation. Again, triangulation was further enhanced by the use of two different data sources, that is, primary and secondary data sources. By these, varying expressions, perspectives and feelings about the phenomenon were identified which enhanced and broadened the analysis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

All relevant research ethics were obeyed during the study. In the first place, I enquired from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and since the research was not intended to disclose the identities of informants, I was given the necessary clearance by the NSD to conduct the study. Related to the clearance was confidentiality. To achieve this, informants' identities such as their names were not used in the analysis. Thus, all names referred to in this study are pseudonyms. Also, participation by informants in the study was voluntary. With no harm on informants in mind, informants had the right to withdraw from the interviews at any point. The purpose for the study was explained to all informants and informed consent sought from them before interviews were conducted.

3.11 Data Analysis

Qualitative methods according to Holloway and Todres (2003) are diverse, complex and nuanced. As a result of this, various methods or approaches exist and are used to analyse qualitative data. Some of these methods include classical content analysis, thematic analysis,

grounded theory, discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, argumentation analysis, conversation analysis as well as framework analysis. Thematic analysis was used in the case of this study. This approach was selected over the others because by “...its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78). Thematic analysis is described by Daly, Kellehear and Gliksman (1997, in Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006: 3) as a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of a phenomenon. It is a form of pattern recognition within data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006: 4). It also involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79).

Guided by the research questions, I used the six-stage framework of thematic data analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006: 87) as guide. The first stage involved familiarizing myself with the data during the process of transcription as well as the reading and re-reading (described as “careful reading and re-reading” by Rice and Ezzy, 1999, in Fereday and Muir-Cochrane: 4) of the data/information while at the same time noting down initial ideas. The second stage was generating initial codes. This involved coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. As Boyatzis (1998, in Fereday and Muir-Cochrane: 4) points out, a “good code” is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. The second stage also involved collating data relevant to each code. The third stage had to do with searching for themes. This involved collating codes into potential themes. It also involved gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. Reviewing the various themes constituted the fourth stage of Braun and Clark’s typology. At this stage, the various themes were checked to identify whether or not they worked in relation to the coded extracts in the first stage and the overall data set in stage two. This stage ended with the generation of what Braun and Clark refers to as the thematic map. The fifth and penultimate stage of the process involved defining and naming the themes. It involved engaging in an ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells. It also involved generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Producing the report was the sixth and final stage of the analysis. This was conducted by selecting the most vivid, compelling extract examples. It again involved final analysis of selected extracts. It further involved relating back the analysis to the research questions as well as literature. While doing the analysis from the transcribed data, the analysed information was aided by the

various observations that were conducted as well as the field notes and other relevant secondary data sources.

3.12 Challenges/Problems Encountered

The research was not without some challenges. In the first place, there was difficulty of getting informants at appointed times. The data was collected during the rainy season. As a result of this, most of the informants were busily visiting community members' farms to assist them. They help them to plant seeds and are paid in return only after harvest. This was identified as one of the survival strategies prominent in the camp that helped to sustain the residents. Also, there was the challenge of dealing with high expectations. Like philanthropists who had visited the camp in the past, most of the residents had high expectations that I was yet another philanthropist who had come to offer them some material support such as grains and cloths. These expectations were made evident by people when they periodically shared their personal problems or difficulties with me. There was again the problem of dealing with absent-mindedness. Old and challenged by circumstances of life, most of the resident informants momentarily showed some level of absent-mindedness. It was at times very difficult bringing their focus to the interviews. Related to this was the question of gift giving after the fieldwork. Having taken their time out of their busy survival schedules, seeing them go hungry because they did not have food, watching them struggle to move from one location to another because they looked weak and frailed, I could not just walk away after the field visits. Before leaving, an amount of money was therefore given to the authorities, which was distributed to the informants. It must be emphasized that this was not a form of payment for their services, but a form of reimbursement for the time spent with me. It was also intended to take the place of refreshments since I could not provide that during the various field visits.

Related to the problem above was dealing with emotions of some of the informants as well as my own emotions. Most of the residents in the camp could easily become very emotional during the interviews. Their emotions were apparent because, most of them were quite nostalgic of the past. The question of for instance, the circumstances that brought them to the camp was enough to throw some of them into nostalgic moods. Most of them could not for example understand why their own children, people they assumed they suffered and labored to bring to the world, could turn out to be their accusers and orchestrators of their

excommunication and abandonment. Motherhood, most of them stressed, was a very painful experience. Regarding my emotions, I was for instance, at one point, felt sympathetic rather than empathic toward one of the informants. Moved by the situation and plight of this informant, I did not only put myself in her position but also became emotionally and psychologically involved. Added to these, the bad road networks in the area, coupled with the period being a wet season, in addition to the remoteness of some of the communities where some of the residents of the camp hailed from, posed a challenge. It made it impossible to visit those communities. Finally, the renting of a motorcycle to facilitate the commuting and having to financially assist the informants put some level of financial pressure on me.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Introduction

A number of studies have been conducted in the area of witchcraft across different disciplines and from different perspectives. The purpose of this chapter is to carry out a review of some relevant literature from different disciplines and debates. Key to this are witchcraft related research in Ghana, description and activities of alleged witches and the issue that women are most often disproportionately considered as 'witches', compared to men. Finally, with the kind of kinship system influencing how Ghanaians consider, understand and conceptualise witchcraft, a review of kinship systems in Ghana is carried out as well.

4.2 Witchcraft-Related Research in Ghana

Historically, research on witchcraft traces witchcraft practice to the pre-colonial and colonial times. Generally, the period predating colonialism is seen to have been marked by unregulated witchcraft practice. The emergence of colonialism in the then Gold Coast saw an introduction of some regulations. Some of the well known witch finding shrines during the colonial period included *Aberewa* (The Old Woman), *Hwe me so*, (watch over me), Kunde, Tongo, Senya Gupo, Senyan and Tigare (Olsen, 2002: 528). Olsen argues that the Tigare shrine still maintains a large following in Ghana today. A 2001 study by Gray provides an extensive focus on the nature of witchcraft practice in both periods of Ghana's political history. For example, McCaskie (1981 in Gray, 2001: 1340) notes that as early as the 1870s, medicine oracle shrines whose priests claimed they could neutralize witches' power without harming them were popular in southern Ghana. According to McCaskie, pre-colonial witch-finding methods included trial by ordeal, manifested in the drinking of poison (*odom* poison) as well as the practice of "corpse-carrying". The later practice involved people carrying a dead body in which the body of the dead person would direct the people carrying it toward the individual responsible for the death of another person through witchcraft or magic (Rattra, 1959 in Gray, 2001: 340).

Also, Edward-Bowdich (1966 in Gray, 2001: 340) provides an overview of how people accused of witchcraft were treated in the period predating colonial engagement in Ghana. He argues that before colonial rule, a person found guilty of witchcraft could be

executed, exiled, sold into slavery or cleansed at a shrine. Accused persons however did not have the right to decide on which of the several modes of treatment should be meted out to them. The decision and judgement, according to Edward-Bowdich, were dependent on the community. When the British assumed colonial control over the southern territories of Ghana in 1874, Gray (2001: 340) notes that, they prohibited trial by ordeal (both the *odum* poison ordeal and corpse-carrying). The colonial authority argued that any form of trial by ordeal was a form of capital punishment. Since capital punishment was now to be regulated by new laws that were formulated, various forms of trial by ordeal as well as the execution of people accused of witchcraft, were gradually reducing, Gray argues. However, the criminalisation of trial by ordeal and execution of people did not however mean that the door was completely shut on witchcraft practices, for like today, witchcraft pervaded the lives of the people. Also, to build good relationships with the local authorities, in order to achieve and sustain colonial engagement goals, Gray (2001: 341) emphasizes that there was a show of colonial interest in witchcraft practice, characterised by legal acceptance of the practice through Native Tribunals. Accordingly, the colonial administration at a point used the widespread belief in witchcraft to justify their oppression (Palmer, 2010: 45). Palmer is of the opinion that the colonisers believed that people who believed in the powers and invisible magic of witches could not be rational to govern each other.

Back to the existence of the native tribunals, it is worth noting that Native Tribunals could order a suspected culprit to be tested at an oracle. Gray (2001: 341) notes that the postulation of the laws that established the native tribunals was the result of a long history of negotiation between African leaders such as chiefs, priests, lawyers as well as journalists and the various colonizing powers of the West. This was before 1930. Olsen (2002: 522) puts the period as 1906. This law was however revoked after 1930 following what Gray (p.339) describes as the “controversy of the Tongo oracle”. The Tongo oracle was the most powerful shrine transported from the then northern territories to the colonized southern zone. Olsen (2002: 529), in reference to a 1945 diary reports by Meyer Fortes, notes that witch-catching shrines such as the Tongo shrine were imported by Asante from the northern territories because of their potency. Parrinder (1956: 149) also argues that unlike other shrines, Tigare (the name of Tongo oracle) was able to deal with more perplexing phenomenon of modernity where the others had failed. It was thus renowned for its mystical and medicinal powers (Olsen, 2002: 529). Part of the confusions or controversies regarding the Tongo shrine was

religious. According to Gray (2001: 351), both Christian and Muslim groups were opposed to the activities of the shrine and therefore appealed to the colonial authorities to take a closer look at it. They for instance argued that the activities of the Tongo shrine violated the tenets and practices of the two faiths. Due to this, many people who had become converts to the Christian faith began to question the appearance of their kinsmen before the Tongo shrine. Olsen (2002: 529) also notes that the influential persuasion of the Tongo and other shrines over members of various Christian faiths implied that the spread of the Christian faith, which was one of the cardinal goals of colonialism, would suffer a serious relapse if actions were not taken. Added to the Tongo shrine controversy, for which reason the British colonisers needed to intervene in witchcraft practices in the Gold Coast, was the confusions that followed the proliferation of new shrines across south of the Gold Coast (Olsen, 2002: 528). According to Olsen (2002: 524), the emergence of new group of rich and wealthy people through capitalism, was partly responsible for the emergence and rise of new shrines. This was because capitalism had made, hitherto, poor people become rich overnight. The swiftness with which this crop of people became rich or wealthy was thought to indicate some level of devilish practices, for which reason there emerged suspicions. These people could not just become rich in a short period without engaging in witchcraft, people assumed. This is similar to the rise in witch hunts and witch killings through mob justice in the north of South Africa after the end of apartheid (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999: 288). Comaroff and Comaroff argue that most spirited witch findings in the Northern provinces occurred as a result of blatant and rising inequality, brought about by rising middle class of people in this new era of post-colonialism.

4.3 Description of Witches

It has been argued that the belief in witchcraft is based on the assumption that man by nature live in two worlds simultaneously. These are the world that can be seen and the world of the unseen (Palmer, 2010: 43). Populated by the spirits (Palmer, 2010: 43), witches are believed to inhabit the world of the unseen. Thus, it is believed by many people that due to witches' statuses, they belong to a world of their own. Though the ordinary person in Ghana believes in the existence and powers of witches, Nukunya (2003: 59) is of the opinion that people are quite confused regarding the nature of witches as well as the manner which witches operate. Nukunya (2003: 59) describes witches as people, male and female, who are believed to possess inherent supernatural powers which they use to harm others or to benefit themselves.

The use of these powers, Nukunya notes, could be done either knowingly or unknowingly. The description of witches offered by Nukunya (2003: 59) highlights three important things. In the first instance, a witch can either be a man or a woman. Secondly, the use of the powers of a witch can be used intentionally or unintentionally. The third reason is that witchcraft can be used for both good and bad purposes. Regarding the second factor, a witch may be conscious or unconscious of her activities (Sarpong, 2006: 47). Sarpong (2006: 47) argues that in Ghana, it is believed that some witches deliberately acquire their powers from their mothers, fathers or other close relatives or at times even strangers. These strangers are usually old women who are believed to give the powers to the individual in the form of gifts, usually beads. This means that the use of witchcraft by this category of witches is conscious. Sarpong (2006: 45) also discusses witchcraft as an inheritance phenomenon. Thus, the acquisition of witchcraft powers is quite extensive, and in some African societies, it is believed that the daughters of a female witch become automatically witches and not her sons. Also, the sons of a male witch become witches automatically and not his daughters (Sarpong, 2006: 45). In the light of this argument, Sarpong emphasizes that witchcraft in those societies is inherited through the unilinear descent from parent to child. Nukunya (2003: 60) on the other hand hold a different opinion. He notes that though witchcraft may be inherited or acquired, it is usually not vested in the descent groups. According to Nukunya, vesting it in the descent group will either weaken or even completely destroy the group. The third and final point in Nukunya's (2003: 59) description of witches relates to the fact that witchcraft powers can be used to either destroy others, that is, for bad purposes, or can be used for the benefit of the witch. It is however not clear whether the benefits that accrues to the witch is for her selfish and parochial interests. Taken a Durkheimian view of witchcraft, where emphasis is placed on the social cleavages and not natural causes, Simmons (1980: 447) defines witchcraft to mean a folk theory of misfortune according to which impersonal misfortunes, such as illness, accidents and death are believed to be caused by persons who possess dangerous supernatural powers. Therefore, according to Sarpong (2006: 44), there cannot be a good witch. Thus, all witches are evil. "They are "obsessed" with evil, they are "compelled" to do evil, it is even "involuntary" with them" (Zuesse, 1971: 225). Sarpong (2006: 44) argues further that at best, a witch uses his or her powers for selfish purposes; to get children, money, good crops among others and at worse, they use their witchcraft to harm or cause destruction to others. Witches are therefore seen as a social menace.

4.4 Features and Activities of Witches

Different views have been expressed by people regarding how witches carry out their activities. For Sarpong (2006: 45), a witch is a living human being who possesses or is supposed to possess witchcraft substance. To be able to perform their devilish activities, Parrinder (1956: 148) argues that witches are often supposed to possess some apparatus or medicine. According to Sarpong (2006: 45), these substances take many forms and shapes. They could be in the form of a pot, a gourd, a shell among others in which concoctions are prepared. The concoctions or the mixture, Sarpong notes, could be made up of beans, herbs of several kinds, human hair and nails, cola, cocoa or even fish. Sarpong argues that the stranger the objects are, the more potent and powerful the mixture will be. The places where these substances are located vary from society to society. In Ghana for instance, these substances can be located in the farm, in the hearth, under the bed and outside the compound of one's house (Sarpong, 2006: 45).

Though witches do not perform any rites, make sacrifices or recite any spells and incantations (Nukunya, 2003: 60), they are supposed to possess psychic emanation which is believed to cause injury to health and property (Sarpong, 2006: 46). These are complemented by some nocturnal orgies and possible transmutation of witches into birds, reptiles and other creatures (Nukunya, 2003: 60) such as owls, nightjar, black cats and fireflies (Parrinder, 1956: 144). According to Sarpong (2006: 46), it is believed that witches look and glow like fire and are able to fly. Evans-Pritchard (1967: 11) argues that light is not the witch in person stalking its victim, but is an emanation from the witch's body. Assuming the form of an animal, the glowing light comes from her forehead which lights her way across the night sky (Parish, 2003: 27). Sarpong (2006: 46) again argues that witches are also believed to be visible at night but dangerous to see by the ordinary person. This is because, witches are believed to attack at night (Parish, 2003: 27). According to Levine (1982: 262), night hours are assumed to be good for witches because people are defenceless during this time and as a result, witches can easily unleash their powers over their victims. Thus, they invisibly devour their victims, typically causing lingering illness and eventually death (Drucker-Brown, 1993: 533). Levine (1982: 264) posits that during the night orgies, some witches drag their own daughters along to their assembly grounds. In the end, these daughters are forced into witchcraft. Related to this is the belief in witchcraft by the Tallensi of northern Ghana as discussed by Drucker-Brown (1993: 533). Drucker-Brown notes that among the Tallensi,

witchcraft is inherited from one's mother. This always make the uterine kin, referred to as *soog*, as potential suspects whenever witches strike (Drucker-Brown, 1993: 533). As novices, new female witches among the Mamprushis of northern Ghana, trained or coerced into witchcraft, are expected to provide food for their seniors (Drucker-Brown, 1993: 534).

There is also the assertion that witches act in concert. It is believed that witches meet in companies (Parrinder, 1956: 145), that they are seen in clusters (Parish, 2003) or even sometimes part of an organisation (Macfarlane, 1999: 212). In Ghana, Nukunya (2003: 60) argues that there have been reports of witches holding night assemblies at which decisions are taken about their victims. Nukunya again points out that it is usually during these meetings that the actual devouring of victims takes place. Witches meets up with their fellows and other conspirators around a pot into which the soul of the victim is thrown and boiled for eating. In relation to this, witches are believed to roam the spiritual world, in curious ways and defying the laws of gravity (Macfarlane, 1999: 214) to feast on the flesh of their victims (Palmer, 2010: 45). Sarpong (2006: 46) asserts that though the witches may physically be lying in their beds, they despatch the souls of their witchcraft to remove the physical part of their victims' organs, which the witches, as a group, will devour at a meeting. Thus, the witches' souls fly at night while their bodies remain asleep in their various homes (Parrinder, 1956: 144). This is linked to the African belief of the separable soul (Parrinder, 1956: 145). Witches are noted to supply human flesh in turns, with the flesh of victims decided upon at their nightly meetings (Sarpong, 2006: 46). Citing copious examples across the world such as Navaho, Mbugwe, Lugbara as well as the Pondo, Macfarlane (1999: 215) notes that at these nightly meetings, some witches also engage in sexual obscenity. On how witches devour their victims, Parrinder (1956: 146) notes that it is the 'spiritual body' or the 'soul of the flesh' of a victim that has its power sucked or is eaten and not the physical body. Sarpong (2006: 46) also argues that death to a victim is done slowly and that a witch may take a portion of a victim's brain and add to his or hers. This explains why some lazy, slovenly, unattractive can nevertheless be very clever and thus pass their examinations, while the clever ones fail in their examinations. Similar to this, there was a media report of a 17 year old girl dumped at one of the witches' camps in the northern region for being exceptionally brilliant. The story, retrieved from myjoyonline.com (April 2, 2012) reports of how the Senior High School student was rescued by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs after she had been accused of allegedly having taken away the brains of her less intelligent colleagues to excel

in school. To escape from harm and harsh attitudes of her family and community members, she had to seek refuge at the Gambaga witches' camp.

4.5 Witch Camps in Ghana

Though the existence of the witch camps in Ghana can be traced to the pre-colonial period (Kirby, 2009: 49) or more than hundred years back (Schnoebelen, 2009: 21) or even since the 19th century (Stromberg, 2011: 2), not much has been written about the existence of these camps. It was not given public focus until recent times. It is through media reports that it has been identified and seen as a critical social problem confronting Ghana (Kirby, 2009: 49). Kirby also notes that the creation of public awareness, driven by the proliferated media in Ghana, has also encouraged many NGOs with political and gender laced agendas, to join the drive towards creating wider public attention to this social problem. Due to the activities of these NGOs and the essential and informative lenses of the various media outlets in Ghana, the witch camp phenomenon has attracted the attention of the international community too. For example, The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women reported in February 2008 that “violence against women branded as witches is reported from all regions, but the issue is more visible in the north due to...settlements...where women accused of witchcraft can seek refuge and protection from persecution by their own community or family” (Schnoebelen, 2009: 22). Schnoebelen (2009: 22) again notes that the UN Human Rights Council identifies the Gambaga witch camp as an Outcast Home, and accommodating an estimated number of 80 women. The ages of these women ranged between 40 and 70. The report further highlights that some of the women in the Gambaga camp have been living there for more than two decades. They are unable to return home out of fear. Palmer (2010: 14) also describes these camps as isolated colonies, where women, who escape from being beaten to death, stoned or lynched, are banished; to live the rests of their lives. There is no agreed number of witches' camps in the northern region.

With the media taking a centre stage in highlighting the witch camp phenomenon, quite a lot of media houses have had time to carry reports, commentaries and articles about the practice. I hereby highlight three of such media focus; two from Ghana and the third one by an international media. Regarding how the Ghanaian media have portrayed the witch

camp phenomenon, a news commentary by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)³, discussing the witch camps, casts a rather negative light on the phenomenon, especially in this age of growth in science and technology, whereby witchcraft accusations cannot be empirically proven. It also emphasizes the fact that it is saddening that this phenomenon still exists in modern day Ghana where people professed to be Christians or Muslims and the existence of the rule of law. The news commentary, written by George Asekere, gives the number of people living in three of these camps to be as many as over nine hundred and sixty-six (966) women and six hundred and seven (607) children. These camps are the Kuku camp at Bimbila, Gambaga camp and the Gnani camp. Writing specifically on the Gnani witches' camp, a feature article by Leo Igwe on GhanaWeb,⁴ highlights that the camp is a place whereby the safety of people, running away from their communities, due to witchcraft persecution, are guaranteed. Leo Igwe is also of the opinion that the residents of the camp are not seen as outcasts by the community members but are valued and respected. The writer concludes by arguing that the practice of witchcraft is a subtle way of eliminating or of getting rid of people he describes as 'hated' or 'unwanted' by their families or communities. Finally, at the international level, Kati Whitaker, in *The Telegraph*⁵ entitled 'Hundreds of women trapped in Ghana's 'witches camp'', posits that these camps exist in Ghana's poor regions of the north. She emphasizes that these camps are places where women seek refuge after escaping from beating, torture even lynching to live a life in exile, ostracised from their families and left to fend for themselves.

4.6 Kinship in Ghana

Like in other parts of Africa, as Alber, Häberlein and Martin (2010: 44) note, the significance of kinship, belonging, as well as mutual support, pervades the life of the ordinary Ghanaian. According to Stone (2010: 5), kinship is simply defined as relationships between persons based on descent or marriage. Kinship relationship which can occur through blood (*consanguineal*) as well as brought about through marriage (*affinal*) ensures the cultural and

³ Retrieved from www.gbcghana.com on the 06/04/13.

⁴ Published on 19/02/13 and retrieved from www.ghanaweb.com on 06/04/2013.

⁵ Published on 30/08/12 and retrieved from www.telegraph.co.uk on the 06/04/13.

biological perpetual of society's membership in addition to setting the parameters for people's statuses, rights and obligations to one another (Assimeng, 1999: 74). The importance of kinship relationships in Ghana is almost all-embracing (Nukunya, 2003: 17) indicating the nature of relationship between for instance husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters grandparents and grand children among others. How marriages are contracted and where couples should live after marriage is informed by kinship. According to Nukunya (2003: 18), kinship in Ghana affects the religious, economic and political organization of various ethnic groups. Explaining this further, Nukunya is of the opinion that on religion, every group in Ghana has different ways by which they create and maintain their association with the dead or the ancestors through activities such as rituals and sacrifices. It is usually the descent group among many groups in Ghana which organizes ancestral rituals. In the area of economic organization, property relations and inheritance and residential patterns are organized based on the type of kinship system being practiced. Politically, the selection and roles of succession are defined by kinship. For instance, how a chief and family head are chosen is determined by kinship.

Assimeng (1999: 75) identifies three kinship and lineage arrangements in Ghana. These are matrilineal, patrilineal and double descent systems. According to Assimeng, the matrilineal is by far the most widespread in Ghana in terms of population. This system is practiced by almost all the various groups which come together to form the Akan-speaking group such as the Ashanti, Akwapim, Brong, Kwawu among others, except the Fantes. In the matrilineal system, a person is more connected to the mother's lineage than his father's because the descent group to which he belongs to is traced to the female line (Nukunya, 2003: 33). The origin of this system, according to Assimeng (1999: 76) is traced to the Akan theory of procreation which is to the effect that during mating, it is the mother who provides the blood (egg) while the father provides *ntoro* or spirit (sperm). Blood is believed to be thicker than the *ntoro* among the Akan. Thus, people who belong to the same blood are believed to have greater affinity than those in the *ntoro* (Assimeng, 1999: 76). Assimeng notes that the father in a matrilineal setting is assumed to be a stranger. In the area of inheritance, nephews inherit the property of their uncles and not of their father. The term *wofa* (uncle) is therefore a respected and revered title exclusively reserved for the mother's brother (Assimeng, 1999: 77).

In patrilineality, children belong to their father's descent group. Such a descent group is made up of persons, male and female, who are descended through the male line only from a common ancestor (Nukunya, 2003: 27). It is by far the most common form of kinship system in Africa (Nukunya, 2003: 25) and the most familiar to students of western societies (Assimeng, 1999: 77). Assemeng (1999: 77) argues that under this system, children inherit their father's property and succeed to his office. He further posits that unlike the matrilineal society, children in a patrilineal system of kinship belong to, and are owned by the family of the father, and mothers are seen as strangers who also belong to their own patrilineage. This system is by far the most common system of kinship among many ethnic groups in northern Ghana, such as Dagombas, Mamprushis, Gonjas, Walas, Nanumbas, Konkombas and the Tallensi, among others. It is however significant to emphasize that the Gas and Ewes, located in southern Ghana, also practice patrilineal system of kinship. Before I discuss the position of women in a typical northern community or society, which also forms part of the nature of kinship, I turn my attention to a brief discussion of the double descent system of kinship practiced by the Fantes, an offshoot or a sub-unit of the Akan group. According to Assimeng (1999: 78), under the double descent system, aspects of both matrilineal and patrilineal practices are found. It is therefore a kind of a shared system of kinship, whereby matrilineal and patrilineal kinship attributes can each be located. For instance, Assimeng emphasizes that in the area of rights and responsibilities, due acknowledgement is given to the matrilineage. Land is also inherited through the mother's line. On the other hand, in the area of military organization and spiritual protection, due recognition is given to the father's lineage.

The political organization of an ethnic Ghanaian is partly informed by the kind of kinship system that is practiced, especially in the area of inheritance. In this discussion, I will focus attention on the centralized political systems of some ethnic groups, which also indicates the position of women. Among Dagombas, by far the most populous centralized people in northern Ghana, Nukunya (2003: 73) argues that apart from the maintenance of law and order, the hub of social, economic and religious organization of the people rests under the domain of the chief. Having been influenced by Islam through Wangara and Hausa Muslim migrants, Nukunya argues that aspects of the Dagomba royalty have been Islamized. Therefore, most of the traditional and non-Muslim religious functions are left to non-Muslim practitioners and functionaries of whom the *Tindanas* (the earth priests or custodians of the earth) forms a significant part. In both cases, that is in accession to chieftaincy (a system of

accession to a position of a chief) as well as Tindanas' office, inheritance is passed through the male line and usually through the male line/child. By mediating between man and the spirits, the role of the Tinadana is very important since every northerner believe in the existence and powers of the ancestors and their influence on their lives, just like other ethnic groups of the south of Ghana. As Sarpong (2006: 41) notes, even though the living cannot go to the world of the ancestors, they believe that the ancestors keep a watch and a constant contact with the living members of every lineage; they are said to be the custodians and makers of tribal laws. Writing extensively on the Mamprushis, one of the sub-units of the Mole-Dagomba⁶ (also refer to as Mole-Dagbani), Drucker-Brown (1999: 544) emphasizes that in the Mamprusi kinship system women's relationships with one another as well as the segregation of women from men in the Mamprusi household are significant. Describing Mamprusis as people who value polygyny, Drucker-Brown (1993: 544-545) offers the following to show the position of an indigenous Mamprusi woman and/or wife:

The potential conflict among co-wives which exists in all polygynous societies is part here of a highly stratified domestic order. The hierarchy among the wives of a Mamprusi husband is based strictly on the order of marriage. In households with four wives or more there will be a further division between the first three 'senior wives', ranked among themselves, and the junior wives, who are also individually ranked. The authority of the first wife with regard to all others is unquestionable. A Mamprusi senior wife organises the essential domestic activities of junior women, such as carrying water, collecting firewood and preparing food for cooking. She divides and serves the food to be distributed by junior women to the men, the children and to other women. In larger households she may organise and oversee the brewing of beer, the making of shea butter and locust-bean (*dawadawa*) soup, or the production and marketing of other products. Moreover, in all households, a senior wife has authority over the children of junior wives and young children sleep in her room once they are weaned.

⁶ This group comprise of the Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprushi and the Moshi who are largely found in Burkina Faso. The history of these people is traced to a common ancestor. They therefore share similarities in language, customs and traditions.

Describing how children are socialized, how wives are positioned in a household, how divorce and separation are frowned upon as well as how women may acquire witchcraft powers, Ducker-Brown (1993: 545) emphasizes thus:

In a well ordered Mamprusi household junior and senior women form cohesive if hierarchically ordered groups. Ideally, children are separated early from their mothers to join a group of half-siblings, subject to the authority of senior women or young men. Young women, joining such households as junior wives, often rebel by running away. More often than not their male kin return them to their husbands. The vision of such women inadvertently becoming witches may well be a response to the rebellious emotions of junior wives. Certainly the image of a senior witch or witches recruiting a junior woman by surreptitiously feeding her medicine, which then impels her to kill her own child or a co-wife's child in order to feed them all, is a nightmare which encapsulates many of the tensions common among women in the large polygynous Mamprusi households.

The descriptions above partly show gender role expectations of women, especially by married women in a typical traditional Mole-Dagbani society. This is not very different from other ethnic groups spanning northern Ghana. In a more general perspective, Nukunya (2003: 96) emphasizes that even though both men and women can undertake farming throughout Ghana, there is usually a clear division of labour between the sexes. This sometimes extends to different age groups. For example, the felling of trees, clearing of the bush and the preparation of land for planting are usually undertaken by men; apparently because of the physical exertion these activities requires (Nukunya, 2003: 96). Women on the other hand are required to make sure that food is made available for the men. Also, along the coast of Ghana, where fishing is a major economic activity, men do the actual fishing while women process and sell the fish. Nukunya (2003: 96) is also of the opinion that there are certain areas where gender roles are not strict. For example, Nukunya (2003: 96) argues that in most instances, sowing/planting, harvesting and carrying of food harvest to the house/home in most farming communities across Ghana are carried out by both men and women. What must be emphasized is that children are socialized to move along gender specific roles as described above. As Nukunya (2003: 96) highlights, specific tasks reserved for the sexes are also considered appropriate for younger children of both sexes. Assimeng (1999: 110) also

emphasizes the fact that during various rites of passage by various ethnic groups in Ghana for example, women are instructed on the conditions of marriage, the art of home keeping such as cooking, the care of children and how to take care of the husband and other extended relations of the husband. Assimeng (1999: 110) summarizes the gender role socialization in most traditional Ghanaian societies as the fact that girls are socialized to take up their future roles as mothers and housewives while boys follow their fathers on the various chores in either hunting, fishing, farming and metal fabrication. Finally, it is essential to note that there are presently changing trends regarding specific gender roles, especially in most urban centres in Ghana. Assimeng (1999: 124-132) extensively discusses the essential role of education and the world of work at urban centres across Ghana as behind these changes. He argues that education has made more urban women more independent than before. This, according to Assimeng (1999: 126) has partly been influenced by exposure to contemporary gender studies.

4.7 Women as ‘Witches’

The sex of alleged witches varies across different societies. What is however clear is that many studies identify that in many parts of the world, women are largely at the receiving end of witchcraft accusations, compared to men. In relation to this, Osam (2004: 22) argues that in Ghana as well as in other parts of the world, alleged witches are almost always women. Making copious reference to various regional statistics across the world, Schnoebelen (2009: 8-11) argues that a significant number of people and communities across the world either label, target or persecute women as witches. In Europe, during the witch-hunts that took place from approximately 1450 to 1750, there were roughly 100,000 trials and half as many executions. About three-quarters of these people were women. The numbers in some countries/places were however even more disproportionate. In Hungary, Denmark and England, roughly 90% of ‘known witches’ were women. Even though Gaule (1646, in Macfarlane, 1999: 158) stresses that a person’s ugliness was the main feature of determining who was a witch in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Gaule’s further description of those features shows that women were more or less the main targets of accusations. Gaule notes that ‘every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furr’d brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice, or a scolding tongue’ was ‘pronounced for a witch’ (in Macfarlane, 1999: 158). Explaining why women are most often the objects of witchcraft accusations, Macfarlane (1999: 161) suggests that the female sex is considered to be both

weak and vicious. The weakness of the female sex is often attributed to Satan and women's vicious characterisation attributed towards fellow human beings. The weakness of the female sex is, according to Perkins (1608, in Macfarlane, 1999: 161), entangled by the illusions of the devil to commit the act of witchcraft which he describes as a damnable art, compared to men. Stearne (1648, in Macfarlane, 1999: 161) also argues that the tendency of women to become witches through the work of the devil is due to what he describes as connected to the expectation that women are 'commonly impatient, and being displeased more malicious, and so more apt to revenge according to their power, and thereby more fit instruments for the Deville'.

Discussing African ideas of witchcraft, Parrinder (1956: 147-148) is of the opinion that instances of women confessing to witchcraft are a widespread practice in most parts of West Africa. According to Parrinder, while some women are eager to confess, others have resisted the accusations and temptations to confess, to death. Parrinder (1956: 147) again argues that it is a common practice to mistrust old women because it is believed that most old women 'consume' others to add up the ages of their victims to theirs. It is therefore a common phenomenon to witness people look at old women with some level of mistrust. Parrinder (1956: 150) attributes the association of women with witchcraft in Africa to two main factors. In the first instance, this could partly be a result of male domination in all spheres of life in most African societies. The second factor Parrinder advances is the close link between women, as mothers and midwives, and infant mortality. With women largely exclusively expected to ensure child care, it is therefore highly likely that when children die, women could easily be pinpointed as responsible. When the deaths are beyond comprehension sometimes, women could be cited as 'witches' who have been consuming the soul of these infants. In terms of country-specific data, Miguel (2005: 1154-1155) argues that national statistics provided by the government of Tanzania show a rise in witches' killings in western Tanzania since the 1960's. Miguel reports that between 1970 and 1988, three thousand and seventy-two (3072) accused witches were killed in Sukumaland alone. This figure, which represented more than two-thirds of national witch murder total constituted eighty percent (80%) women. Miguel (2005: 1156) also makes copious reference to witch killings around other parts of Africa where majority of victims have been women. He cites places such as northern Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa as explicit cases. Macfarlane (1999: 230) also argues that apart from women being labelled as

witches, there is a further distinction as to whether women who are witches are married, childless, single or widowed. Macfarlane cites Nupe women witches as always as married and Navaho women witches as those who are childless or have passed the menopause. Macfarlane (1999: 161) attributes the social positions of the female as being responsible for accusations, compared to men. Macfarlane argues that as wives as well as mothers, women tend to be more intimately connected with various groups such as village groups. For instance, women are most often the co-ordinating element in village society. In cases whereby society was segmenting, people would feel uneasy about them. Finally, even though women have been cited as victims of witchcraft as the various studies and reports reviewed above have clearly demonstrated, data analysis provided by my current study argues that since both men and women can be accused of witchcraft, and thus become victims of witchcraft accusations, the propensity or ability to defend themselves stand out for consideration as well. This partly forms the departure point of this study from other previous studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVEMENT TO THE CAMP, SOCIAL POSITIONS AND THE DEFENSE AGAINST ACCUSATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the movement of people to the camp. The chapter specifically looks at the nature of movement to the camp and the immediate causes that might have triggered those movements. The chapter ends with a discussion of certain social positional characteristics of the residents at their original communities that played various roles in the accusations and the subsequent movement of people to the camp.

5.2 Movement to the Camp

5.2.1 Nburidiba's Story

It was one Saturday evening, deep in the night. Most people in Nburidiba's community were deep asleep. Typical of night life in most rural communities across Ghana, there was dead silence. Only shrills of birds covered the atmosphere. Nburidiba waited endlessly to hear the first cockerel that usually shows that the next morning was nigh. The first cockerel was also to signal to her that the decision hour had arrived. As she thought over this, one idea came smashing what she had envisioned. The first cockerel would also mean that some young men and women will begin movement to their various farms, to clear the lands for the impending farming season. The *Mu-azin*⁷ will also begin the first Muslim call for prayers and sooner, people, especially the old ones, will start moving to the mosque for the early morning prayers. Also, people who had planned to travel to other communities the next morning will soon be seen on their bicycles paddling to those destinations. As these thoughts clouded her mind, Nburidiba was put in a state of confusion. Should she risk remaining in her room and getting picked up by some angry youth in the community or should she move out earlier than the morning cockerel? What was Nburidiba's crime that instigated this movement? She was

⁷ A person who calls people to prayer in Islam

accused of being a *songya*⁸ and some youth in the community were angry. Nburidiba opted for the latter plan of moving out of the community before the first morning cockerel. Unprepared, with few cloths stuffed on her armpit, she moved out of the community of her birth and that of her ancestors to her present community of Gnani. According to Nburidiba, though she could not tell the exact time when she started her journey, she was quite sure that it was around 2:30 am.

In the interview I had with her, though she did not know my age, she was very sure that I was not born at the time she set foot to the camp which had become her home since. Nburidiba was accused of witchcraft by one of the *dang*⁹ members. She was alleged to have blocked all efforts the accused had made to become successful in life. The allegation was based on the alleged victim continuously seeing the accused, in this case Nburidiba, in his dreams. Though Nburidiba was yet to be summoned by the traditional authority of her community, most of the youth in the community were angry and were already up in arms to show Nburidiba where ‘power lies’. Most of the youth had initially suspected her of possessing witchcraft powers. This accusation by the *dang bia*¹⁰ therefore presented most of the youth the opportunity to express their anger on her. In fact, it was a confirmation of their earlier suspicions. Nburidiba’s suspicion was the latest gossip in the community. Thus, to escape from the risk of being threatened, drugged and beaten, which often accompany such accusations (Quarmyne, 2011: 481) and even sometimes being butchered to death (Hari, 2009 in Quarmyne, 2011: 481), Nburidiba had to leave her community. Under the cover of darkness, she walked through the narrow path which leads to and from the community and the bushes for long hours to Gnani. She escaped in order to ‘*to prove my innocence*’ as she put it. The case of Nburidiba’s movement illustrates Adinkrah’s (2004) emphasis that

⁸ A Dagbani word referring to witches. The male equivalent is *bukpaha*, but this is hardly known by people because of the assumption that women largely practice witchcraft and also use their witchcraft powers for evil purposes.

⁹ A *dang* refers to the family in Dagbanli, usually the extended family.

¹⁰ Family member, usually an extended family member.

witchcraft accusations are based on suspicion, rumor, or gossip that circulates within a community.

5.2.2 The Story of Neena

Neena was happily married to her second husband after being widowed for close to two years. The first husband was a chief in one small community in the northern region. Neena had two grown-up children from her first marriage; a male and a female. It took time and persuasion from some of her family members to convince her to get married for the second time after the unfortunate death of her first husband. She had to finally yield to the persistent persuasions and pressures of the family members, especially her two children. The outcome of the persistent pressures and persuasions compelled her to get married and thus move into her second marital home, this time, in a different community. From this second marriage came two other children; both males. Growing up, Neena was not given the opportunity to go to school just like many other people in the community. She was however very fortunate to have acquired some basic skills in local soap making and alcohol brewing from her *Priba*¹¹. As part of the traditions of her people, she had been raised by her *Priba* as a fostered child. Kuyini et'al (2009: 441) refer to this type of fostering as kinship foster care involving the placement of a child with a blood relative. This, according to Kuyini et'al (2009: 441) is common among Dagombas of northern Ghana. From village to village, Neena carried a head load of the soap she produced every morning to sell. She also brewed local alcohol for sale when she got home after the morning soap business. Though limited money was realized from these businesses, she was quite satisfied because the little money she made from them were supportive enough to enable her to live a dignified life, at least from the standard of the community. With these businesses in place, "*n daa bi gberi kum bee chani n suhura*",¹² she intimated.

One day, a day she described as a terrible day, a day she hates recalling, a day that draws tears into her eyes whenever she reflects over it, her happy marriage and businesses came crashing. What happened? Neena was accused of witchcraft by a community member, a

¹¹ Paternal Aunt.

¹² "I never went hungry and I never begged".

man she said she so much respected. She was alleged to have killed the wife of the man in question, through witchcraft. The allegation, in the form of a rumor, was the commonest talk in the community for almost a week. She only became aware of it when people started pointing accusing fingers at her physically. *“My son I thought I was dreaming when I found out the person who made the accusation, I could not believe it...”*, Neena told me in an interview. It became worse when her businesses began to suffer as people avoided buying her products. Like wildfire in a windy day, the rumor had reached almost all the adjoining communities. As a result of this, members from these adjoining communities also avoided buying Neena’s products. With the accusation growing by each passing day, Neena had to find alternative solutions as the community members could at any point in time react violently towards her. *“I heard one young boy, younger than all my children point his finger at me and said that I will see...this happened when I was returning from the sale of my soap. I just walked away from him to my house with my eyes filled with tears...”*, Neena underscored during the interview. If Neena was disturbed and confused at this stage of her life, her two children were more disturbed and worried. Neena noted that she was not the only person affected by this accusation. Her two children were also affected. For instance, the children could not withstand any longer, seeing people persistently pointing accusing fingers at their mother to the extent of insulting her; people they assumed, were younger than they were. *“If you were my child what would you have done?”*, Neena asked rhetorically during the interview. The two children, out of these frustrations had to act swiftly. What broke the camel’s back was when they heard rumors circulating in the community about planned attacks on their mother. Upon hearing this, they immediately organized two bicycles; one of them took her at the back bonnet of one of the bicycles. With her little clothing packed at the back of the other bicycle, they secretly took her during the night to the Gnani camp. In relation to Neena’s story, Toka, a relevant actor in an interview noted that:

“if there is a grown up boy of the woman who hears about this (referring to accusations) from the chief that he can no longer stand with his mother and then he will take her to the camp....if the woman has a relation who cares about her...will take her to the camp for cleansing...she will be humiliated if she doesn’t have”

From this perspective, Neena was fortunate because she had two grown up children who witnessed the impending danger and so acted quickly. According to Neena, it took a lot of time to convince her to embark on the journey to Gnani because as she said:

“I know I was innocent of the accusation’. No member in my family has ever been a witch. This was proven when I came here....but I am not prepared to go back. It was proven years later that the woman died through poisoning...The husband has also since died but he apologized to me before he died. So you see I was innocent but will never go back...”

During the interview, Neena intimated that she was made a suspect because she was a former *Napaga*¹³. As such, she was assumed to be in possession of witchcraft powers. “*You know every Napaga is assumed to be a witch.....*”, she emphasized. Neena noted that to confront the challenges that come with being married to a chief; it is believed by many people that most women married to chiefs acquire certain powers, including witchcraft powers. This belief is common among many people in the northern region, especially among ethnic Dagombas, Mamprusis and Nanumbas. Neena also believed that because she was a stranger in that community, she was only made an innocent victim of a crime she swore she never committed.

5.3 Matters Arising from the Two Stories

The two stories provide two different but typical cases by which most of the resident informants had moved to the camp. The decision to move to the camp, in the case of Nburidiba, was taken by Nburidiba herself. In the case of Neena, the decision was taken by her children. Also, while Nburidiba moved alone without any form of support, Neena had her two children transporting her to the camp. In the case of Nburidiba, she stood the risk of being attacked if her movement had been discovered by other community members. Though Neena also stood the risk of being attacked just like Nburidiba, the presence of her children was at least capable of warding off would-be attackers. To avoid potential attacks, both Nburidiba and Neena had to move out of their communities during the night when it was expected that members of both communities were fast asleep. Again, what was found

¹³ Title for a woman married to a chief.

common between these two stories was the fact that both Nburidiba's and Neena's movements were based on rumors or gossips. In relation to this, Charlie, a relevant actor emphasized that *"Sometimes when they get an early hint that there is this gossip information that she is going to be called and questioned, then she can quietly move to the camp voluntarily without anyone even seeing her...."* This implies that, sometimes movement to the camp is instigated by suspicions. To avoid being humiliated or embarrassed by community members, quietly moving to the camp, sometimes under the cover of darkness, become the immediate and sensible option for most alleged witches and alleged wizards.

Also, avoiding the risks of being physically attacked or beaten up by angry community members were the immediate factors that influenced the movement of most of the residents to the camp as exemplified by Nburidiba and Neena's stories. It can also be seen from the two cases that people can be accused of not only bewitching kin members but non-kin members as well. For instance, Nburidiba had a blood relationship with the person who made the accusation against her. In the case of Neena, she had no blood relationship with the person who accused her. This is in support of Adinkrah's (2004: 744) assertion that most ethnic groups in Ghana which practice patrilineal kinship such as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Gurushi, together with the Ewes of southern Ghana, believe that a witch can bewitch anybody and not only kin members. However, in the case of those professing matrilineal system of kinship, such as the Akan-speaking groups like the Ashanti, Nzema, Akwamu among others, it is believed that an accused witch can bewitch only maternal kin (Adinkrah, 2004: 744). Finally, contrary to public perception that the Gnani camp and the other camps alike are prisons or sanctuaries, the two stories provide a rather different picture. As the two stories have clearly demonstrated, faced with the risks of being embarrassed at the least and attacked or tortured or even threatened with death at worse, Nburidiba and Neena had to move to the Gnani camp for safety. What must be noted therefore is the fact that the Gnani camp do not only serve as a refuge but a safe haven for many of the residents.

5.4 Directives, Orders and Instructions of Community Chiefs

Another way by which some of the residents had moved to the camp was as a result of directives, orders or instructions of some community chiefs or traditional rulers of the original communities. *"Sometimes the chief can call the children of the alleged witch and tell them he can no more contain her...This is done after the person is suspected of being a witch.*

This is an indirect way of ordering the alleged witch to leave the community...”, Kanta, a relevant actor emphasized. Sometimes, opportunities are given to some of the alleged witches and wizards to prove their guilt or innocence by appearing before community chiefs and their councils of elders. In doing this, some communities invite diviners to determine or identify whether or not accused persons are guilty of the allegations or otherwise. This the diviners do by consulting with the oracles or the gods of the land. As Adinkrah (2004: 337) notes, oracles or witchdoctors, who are believed to possess the powers of divination, may be called upon to establish, confirm or reveal the identity of offending witches. My study revealed that in most cases, the verdicts are arrived at even before accused persons appear before the various councils. Ati, a relevant actor for instance noted that *“Appearing before the council is usually a window dressing thing. Though the council is required to be independent, its independence is compromised, especially when the accused happens to be a woman who has no power and is vulnerable”*. As the comments by Ati clearly demonstrate, accused persons are only made to appear before traditional councils in order to satisfy standard practices. To avoid appearing before a council that already had its verdict decided upon, Nburidiba and Neena for instance found that they had to move out of their communities. In other cases, when found guilty, an accused person could be made to undo his/her alleged witchcraft activities which resulted in the accusations. For instance, if the alleged victim is sick or ill through alleged witchcraft, the accused person, in this sense the alleged witch or wizard, could be asked or ordered to heal the alleged victim. Also, if the allegation rests on alleged blocking of the successes of the alleged victim, the accused witch or wizard could be ordered to unblock this in order to enhance the successes of the alleged victim. However, the accused witch or wizard may still live under the fear of being re-accused when the alleged victim is faced with new difficulties, allegedly arising out of witchcraft in the future. To avoid being accused again, some of the resident informants avoid going through these processes by moving to the Gnani camp.

5.5 Social Positions as Functions of Accusations

In many societies where witchcraft is widely practiced, men, women and even children can all be accused of practicing one form of witchcraft or another. However, among these categories of people, among others, some groups are more predisposed to accusations than others. A number of factors account for this. A cursory glance at a lot of literature shows that in many parts of the world and especially in Africa, the social positions of people, such as their gender, age, economic condition serve as predisposing factors for accusations. Much as

these assertions might have played a part in the allegations leveled against the resident informants of the camp, the focus of this chapter is not on the significance of social positions for being accused, but rather the relevance of social positions for the ability of the accused men and women to defend themselves. Some of these social positional features discussed in this chapter include gender, economic position as well as age and education.

5.5.1 'Because I am a Woman'-Gender as a Function of Accusation

Once allegations are made, what is left for an accused person is to decide on ways to defend oneself. The propensity to defend oneself is partly determined by certain gender-related factors. The first is the relative power position between men and women. Men in all the communities the residents hailed from were considered to be more powerful compared to women. Men were particularly considered to be stronger physically and socially compared to women. For instance, Charlie, a relevant actor noted that:

“...for those who believe in witchcraft, they know that the men are equally committing crimes with it. But because they are men, they are powerful people, they are strong physically and socially, men are very more recognized and regarded. Who are you to go and accuse him? You see....., yes men are equally vulnerable but they are better off in relative terms and so people are even afraid to accuse them”.

Thus, once men are considered to be stronger socially and physically, they stand the chance of defending themselves when faced with the risks of attacks by community members, such as the youth. Also, the assumption that women are weak physically and socially implies that they lack the necessary powers to defend themselves when accusations arise or even when they are physically confronted. Once they find escape routes following accusations, women, considered to be weak, may move to the camp for safety/protection.

Regarding the social power of men compared to women, most of the people who preside or are likely to preside over the traditional trial processes in their original communities are men. For instance, Ati, a relevant actor noted that “...in some of the cases, the women are not able to deny the directives of the traditional chiefs who most often preside over the allegations in their communities”. Accused female residents therefore only listen to their dictates without being given the slightest opportunities to talk when they appear before them for various forms of alleged bewitchments. This position of alleged women culprits is

supported by the general societal belief that women are not expected to talk in public and especially in the presence of men. With this assumption in mind, in the traditional adjudication of cases, women largely do not have a voice. Thus, denied with opportunities to be heard, they only stand and watch defenselessly as their cases are decided upon. What must also be noted is that these trials are most often held in public. The presence of usually large numbers of men is alone enough to dissuade most female alleged witches from putting their sides of the accusations before the traditional judge or judges. Even when some accused women are given the opportunity to tell their sides of stories by some community chiefs who are a little more flexible in their dictates, their stories are likely to be regarded as either untruths or half truths. *“I just kept quiet when the chief called me and asked me whether I actually killed him.....”*, Bangbebu, a female resident informant emphasized. With women least likely to be heard during the trial, most of them easily move to the nearest camp, such as Gnani, upon hearing rumors of their alleged witchcraft activities. I learned that most of the female residents had moved to the Gnani camp because they lacked the necessary powers to question their community chiefs upon whose instructions they got banished to the camp. For instance, during an interview, Tunteeya, a female resident emphasized that *“when I was accused and the chief called me and said I should leave his community, I had to leave to Gnani”*. When Tunteeya was asked why she did not challenge the chief knowing that she was innocent, she noted that *“...he is a man. He is also my chief. I have to respect his orders. If he should call me today, I will go and listen to him but I will return to Gnani. He is still a man and my chief despite that I do not live in the community any longer”*.

Related to what has been identified above was the belief that men were the breadwinners of families. Men are traditionally required to provide care and protection to members of their families, including women. Thus, when men acquire witchcraft powers, the acquisition is assumed to be for protection of family members. In contrast, when women acquire witchcraft powers, it raises eyebrows. This is because it is assumed that women are already given protection by their husbands or family heads who are most often men. In the case of most of the interviewed residents of the Gnani camp, the acquisition of witchcraft powers by women was assumed by members of their communities to be for evil purposes which must be corrected. As ‘evil’ people, women were considered a threat to the order of the human society. Azima one of the resident informants noted that:

“...there is this aspect of the belief in witchcraft here (apparently referring to northern Ghana)...it is accepted that it is not just women who have witchcraft in them, that men also have it. ...for men, their powers are not evil. They do not use it for evil things. They use it to protect their households and society. So everybody knows that, yes, this man standing there is a wizard but he is free to move around because he is a man. He can practice it. But let the first person suspect that this woman has a bit of witchcraft in her, and then they begin to lynch her. So that is the unfair part of it”.

Indeed, the belief that men are the main breadwinners of families could be in theory, since in real practice, the contributions of women in the running of households could make them assume the position of breadwinners, if women's contributions in the running of households were to be quantified and made visible. Although some of the resident informants were engaged in some level of economic activities and contributing in various ways to the welfare of their families, it was likely that they were not considered as breadwinners and as such their movement to the camp could not have impacted on the sustenance of their families. With this assumption in mind, most women might feel constrained in the opportunity to defend themselves when they are accused of witchcraft. This belief, viewed from another angle, may be defective in the sense that though they may not traditionally be seen as breadwinners, their essential roles in keeping families moving on cannot be overemphasized, such as in relation to child caring and domestic responsibilities.

5.5.2 Widowhood and Wife Inheritance

Eight out of the thirteen female residents selected for the study were widows before they moved to the camp. Such a change in status did come with some challenges, as for instance, being vulnerable to witchcraft accusations. In relation to this, Kwatra (2012: 3) argues that among other groups, widows were more vulnerable to being accused of witchcraft in the northern region of Ghana. Traditionally, one of the essential responsibilities of men as husbands is to provide protection for their wives or spouses when they are in danger. In the case of widows, the death of their husbands implies that they may lack this kind of protection. Thus, in cases whereby they are accused, there will be no husbands to provide them support and protection, when for instance, they become targets of physical attacks. Therefore, in the case of the widows in this study, most of them could not have had the support to defend themselves when they were accused. Added to this was the practice of polygyny. In most

traditional societies across Ghana, the process of men marrying several wives is a common practice. In many parts of the northern region for example, apart from it being part of the customs and traditions of the people, the religion of Islam also encourages this practice but with a caveat. What must be noted is the fact that Islam is widely practiced in the area. I discovered that most of the widows came from polygynous married backgrounds. Therefore, their safety became much more difficult after the deaths of their husbands. Most of them became targets of the children of co-wives at the least misfortune. For example, four out of the eight widows interviewed were accused by children of co-wives. A circumstance like this brings conflicts within families. With the absence of their husbands who stood the chance of remedying the situation if they were to be alive, accused co-wives are left without any defensive opportunities but to run to the camp for protection.

Closely related to this was the cultural practice of wife or widow inheritance, common among the Komkonba ethnic group. For example, what had triggered the accusations leveled against two widowed residents were confusions regarding who should inherit them as 'properties' of their brothers. Teeya, one of the female residents noted that "*After the death of my first husband, I was supposed to be inherited by one of the family members of my husband and there was confusion or misunderstanding as to who to inherit me as a wife. This brought all the accusations and I moved to Gnani*". Explaining widow inheritance, Agot et'al (2010: 1-2) note that it is a cultural practice where a designated male assumes responsibility for the social and economic support of a widow upon the death of her husband. By this, family members can inherit the wife of a dead family relative. As Agot et'al (2010: 2) argue, inheritors can be brothers or cousins to the widow's late husband. This practice has been identified to be common in patriarchal cultures where women and girls are perceived as commodities belonging to the male family line (Nyanzi and Walakira-Emodu, 2008). As Owen (1996 in Nyanzi and Walakira-Emodu, 2008: 7) identifies, widow inheritance is common in several countries in Africa and Asia such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, India and China.

As the above statement by Teeya clearly indicates, conflicts that come as a result of competition for wife inheritance provides opportunities for the 'defeated' individual (the person not selected) to perhaps level accusations against the widow at the least opportunity. The implication of this is that the conflict can be between two individuals and can sometimes

extend to groups when other family members take sides. In most situations, the widow is left at the centre of the confusion, with no person and group to align herself with. Caught in a web of this confusion, she becomes an island for herself, found between two conflicting individuals and groups. She has no right at this stage to decide what is right for her, not even the right to decide and to select who is best for her as the next suitor. At this stage, the widow's rights to self-determination about her sexuality, whether to remarry or not, to resume sexual activity or remain chaste and to choose her own sexual partner (Nyanzi and Walakira-Emodu, 2008:7) are denied her. These are left to the discretion of the late husband's family. If she refuses, she becomes a recluse with the potential of being seen as an enemy by going against the traditional process in the selection of her next husband.

Indeed, whatever the decision might be, women found in such conflicting positions are susceptible to different forms of abuses and discrimination, including being labeled as witches. For instance, if they are given to men they are not interested in and if they refuse, they are most likely to be seen as witches. Again, if they refuse sexual advances by their new husbands, ostensibly because they do not love them and so do not want to go intimate with them, they stand the risk of being labeled as being possessed by the devil and should therefore be exorcised. Though the two widows in this study who were confronted with challenges of wife inheritance did not mention specific causes but referred to conflicts, it was possible that any of them might have been faced with similar challenges. Tried as I did during the interviews to elicit details, they refrained from doing so. I deduced from their reluctance that the revelations therein were quite personal and sensitive, a decision I respected. Though widow inheritance is increasingly being equated with backwardness and frowned upon, especially by men who have attained some degrees of social statuses (Agot et'al, 2010: 2), it is still being upheld by certain societies or groups as the two examples from this study have demonstrated. Again, the consequences of widow inheritance are most often negative, one of which being that it sometimes make women quite susceptible to witchcraft accusations. Women confronted with challenges such as highlighted in the discussion stands the risk of not being able to defend themselves when they are accused because they will lack the needed support from their own people/families who are widely divided and as such are poles apart.

The discussions above bring the question of structural power which Collins (2000: 277) discusses into perspective as well as the position of especially women in these

structures. The focus of structural power relates to how “institutions are organized to reproduce subordination over time” (Collins, 2000, 277). The power structures of the communities where most of the resident informants hailed from are built around a system of male dominance. At the core of these structures is the institution of chieftaincy and its practices. The activities and practices of the chieftaincy institution have been employed in many instances to control or otherwise oppress certain groups of people. Among other roles, Nukunya (2003: 73) argues that chiefs, who are the focal point within which the institution of chieftaincy rests, include the maintenance of law and order. The hub of social, economic and religious beliefs and practices of people in traditional communities across Ghana, are also partly under the domain and influence of chiefs. Politically, in Ghana, a disproportionate segment of heads of the institution of chieftaincy, in this sense chiefs are men. Its council of elders providing various forms of administrative and judicial support is equally men. As a result of the enormous powers community chiefs possess, together with their councils, their conducts are rarely questioned. This position makes it quite difficult for people to challenge their verdicts. Therefore, if they decide the fates of alleged witches and wizards from their communities, it is mostly held sacrosanct. Also, as an organized group, the chieftaincy institution is considered as representative of the community. Therefore, their decisions are considered as representing the needs and concerns of the members of their communities. Added to this, since women are least represented in the institution of chieftaincy, the tendency of attaching little significance to the needs and concerns of women are presumably high. As a result, when accused women appear before community chiefs and their councils, the tendency of ensuring justice stands a greater chance of being compromised.

5.5.3 Economic Conditions

Though I found that most of the informants were said to be engaged in some economic activities at their respective original communities, money accruing from these activities was not substantial enough to meet their basic needs. Some of the economic activities engaged in by the female resident informants before they moved to the camp included local soap making, brewing of beer known locally as *pito*, charcoal burning, retail of farm produce, especially cereal grains, sale of firewood, processing of sheer butter and locust-bean known locally as *dawawa*. It was noted that these economic activities were not only peculiar to the female residents but were identified to be common among majority of rural and peri-urban women. Tata, one of the female residents noted that “*My son, these were just to assist me a little to*

buy clothing because my children who are supposed to buy them for me are poor themselves". As can be seen from Tata's narrative, traditionally, the expectation was for her children to take care of her needs, especially meeting her clothing and other basic needs such as food and health. Unfortunately, the children were themselves poor, struggling to make a living. Therefore, they could not be relied upon to provide the expected care and support. In another instant, Aje, a resident informant, who was observed to be quite old before she moved to the camp, noted that:

"...I have been living here for several years. My children don't visit me frequently because they do not have money. One of them has moved to Accra to look for work. I hope he gets a good work so that he can come back and support his mother...as for other family members, I cannot remember the last time they visited me..."

As can be seen from Aje's remarks above, the inability of most children and other relations to visit their relations in the camp, as well as the infrequent nature of visits by those who visited, were partly informed by the poor economic situations of those relations. The movement of most of the elderly to the camp at the least opportunity is assumed to be a welcome relief to most families for most of them already considered them a source of economic burden. It is very important to note that when the children and close family relations of accused persons are in good economic positions, the likelihood of defending their relations, especially their mothers, is quite high. This is because those who might be making the accusations could be relying on the wealthy children of the accused for their livelihoods. Additionally, in most cases, the accusations against these people may not be made at all because those who are likely to make the accusations fear being rebuked by other community members. These other community members may ostensibly be depending on the rich children of the accused persons for their livelihoods. *"In a community where a woman with grown up children who are also men and as well as rich...is treated a little bit fairly...compared to a woman who has female children and probably the husband is no more"*, Ate, a relevant actor emphasized.

On the part of the two male resident informants, they were identified to be engaged in subsistence farming before moving to the camp. It must be emphasized that these were common economic activities of most rural men in the northern region as well. Adika, a male resident informant noted that *"...These days farming to even feed the family is not easy. The*

lands have been weakened and if you do not have money to buy fertilizer inputs, you cannot even harvest a bowl of maize....I used to cultivate a lot of maize and little yam...” The comments expressed by Adika clearly demonstrate the frustrations he went through and his laxity to continue farming as in “*...I was more or less idle always loitering in my community because it was not worth going to the farm when the output from the farm could not feed the family....I suspect my idleness, always moving daily with my friends or sitting under community trees and discussing community matters....might have encouraged the people to label me a witch*”. When Adika linked his accusations to idleness, the common Ghanaian saying that the devil finds work in idle hands came to mind. By this, it means that when a person is idle, the likelihood of getting engaged in evil practices, usually attributed to the work and influence of the devil, festers. The assertion by Adika could therefore imply that his idleness, which arose out of poor farm yields, partly made people to believe that he was engaged in devilish practices, including joining forces with alleged witches to commit crimes. With poor farm yields quite discouraging and no other economic activity in place for Adika, he stood defenseless when he was confronted with the accusation. This was because he depended on others for support and sustenance. The likelihood of people believing that he was really joining hands with other alleged witches to commit crimes could have been believed and trusted by others, especially if it emanated from those who provided him support and sustenance. Again, the two assertions below provide cases whereby poverty might have played a part in the accusations made against some of the resident informants:

“My son.....hmmmm don’t even say it. Have you ever seen a rich person being a witch? If a rich person is even suspected of being one, you dare not talk about it. It is only a gossip, remains a gossip and dies as a gossip” (Bangbebu, a Resident informant).

“You will find that there is that dimension of witchcraft allegation which borders on one’s economic vulnerability. A lot of the people accused of witchcraft are very poor people in society. And so yes you don’t have the money, and so if they accuse you, you can’t even protect yourself..... So they are a target; the poor in society” (Toka, a Relevant Actor).

The two expressions above emphasize the close relationship between poverty and witchcraft accusations. Similar to witchcraft practices in other places, the poor are the most

likely to be thought of as naturally witches, if not necessarily accused (Green, 2005: 252). Green (2005: 252) emphasizes further that the association of the poor with the propensity to practice witchcraft is justified by the visible failure of the poor to thrive, a failure which provokes not compassion but a fear that their abject state must inevitably lead to envy. Thus, the expectation about envy of others as a result of poverty is likely to lead to witchcraft accusations. For example, Aje, a resident informant notes that *“My husband’s brother was befriending a lady and another brother of his was also befriending another woman. When the senior one’s girlfriend died, I was accused of killing her”* As can be seen from Aje’s statement, even though the element of jealousy is slightly hidden, a further interaction with Aje revealed that because she was poor, she used to economically depend on the senior one. Once the girl came into the scene, she was alleged to have hated the senior one’s girlfriend because the girlfriend had blocked all the economic supports that she used to get from the husband’s brother. When the girlfriend of the husband’s brother died, it was apparent that she was the first person to be targeted for accusation. She had no chance of defending herself at this stage because her economic dependency made her vulnerable. Also, the expression by Bangbebu is to the effect that the rich and wealthy people in the society could also be in possession of witchcraft powers. However, as a result of their wealth, they are least likely to be accused. When they are suspected, the suspicion may just remain on the lips of community members. This could be linked to the fact that with their economic positions, they will get the support of the majority of community members who may be relying on their benevolence to survive. The community chief may himself be dependent on their economic supports. Therefore, not only will the rich be able to defend themselves when accused, they are also likely be defended by other community members and sometimes the chief. *“How dare you accuse them of witchcraft?”* Toka asked amidst some hisses. In support of the findings that poverty might have played a significant part in the accusations, a study by Kwatra (2012: 3) emphasizes that the camps only exist in the northern region of Ghana, where poverty levels are far higher than other areas of the country. Added to this, the northern regions offer less economic opportunities compared to the south (Kwatra, 2012: 7). Indeed, most people, faced with the challenges and the frustrations that poverty engenders, find solace in blaming other people for their misfortunes instead of confronting the real and practical causes that results in their poor living conditions.

5.5.4 Old Age: A Painful Transition?

Though I could not establish the exact ages of all the resident informants, I observed that the majority of them were quite old. All of them had probably passed sixty years. The inability to get the exact ages of the informants was informed by the fact that none of them had a birth certificate. Though a historical period could have been relied upon to estimate their ages as planned, none of them could recollect a historical period in the traditional calendars which could be relied upon to estimate their ages. Again, though most of the informants might have been young before they moved to the camp, I observed that six of them might have passed sixty years before they moved to the camp. Equally, the remaining nine informants could have also passed the age of fifty years. A number of factors were identified as the main causes which might have predisposed older persons (before they moved to the camp) to witchcraft accusations. In the first instance, all the informants interviewed were found to be poor before they were accused by other members of their original communities. For example, Bangbebu a relevant actor emphasized during an interview that:

“See this is my daughter, she is the one who has been assisting me....she has been doing this for several years because I was weak when I came here....I was not doing anything at home...used to get support from others but here she has to be around to help me because I don’t get the previous support again...she left her husband and children to come here to support me...”

Though other factors might have played a part in their poor economic circumstances before they were accused and subsequently moved to the camp, I identified that six informants were poor before they moved to the camp, and this was informed by their ages. In fact, growing old in most communities in Ghana and especially in northern Ghana is synonymous to economic vulnerability or poverty. This is because as in all societies, ageing diminishes the capacity to work and earn (Kakwani and Subbarao, 2005: 4). This situation of the elderly is a common feature in both urban and rural communities across Ghana.

Again, there is a problem of physical weakness related to old age and the inability of older accused persons to defend themselves when accused of witchcraft. Toka, a relevant actor noted that *“you (referring to alleged witches and wizards) are old and so if a group of young boys attack you cannot do anything. Usually the people accused are very weak, very frail and fragile. And so a young guy comes to accuse you, you don’t have the physical*

strength to fight the fellow back” As can be seen from Toka’s narrative, when people are weak, apparently arising out of old age, the likelihood of defending themselves is less because they do not have the physical strength to do so. What must be noted is that though most of the attacks are group or mob attacks, making it quite difficult for even the stronger ones to escape, some physically stronger ones manage to escape by running away upon sighting the appearance of angered community members. The lucky ones get rescued by either a passerby or other respected community members opposed to the action. The aged and for that matter the weak ones on the other hand are most often unable to run away upon seeing marauding youth or community members. Defenseless at this stage, they are most often subjected to physical attacks like being drugged on the floor, stripped naked or even beaten to death. The unlucky ones may likely lose their lives and those who are fortunate to be rescued could find their ways to either other communities or the nearest witches’ camp. However, in most instances, accused persons prefer the latter option of moving to the nearest witches’ camp because they could easily face similar actions at other communities when they move there. This is because information about witchcraft practices and accusations spread easily between and among different communities. Kanna, an alleged wizard pointed to me several scars on the body which resulted from the severe beating that he received from angry community members. During the interview, Kanna removed the shirt he was wearing and pointed several spots of cuts over his entire body. Though I could not count the number of cut spots on Kanna’s body, upon removing his shirt and drawing his trousers upward, I could see countless number of old cut spots. *“I was very lucky my spinal cord did not break. As you can see from the cut from my back...I will have been dead by now,”* Kanna emphasized. Kanna’s case present a clear case of how physical weakness can make accused persons defenseless in the wake of attacks following witchcraft accusations. According to Kanna, he was defenseless as the community members, largely the youth, subjected him to torture by using sticks, metals and machetes.

5.5.5 ‘I Have Never Been to School’-Lack of Education as a Factor of Accusations

Related to education, Tooya, a relevant actor emphasized that:

“...they are all people (referring to the residents of the camp) who do not know that they have the right to live in the community of their choice. And that the chief and the youth that are banishing them from the communities do not have the right and that

they can contest it. These are illiterates who don't know this and so they suffer without knowing that they are not required to."

Tooya also emphasized that the challenges that come with illiteracy was not only associated with the residents of the Gnani camp alone. All the remaining camps had residents who had never been to school as well. In support of this, I identified that none of the resident informants of the camp had been to school. Therefore, like Tooya, they could not read and write. This inability to read and write might have made it quite difficult to defend themselves when they were accused such as relying or referring the cases to state institutions mandated with responsibility to provide protection in circumstances of the sort. This is because, with illiteracy comes the difficulty of remaining ignorant about one's rights as well as access to information both of which are important in asserting for one's rights.

To fully understand and appreciate the influences of the various social positions in the defense of accusations, it is quite essential to look at them with an intersectional lens. In doing this, it is useful to highlight Collins' (2004, 351) explanation of intersectionality as engendering the analysis that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization. These features shape how people's experiences are shaped (substituting people with African Americans in Collins' definition). From this, it is important to focus on how the interplay of the various social positions discussed in this chapter (gender, economic position/poverty, age and education/ignorance) defined how some of the alleged witches and wizards were able or unable to defend themselves in the wake of accusations. Taking gender for example, Shields (2008: 303) notes that in intersectional analysis, it is usually difficult to focus on gender without considering other dimensions of social structure/social identity that play various roles in the understanding, operation and meaning of gender. The discussions in this section have illustrated that traditionally, being born a woman in most of the communities the residents of the camp hailed from, places them at a lower social position compared to men. Thus, the relative power positions between men and women, seen in the light of the consideration that men are more powerful socio-culturally, physically and economically, compared to women, place men to gain control and dominance over women. The powerful position of men is accorded further impetus by men being considered as the main breadwinners of their families. Indeed, the dominance of men over women in a variety of settings indicated above impedes

women's access to and control over resources. This partly contributes to the generation of poverty, thereby giving poverty a woman's face. In order to cope, most of the women in this study engaged in the fragmented Ghanaian informal sector which fetched them pittance. Since the poor are most likely to be thought as naturally witches (Green, 2005: 252), it places women at precarious positions of being accused as witches and the likelihood of remaining defenseless when labeled. Green (2005: 252) emphasizes that the association of the poor (poor women in the case of this study) with the propensity to practice witchcraft is justified by the visible failure of the poor to thrive. Indeed, informative as Green's position might be, he fails to point out the relative power positions between men and women which directly and indirectly impact the failure of the poor women to thrive. In addition to the economic vulnerability of women is the associated consequence of carrying poverty to old age. Kakwani and Subbarao (2005: 4) argue that though economic vulnerability is associated with the elderly in both the formal and informal sectors, the risk of poverty among the elderly is particularly high among those found in the informal economy. Old age also diminishes the capacity to work and earn (Kakwani and Subbarao, 2005: 4). Thus, with most of the accused old women's economic activities found within the informal economy, added to their diminished capacities to work, poverty at old age stared them on the faces and with poverty comes the corresponding predisposition to witchcraft accusations. This is further worsened when poverty among the elderly is extreme and intergenerational, and there is a gradual decline of traditional arrangements or safety nets as Kakwani and Subbarao (2005: 4) outline. As the United Nations Population Fund and Help Age International (2012: 30) notes, old people often become victims of neglect, violence and abuse because of increasing dependence. Finally, with females least likely to acquire education, arising out of socio-cultural and economic circumstances in most parts of Ghana, illiteracy rates among girls, especially in rural Ghana ranks high compared to boys and this is carried to old age. The effect of this is lack of access to information. This in the longer run impacts the inability of women's access to information about their rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to live in any part of Ghana they choose to, including their own communities as well as the right to a fair hearing in a competent court, as opposed to the traditional trial process they are subjected to, both at their original communities and when they arrive at the camp. Finally, the lives and conditions of the marginalized, especially women, as Samuels and Ross-Sheriff (2008: 5) highlight, cannot be well understood with a focus on gender as an analytical tool

without exploring how other elements such as race, migration status, history as well as social class impacts or influences the position of women as a marginalized group. Thus, in demonstrating how witchcraft labeling occurs in the original communities of the residents of the Gnani camp in this study, and the nature of defense of accusations, it is essential not only to consider the constituent elements of social positions as units or single entities, but to consider or even scrutinize the interplay of the various social positions of accused persons such as their gender, age, economic position/poverty as well as levels of education.

5.6 Conclusions

The chapter began with how most of the residents of the Gnani camp move to the camp. It particularly identified that the threat or danger of being physically attacked by angry community members, especially the youth and triggered by rumors or gossips, were the immediate factors which facilitated the movement of people to the camp. This chapter has equally demonstrated that in order to avoid attacks, most often, movement out of the original communities of accused persons was done secretly. Studies on witchcraft most often look at social positions of accused persons as factors which predispose people to witchcraft accusations. As this chapter has clearly demonstrated, my study provides a different perspective. The chapter has argued that how accused persons are able to defend themselves when they are accused, informed by their social positions, is equally significant. This is based on the argument that in Ghana, men, women and even children, the rich and the poor can be accused of witchcraft but how these groups of people are able to defend themselves is essential.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCES

6.1 Introduction

Two main issues are captured in this chapter. The first part looks at the nature of social relationships that exists between the resident informants of the camp and other groups of people. These groups include the family members (kin and kith), the traditional authority and other members of the Gnani community. How the resident informants live their everyday lives is equally useful in showing how they cope with their new environment. The focus of the last section of this chapter is therefore on the everyday life experiences of the resident informants.

6.2 Witchcraft Accusations as a Function of Social Relationships

6.2.1 Paternal Aunties at Large?

Ten of the female resident informants had direct relationship with the people who accused them of bewitchment. For instance, Tipagya was accused by her own brother. She pointed out that *“I am here because of my senior brother, the one I am next to. His son was ill and was sent to the hospital and I was accused of being responsible for his illness”*. Fabla, a relevant actor also emphasized that *“I was living at my brother’s house after the death of my husband. One day they called me and told me that they were seeing me in their dreams and sacked me from the house. Since I came here, they have never visited me”*. Fabla’s assertion is not surprising because as Sarpong (2006) notes, it is common among many Ghanaians to classify bad dreams as what he calls ‘witch dreams’ and that all nightmares are supposed to come from the activities of witches. Also, as Tipagya and Fabla’s cases have demonstrated, most of the female resident informants were accused for allegedly engaging in the killing of their brothers’ children, making them grow sick/ill and putting obstacles on their strive for success in the future. For instance, Tooini noted that *“...I was in my father’s house when my brother’s child died and they said I was responsible for the death. Then I brought myself to this place”*. Tata also emphasized that *...It was really bad to see my own brother accuse me of killing his child after I had helped him so much including assisting him in organizing the marriage ceremony of one of his children recently...the child was my child also...so how could have killed him?”*. It can be seen from the two cases that Tooini and Tata were paternal

Aunties to the alleged victims. Further interviews and observations indicated that it is a common practice among many Ghanaians, especially among many ethnic groups of the north such as Dagombas, Konkombas, Mamprusis, Nanumbas to accuse paternal aunties of bewitchment. Paternal aunties are believed to be extremely jealous of the progress of their brother's children. Collaborating this, Charlie, a relevant actor noted that "*paternal aunties are easily targeted when disaster strikes her brother's children.... However, paternal aunties are not held responsible when their brother's children are successful in life. That is where there is a contradiction.....it confuses me sometimes*".

Charlie's assertion above makes it quite difficult to comprehend why paternal aunties are not given the credit when their brothers' children are making progress in life. This could be due to human nature where successes in life are often attributed to the hardworking and persevering attitudes of people. On the other hand, failures in life are often attributed to certain external forces or stimuli. During some of the interviews and observations, I was made to understand that when people, especially children, are making progress in life and all of a sudden they are confronted with challenges, certain individuals and sometimes invisible forces are often cited as being responsible. This is where paternal aunties become the prime suspects and as such immediate targets of witchcraft allegations. Regarding why paternal aunties become prime suspects, informants could not provide precise information except to say that it could be due to their gender. Toka for instance noted that "*I am not really sure why.....it may be due to their sex...they being women...there may be more to this*". From a more general perspective, Nukunya (2003: 60) argues that it is common to expect that when somebody makes successful progress in life, this will generate hatred and envy among other members of the society. I discovered further that paternal aunties who are barren, widowed or unmarried are more susceptible to be accused. "*When you are a woman or an auntie, you are a target...especially when you do not have a child of your own, when you lose your husband or even when you are grown-up and not married*", Ati, a relevant actor emphasized. On the part of paternal aunties who have children, they were most likely the target when their own children were not making progress in life, compared to their brother's own. "*You can see that the fact that paternal aunties are women, they are the target because I see no reason why paternal uncles or other people are not suspected*", Kanta, a relevant actor noted during an interview.

Again, in most instances, paternal aunts are not necessarily assumed to be directly involved but may be accused to have asked other alleged witches or wizards to destroy or kill the alleged victims, most often children. Achiri, a relevant actor noted that “...*paternal aunts are very powerful and should be feared. They spiritually investigate the future prospects of their alleged victims before they strike them*”. If the alleged victim, most often children, were found to likely become prosperous in future, “*they finish him/her*”, Achiri further emphasized. This statement implies that they kill the person as a child before the child grows up. The powerful nature of paternal aunts as Achiri narrates should not be mistaken to political powers or other forms of power, but spiritual powers. Explaining this further, Achiri posited that “*It is also believed that a paternal aunt can, instead of killing the growing child, decide to put obstacles on the prospective successes of the child such as spiritually frustrating all successful undertakings of the child. She can for instance make the child unintelligent or a perpetual sick person. Some paternal aunts can also choose to make their brother’s children morons*”. It was therefore not surprising when during one of the interviews, Tigya, a female resident informant, noted that all her brother’s children used to avoid her at all times. “*When they visited me and I gave them something, they will not take it...they would not stay for a longer time. One of them died and I was accused*”. Related to this, Ati, a relevant actor noted “...*growing up, children are most often advised and even warned to be careful of their paternal aunts. I can still recollect when I was growing up...we feared our paternal aunts a lot...we were made to believe that they were witches*”.

From the discussions, it is established that to a larger extent, witchcraft is a function of social relations. Green (2005: 247) for instance notes that social relations are both a cause and consequences of witchcraft. Also, making reference to Evans-Pritchard, Nukunya (2003: 59) argues that witches don’t strike at random. Therefore, for witchcraft accusations to come from somebody, the supposed victim must have some level of relationship with the accused. These relationships could be blood and non-blood relationships. Nukunya identifies some of these relationships to those arising out of kinship, friends, colleagues, fellow students and neighbours.

6.3 Relationship with Family/Kin and Kith

Despite the fact that most of the resident informants expressed general disquiet in their relationships with some members of their families, they maintained that their relationships with some of them were cordial. *“I still have good relationship with them (referring to family members),... my uncle’s children sometimes come here. They give me food and clothes sometimes”*, Adika, a male resident informant emphasized. Resident informant-kin and kith cordiality was often seen by visits of some family members to the camp. *My niece was here with cloth and a basin of maize for me*, Adika further narrated in an interview. Though these visits were observed to be infrequent, they were identified to enhance and maintain some level of good relationships with some family members. Neena noted that *“my children sometimes visit me...they bring food to me*. Kparibu also emphasized that *one of them just came here some few days ago. Anytime they come they give me money....”*

Even though both men and women were reported to be visiting their relatives in the camp, women largely outnumbered men in the visits and were comparatively frequent in their visits. Also, though family members could visit the camp at any period during the year, the harvesting season was the time within the year when they visited most. This was because this is the time within the year which they are less busy from their largely subsistent farming activities. It could also be attributed to the availability of food grains after harvest, part of which could be presented to their relations at the camp, no matter how little. Receptions given to kin and kith visitors were usually hospitable. Some of the visitors, especially women, could spend the whole day with their relations in the camp and help prepare food. It must again be emphasized that people who made the various accusations against the resident informants, irrespective of their gender, were unlikely to pay them visits at the camp. Therefore, though most of the resident informants had good relationships with some of their family members, those people definitely did not include people who made the allegations against them, for which reasons they had to move to the camp. Teeya, a resident informant emphasized that *“...it was my own brother who accused me of witchcraft and since I came here, he has never visited me...I do not even want to see him...I don’t trust him again...”*

I also identified that some of the resident informants had some members of their families living with them and supporting them in various ways. Some of these people, as

caregivers or caretakers, included their own children, grandchildren as well as other extended family relations. However, a majority of these caregivers were grandchildren, mostly young girls of school going age. While some of these children who were already living with their grandparents migrated with them to the camp when they got banished, others were sent to them by other family relations to support them after they had been banished to the camp. According to Charlie, a relevant actor, living with the resident informants by these relations further enhances family bonding. Charlie was of the opinion that “...*you can see that once you have your child living with your mother at the camp, if you do not even visit your mother, you will come to the camp because you have your daughter living with your mother*”. This implies that at least, the presence of a person’s child at the camp might alone encourage some family members to visit the camp.

6.4 Relationship with Traditional Authority (Tindana)

The current Tindana of the camp is a young man in his early forties. He currently acts as the head of the camp following the death of his father some years ago. His late father, before his death, was the spiritual leader of the camp. By the customs of most ethnic groups in the northern region of Ghana (patrilineality), the elder’s son of a chief or a priest is selected as heir apparent to the throne after the death of the father (chief or priest). The current Tindana is therefore acting as the leader of the camp until a substantive head is traditionally selected and enskinned. This could equally be the current Tindana, on condition that he qualifies. Known traditionally as the *Gbanglana* (regent) in the Dagbanli language, the acting capacity of the current Tindana includes conducting all the daily activities of the camp, including welcoming new alleged witches to the camp and spiritually cleansing them of all ‘evil’ powers. Like his late father, apart from carrying out the responsibilities of the camp, the acting Tindana is a subsistent farmer.

With this brief description of the profile of the Tindana (traditional authority), his relationship with the resident informants is a very useful theme worth analyzing because the nature of this relationship could determine whether the resident informants found comfort or otherwise within the camp. It could equally be a determining factor which could push the resident informants away from the camp. This kind of relationship could be seen from two angles. In the first place, the traditional authority is considered the leader of the camp, who do not only determine the fates of the resident informants as witches and wizards but also, a

symbol of authority whose commands must be obeyed or respected. Secondly, the traditional authority is considered a person who did not only provide resident informants with shelter, but also responds to their health and other basic need requirements, when necessary.

On the traditional authority as a symbol of authority, Adika, a resident informant noted thus “...*he is very kind. As you can see I was talking with him when you came. He will not shout at you even when he wants to control you.....*” Tooini also emphasized that “*we consider him as our child and grandchild...he is young that is why...he is very good and I like him*”. Contrary to my expectation and the perception of some members of the general public, the resident informants I spoke with expressed full confidence in the traditional authority. They described their relationship with the traditional authority; that is, the Tindana, as very cordial. For example, during an interview, Aje, a resident informant said that “*our relationship is cordial. Even today we just came from his farm. During the planting period, we go to give him a helping hand and after harvesting they give us some of the produce*”. As to whether engaging the resident informants in his farm constitutes a kind of slavery is thus subject to debate. When Tata was asked to describe her relationship with the Tindana, she simply said that “*...Our relationship is very good*”. The good relationship between the resident informants and the traditional authority was also demonstrated through some observations that I conducted during some of my field visits. The Tindana on several occasions was seen in hearty conversations with many of the resident informants as well as other residents of the camp under a canopy of a tree located within the Tindana’s compound. Though the Tindana was always seen chatting with most resident informants, the two male resident informants were more physically closer to him than the female resident informants. This could understandably be so because through socialization among many ethnic groups in Ghana, males are trained to follow males and females are trained to be in the company of their female colleague. This is carried through the life process by many people, especially people from rural areas who, compared to people residing in urban areas, still hold on to this kind of traditional process of socialization.

6.5 Relationship with other Members of the Gnani Community

The relationship between the resident informants and other people within the Gnani community could be viewed from a variety of settings. In the first place, it could be seen from whether or not the resident informants were allowed to attend communal activities or

gatherings such as naming ceremonies, funerals and traditional festivals or even markets. I gathered that, even in situations whereby they were not even invited to those special occasions, they would be received with open arms should they go. Regarding participation in communal gatherings for example, Kparibu narrated that “...*I used to go to community ceremonies when I was a little stronger but now I cannot walk well. It is my daughter who goes*”. Another setting which came up was some level of dependency between some community members of Gnani and resident informants. Some of the resident informants emphasized that they sometimes depended on some community members for, food in particular. For example, Adika emphasized that “...*We and the other people in Gnani are living well without fear and intimidation...when we visit some of them we are even given food before we go back to the camp...*” Likewise, the children of some members of the Gnani community could visit resident informants and be given food. According to Aje, “*we do not have problems with them...sometimes we cook and give some of the food to their children who come around*”. This was contrary to my expectation before data collection. I envisaged that the fact that the residents were regarded as ‘witches’ and ‘wizards’, people within the Gnani community would bear some level of fear towards them.

Related to dependence on each other was that some of the resident informants assisted some community members in their farms, especially during the planting and harvesting seasons. In return, community members gave resident informants some food grains after harvesting. Similar to this, Achiri, a relevant actor emphasized that “*They live and work together without any discrimination and intimidation*”. This dependency to some extent deepened community members’ relationships with the resident informants. When Ati, a relevant actor was asked to examine the relations between the resident informants and members of the Gnani community, she noted that “...*is cordial. There is no stigmatization....people see them as persons with dignity*”. The consequence of this relationship is the absence of stigmatization within Gnani as highlighted above by Ati and which will be discussed into detail in the next chapter.

6.6 Relationship Between and Among Resident Informants

Like the relationship with the traditional authority and other community members, I identified that the relationship between and among resident informants was equally good. This could be seen in the way and manner in which various residents depended on each other,

when they were in need. For example, Bangbebu noted during a conversation that *“when I do not have something and contact one of my colleagues and she has it she will give me and when they also want something from me, I give them. We the Dagombas are living together with the komkombas”*. Pointing to other women who were engaged in hearty conversations, Bangbebu noted that *“...you see, this woman is a Dagomba, myself I am a Dagomba and the others behind us over there are Komkombas”*. What must be noted from Bangbebu’s statement is the fact that though they belonged to two different ethnic groups, they considered themselves as one and took no notice of their ethnic differences. Making reference to the support they give to each other in their economic ventures, Aje also emphasized that *“we have a peaceful relationship. We even work together on the sheabutter work”*. As I will come back to, the sheabutter extraction is one of the economic activities that some of the resident informants engaged in as a form of a survival strategy.

Explaining how peaceful they lived together in the camp, Adika also emphasized that *“We are all living together happily without any problem....we sit in groups to converse on issues concerning our lives in the camp”*. Adika again noted that *“...after cooking we come together to eat”*. Comparing her life and condition in the camp with life at her original community, Fabla emphasized that even if there was no cordial relationship between him and other residents of the camp, she, at least, was spared the anger of people of her original community. Thus *“we all live in our individual rooms....I do not have any problem with anyone as I am here.....this is better than to stay in somebody’s house (apparent reference to her original community) and have troubles”*. Corroborating the issues raised by most of the resident informants, Achiri, a relevant actor, noted that *“if any of them has a problem such as fetching water and cooking, those of them who are still stronger are fond of giving them support”*. This is not however to say that resident informants did not sometimes experience some levels of squabbles. As a human institution, differences were bound to occur once in a while. However, the traditional authority with the support of the leader of the resident informants, were generally able to intervene to resolve them. According to Achiri, a resident informant *“when there is a small problem, we try to solve it...but it rarely occurs...just some little little squabbles...”*. Achiri’s assertion implies that overall, the nature of relationship between and amongst resident informants was peaceful and cordial. During the field visits, I did not witness, see or observe any kind of squabbles.

6.7 Living in the Camp: Everyday Life Experiences

6.7.1 Agency and Power: Survival Strategies of Residents

One may ask, what constitute the daily lives of the resident informants? In answering this question, one will be tempted to believe that life in the camp is that of hell. However, it must be emphasized that the residents of the camp possess certain characteristics which ensured that they survive under their circumstances and should therefore not be glossed over. Some of the resident informants still engaged in their previous economic activities which they used to undertake at their original communities. Some of these activities included burning and sale of charcoal, sale of firewood and local soap, brewing of local beer, subsistence farming, spinning of cotton as well as the sheabutter extraction. Kanna, a male resident informant, who was a farmer before he moved to the camp for instance noted that *“I asked the Tindana to give me a farm land...he has given me and so I will be farming...my own farm even though I will still help him in his farm....”*. Unlike their original communities where they could move to other surrounding communities to sell these products before the accusations, these economic ventures were conducted within the confines of the Gnani community this time around. This was because of the fear of stigmatization should they move to other adjoining communities. This is discussed into detail in a next chapter.

Also, with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP) and through Songtaba, some of the resident informants were engaged in re-bagging and selling salt. To generate money for the residents, the WFP again donated a grinding mill to the camp. Regarding the donation of the grinding mill, Ati emphasized that *“we (reference to her organization) spoke to the World Food Programme that we wanted to see how we could sustain them economically and then they gave them the grinding mill”*. Ati noted that the absence of electricity within the camp made the sustenance of the grinding mill quite difficult however. Ati rhetorically noted that *“...there is no electricity in the camp so how does the mill survive?”* Again, another form of coping strategy which resident informants resorted to was that the agile ones visiting local and nearby farms to pick leftover food grains, either for sale or to use for cooking. This implies that this activity was more applicable during the harvesting season. Related to this was that some of them supported community members in their farms during the planting and harvesting seasons and in return, they were given some quantity of food grains after harvest. For instance, Aje, in a comfortable and relaxed posture,

emphasized thus “*we just came from the farm. During the sowing period, we go and give them a helping hand and after harvesting they give us some of the food produce*”. In another vein, those of them who had some caregivers living with them provided some level of emotional and social support. For instance, they ran errands for them and also carried out primary domestic responsibilities for them such as washing of their cloths, sweeping the compound, cooking and fetching water for domestic use. In an interview, Gaani emphasized that “*...my grandchild is helping me....but I have lost the support of my children and husband...it is painful but I have lived to understand and to accept the situation*”. It is clear from Gaani’s statement that despite the loss of social support from her children and husband, and like many of her colleagues who expressed similar sentiments, she had lived and learnt to accept the situation.

6.7.2 Shelter and Housing Conditions

Passing through the Gnani community, one would hardly believe that this community is home to Ghana’s largest witch camps, in terms of population. The community has quite a number of social amenities, including electricity, a primary and a junior high school. It can easily pass for a district capital in Ghana. Heading eastward however, from the central business area through the dusty road that leads to the community’s sea sand pit, one meets a signpost welcoming you to the witch camp. On the signpost is boldly written ‘*Pagkpamba fong*’¹⁴. The synonym for *Pagkpamba* is *Pagkora* and as Kirby (2009, 2009: 63) notes, these concepts are euphemisms for ‘witch’. This implies that every old woman is at risk of being accused or labeled as a witch (Kirby, 2009: 63). Like the other camps, the boundaries of the Gnani camp are not fenced. However, as Kwatra (2012: 4) notes, residents are very aware of where the camp’s boundaries lie. In different ways, the *Pagkpamba fong* is different from other areas within the community. For example, while the other areas have beautiful houses (at least by the community’s standards), the *Pagkpamba fong* do not.

It is important to emphasize that like typical northern families in rural areas, the residents of the camp are housed in single round rooms or huts. Several of these huts put together constitute a compound. An average of three to four residents could be found in a

¹⁴ This is in Dagbanli which means literally ‘old women’s areas’.

compound structure. Those who were not found in compound structures lived in single isolated houses within the *Pagkpamba fong*. All the rooms were built with mud and thatch. On how these huts are put up, I identified that once accused persons opt to remain in the camp, a piece of land to put up a hut is usually allocated to them by the Tindana. Achiri noted that family members of accused persons are usually expected to build the huts. The Tindana and his council of elders most often had to put up these huts because most family members of accused persons were said to be unwilling to do this. An old hut, either previously inhabited by a reintegrated alleged witch or wizard or a dead person, could equally be reallocated to a new resident. One major difficulty that was identified was that one could see the skies through the thatch roofs in most of the rooms. Thus, most of the rooms leaked during the rainy season. Most residents were therefore exposed to cold during the rainy season. It was not therefore surprising that ActionAid (2008: 34) found pneumonia as one of the common diseases prevalent in the camp. According to Tata, a resident informant, most of them hardly had comfortable sleeps during the rainy season because of the leakages. Added to this, the floors of most of the rooms were under bad conditions. “*The floors...are nothing to write home about...*”, Ati, a relevant actor emphasized.

Under normal circumstances, family members of the residents were required to periodically re-roof the rooms of their family members. However, Achiri noted that “*...most family members, once they know that it is time to re-roof them, do not show up*”. These attitudes by family members of residents put pressure on the traditional authority, since in most of the cases, it had to come in to re-roof these rooms. I found also that Songtaba in the past had assisted in re-roofing some of the rooms. They were however sometimes confronted by challenges of funds. Though the rooms or huts were quite small in sizes, most of the resident informants expressed happiness living in these huts. According to most of them, though not spacious and comfortable enough, they lived peacefully in them. At least, they did not live under constant fear as were the case in their original communities, most of them noted. Kanna, a male resident informant highlighted that “*my grandson, I feel comfortable in this room. I do not live in fear in this room.....nobody can come around to knock on my door and accuse me of killing his/her so and so*”. By this assertion, since accusations were unlikely to happen once they were living within the camp, they were quite satisfied despite the uncomfortable nature of their rooms.

6.7.3 Access to Basic Food: Hungry but Survives

Access to food was a challenge for all the resident informants and they complained how hard it was to afford the proverbial three square meals a day. For instance, Bangbebu noted “...*there is no food. Food is our major problem. ...if I were having flour I would have prepared porridge. Since there is no enough flour, I will use the small flour to prepare Tuozaafi¹⁵ for the children instead*”. Though some of them indicated that their children and other relatives had been providing them cereal grains, especially maize to prepare food, they emphasized that the provision was neither consistent nor sufficient. According to Gaani, a resident informant, “*the last time my son sent food was about a year ago...we are living under the support of my colleagues (referring to other residents of the camp) and the Tindana*”. As Gaani’s assertion highlights, the have-nots depends on those who have in times of need. Added to this, some of the residents, once they were hungry and did not have enough food, depended on the Tindana for food. “*Once I don’t have food, I just go to the Tindana’s compound with my bowl and I will get food to eat,...his wives will give me*”, Tigya noted. As a result of this, all the resident informants expressed their delight in the manner the Tindana had been responding to their food requirement needs, when necessary. However, the provision of food to most of the informants by the Tindana reportedly put pressure on the Tindana. Challenged by this, the Tindana was sometimes motivated to send some of the resident informants to his farm, especially during planting and harvesting periods to assist, in order to as Ati, a relevant actor put it “...*supplement the household food requirement*”. As initially noted, the relatively stronger ones worked on the farms of other community members to supplement their foodstuff needs and others visited the farms of community members to gather or pick up leftover food grains. Some of the informants also mentioned Songtaba as one of the organizations that has been supporting them in the provision of food. Neena for example noted that “...*Songtaba was here to give us some foodstuffs...we still have some of the food. But for Songtaba, it will have been difficult for me because I do not have the strength to work again*”.

¹⁵ A kind of food prepared from the flour of maize, cassava etc. it is the common staple among Dagombas and many other ethnic groups in the northern region.

As a programme aimed at poverty reduction among certain vulnerable groups in Ghana, such as people living with disabilities and women, the implementation of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme by the government of Ghana at the Gnani camp was explored as part of this study. As a social grant scheme, the LEAP programme was launched in March 2008 (Amuzu, Jones and Pereznieta, 2010: 2) by the government of Ghana, as part of an overall National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), whose vision is “creating an all inclusive society through the provision of sustainable mechanisms for the protection of persons living in situations of extreme poverty, vulnerability and exclusion” (Government of Ghana, 2007: 5). It is a social grants scheme that will provide target groups with a reliable and cost-effective cash transfer to support their basic human needs (Government of Ghana, 2007: 5) such as food. Among the beneficiaries of the LEAP cash transfer include the aged who are above 65 years and living without subsistence support. With almost all the resident informants quite old (probably above 65 years), most of them were thus qualified or eligible to benefit from the LEAP programme. Findings on the ground however showed that they nonetheless did not receive the grant support. According to Kanta, a relevant actor, although “...many people in the Gnani community are qualified to benefit from the scheme...not all of them were selected”. The findings further points to the fact that out of the overwhelming number of residents of the camp, who were above 65 years, poor and vulnerable, and so qualified to benefit from the scheme, only two of them, had recently received the cash transfer.

6.7.4 Access to Health Care Services

Gnani is one of the few communities in the Yendi municipality that has a health centre. The health centre is expected to offer orthodox medical services to the inhabitants of Gnani and other surrounding communities. Despite the existence of the health centre in the community, few of the resident informants access its services. According to most of the informants, they did not have the necessary resources or money to access the services of the health centre. Challenged by difficult access to orthodox health care, most of the resident informants resorted to the use of local or herbal medicine. “*When I am sick, I use traditional medicine*

because I do not have money to go to “ashipti¹⁶”, Bangbebu noted in an interview. The provision of the traditional medicine rests with the Tindana, the caretakers and sometimes relatives of the residents who may visit. *“As I am talking to you, I am sick but I cannot go to the hospital...my legs are burning and painful...the Tindana gave me some medicine yesterday...I used it but it is still painful”*, Aje noted in an interview. In the interviews, twelve out of the fifteen resident informants complained of different forms of illnesses. From their statements, I observed that most of them were probably suffering from malaria, known in Dagbani as *kpagu*. The suspected presence of malaria, which is a preventable disease, could probably be due to the poor environmental conditions in the camp. From my observations, I identified that long grasses were allowed to grow at almost every corner of the various compounds within the camp.

Ghana has a National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) which was established by the government of Ghana in 2003, through an Act of Parliament, (Act 650). Under Ghana’s NHIS, some groups of people are exempted from paying premiums but are allowed to benefit from the scheme. These groups of people include children below 18 years, the aged above 70 years and indigents considered financially incapacitated (National Health Insurance Act, 2003). With most of the resident informants very old, they were by this condition qualified to be registered freely and enjoy free health care delivery. The findings of this study however revealed that most of the resident informants were not covered by the NHIS. *“Virtually all of them do not have...”*, Ati emphasized. Also, under the NHIS, subscribers are required to annually renew their insured cards. However, of the few resident informants who were reportedly registered, renewal of their insured cards was a serious challenge. This was because they did not have money to undertake the renewals. Added to this, the fear of being stigmatized discouraged them from visiting the renewal centre at Yendi, for renewal. Thus, most of them could not enjoy free health care when they fell sick. Among all the 15 resident informants, only one had her NHIS card or register renewed. A review of secondary data indicates that Songtaba, with funding from ActionAid Ghana and North East Programme, and

¹⁶ Generally refers to a hospital, clinic, health centre or any place where orthodox or modern health care services are offered.

in collaboration with the Yendi Municipal Assembly, the NHIS premiums and identity cards of some of the resident informants, among other residents of the camp, were paid for in 2007 (ActionAid, 2008: 34). However, since 2007, renewal of the premiums of the resident informants and their colleagues has remained a challenge.

6.7.5 Water and Sanitation Conditions

All the residents of the camp depended on river Oti which supplies water to the entire Gnani community. Though, not portable, all the resident informants were quite comfortable with the situation, since they were always sure of regular supply throughout the year. They did however complain about the distance from the camp to the river side. It was especially frustrating to resident informants without caretakers. For example, Fabla, a resident informant emphasized that “...*It is very far. Those of us without people staying with us find it difficult to walk to the place*”. The Oti River lies in the eastern side of the community. By my own estimation, it is about two and a half kilometers away from the main community center and about two kilometers from the *Pagkpamba fong*. The path from the main community to the river side passes through the camp. Weak and frail, most of the resident informants found it difficult to walk to the river side to fetch water for both domestic and commercial activities. Added to this, part of the pathway close to the river is quite steep. This made it quite difficult for most of the old residents to descend and ascend to and from the river as they could easily slip and fall. I also observed that during the rainy season, water from the river most often overruns its banks and takes control of the pathway to the river. This further worsens the plight of the residents in accessing water from the river. Regarding sanitation, even though the community has a public place of convenience (toilet), it is far away from the camp. As a result, the resident informants were compelled to visit the nearest bush for nature’s call. Aje noted that “*there is one big tree...where we all free ourselves (use as a toilet). The men also have a place in the bush where they use as a toilet. We are far from the public toilet*”. Despite these conditions, they remained in the camp, and in the next chapter I will elaborate on the reasons for this.

6.8 Conclusions

This chapter has looked at two main things. In the first instance, the chapter looked at various social relationships that resident informants were engaged in with other people such as kin and kith, the traditional authority and the other residents of the Gnani community as well as

among themselves. This part of the chapter found that despite the power differences between the residents and the traditional authority, in this sense the Tindana, this apparent power differences nonetheless negatively affected their relationship with the authority. Thus, their relationship with the Tindana was cordial. Though some of the resident informants still maintained some level of relationships with some kin and kith, expressed through their visits to the camp, these visits were not frequent. Some of them could however take solace in the fact that they had either their children or grandchildren staying with them and providing them some level of social and emotional support. Again, they mutually depended on each other in terms of need, and this enhanced the social relationship between and amongst them. The second part of the chapter looked at the everyday life experiences of the resident informants such as access to food, health care services, and shelter. From the discussions, it was quite clear that the resident informants were faced with some challenges in these areas. To cope with these challenges however, while some of them re-engineered their previous economic activities within the camp, others had to initiate new ways or strategies in order to cope with their new environment. Mutual dependence on each other, the support from caregivers and the Tindana, and working on the farms of other community members, were some of the strategies that ensured that life in the camp was worthwhile compared to their original communities, were they lived under constant fear and threats.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IDENTIFICATION PROCESS AND THE QUESTION OF REINTEGRATION

7.1 Introduction

In the first empirical chapter, I examined the movement of people to the Gnani camp as well as their social positions which might have played various roles in instigating the accusations and their ability for defense. However, it is not possible to fully understand and comprehend the intricacies of Ghanaian witchcraft practices and the witch's camp phenomenon without paying attention to how alleged witches and wizards are identified. In this chapter, I will explore the identification processes involved once an accused person sets foot in the Gnani camp, with an emphasis on the role of the Tindana in the identification process. The chapter will also illustrate that although all the informants were said to be innocent of the accusations and as such were qualified to move out of the camp, they nonetheless chose to remain in the camp. What reasons can account for this? Responses to this question lead the discussion to the second part of this chapter, which is dedicated to an outline of various reasons behind the decisions of resident informants to remain within the camp. One of the reasons is the fear of stigmatization. Therefore, a significant attention is placed on the issue of stigmatization in the discussion.

7.2 Deities and Roles of the Tindana

When a person is accused of witchcraft among Dagombas and many other ethnic groups in the northern region, the question of determining whether or not the person is guilty or innocent of the accusation rests with the gods or deities. According to Achiri, a relevant actor, there are generally two forms of deities among most ethnic groups in the northern region. Firstly, there are family deities. According to Achiri, family deities are meant for families and therefore family members depend on them for their welfare. The second group of deities is community deities. Community deities are for communities and various ethnic groups. A community deity is known as *buguli* (singular) and *buga* (plural) among Dagombas (Mahama, 2004: 180). According to Mahama, these community deities can manifest themselves in several forms such as reptiles, birds, stones, groves, streams, rivers, spirits, stones and thunder, among others. The overseer or fetish priest of community deities is referred to in Dagbanli as *Tindana or Tinbia* (Mahama, 2004: 180).

In Dagbon, the role of a chief and a Tindana are specifically defined. While the chief oversees a wide range of activities of the community, including the maintenance of law and order as well as the development of the community, the role of the Tindana is more spiritual. The Tindana is responsible for all activities that have to do with the gods and deities and is consulted on almost all matters that relate to the spirits and gods. In Gnani, there is a traditional chief and the Tindana. The local chief is a Dagomba and the Tindana is a Konkomba. Therefore, the management of the camp rests with the Konkombas. Thus as Kirby (2009: 65) emphasizes, the Dagomba maintains political powers, while the Konkomba earth-priest has ritual powers. When accused persons arrive in the camp, the Tindana, among other roles, is responsible for passing them through the identification process. Apart from this, the Tindana ensures that the welfare needs of accused persons in the camp, including providing them with protection/security, are met. In response to a question, Achiri emphasized that “...*nobody has the right to attack these people once they are here. They cannot even venture. It is an abomination and an affront to the customs and traditions of the area*”. The assertion by Achiri implies that once they are under the authority of the Tindana, he serves as a source of security for which reason other members of the public cannot attack residents. Added to these functions, a study by ActionAid (2008: 25) also notes that the Tindanas in all the camps, including Gnani, are responsible for the provision of health care, in addition to taking major decisions on behalf of and in the interest of alleged witches and wizards living in the various camps.

7.3 Identification Procedures: The Three Main Stages of Identification

Once a person enters the Gnani camp, an accusation remains as such until the accused person is proven guilty or innocent of the crime through the three main processes of identification which are discussed into detail below. However, before an identification process commences, certain important conditions must be met. Although there may be other conditions, I identified two particular conditions. In the first place, there should be witnesses. Thus, somebody, usually a family member, must be present to serve as a witness. This condition was made known in the following comments by Adika, a male resident informant:

“I initially came here alone and when I came here, the custodians of this camp asked me to go back and bring my people. According to them, the rituals cannot be performed on me without the presence of any of my family members...I stopped on the

way close to my village and sent a child to my people to deliver the message to them...a family member then met me on the way and together, we went to the camp and they finally performed the rituals on me.”

As can be seen from Kanna’s comments, he was initially refused to be taken through the ritual process until he brought a family member to serve as a witness. The reason why a witness must be present is to clear doubts in the minds of family members about the outcome of the identification. Witnesses conduct this by relaying the information to other family members who might not be present during the identification process. The challenge however is whether or not these witnesses are really family members of accused persons since there are no established ways of verifying whether or not they are really family members.

The second condition is that the process offers an exception to pregnant women who are accused. Thus, when a woman enters the camp as a pregnant person, the various processes are suspended until the time after she delivers. This was shown in Tata’s statement that “...when I came here I was even pregnant then...the Tindana told the people that they don’t give pregnant women the medicine since she is already in pain”. This statement offers an idea that the traditional authority knows that the concoctions can have a negative effect on the growing fetus. However, the likely negative effects of these concoctions are not given priority in other cases. Therefore, no matter how harmful these concoctions could be on accused persons’ body and life is not considered by the traditional authority.

7.3.1 First Stage: The Slaughter of Fowls to Prove Guilt or Innocence

When accused witches and wizards arrive in the camp, they are made to go through three stages or procedures of identification. Before I begin a discussion of the various stages, Bangbebu’s narrative, provided below, gives a summary of the main stages.

“I was welcomed by the Tindana. Since I was very hungry, I was first given food and water¹⁷. Since it was already dark, I was taken through the buguli yubu¹⁸ process the next day. I sat before the deity and the Tindana and his people. I was asked questions

¹⁷ It is part of the traditions of many Ghanaian communities to welcome visitors with water and sometimes food.

¹⁸ Refers to the entire process of identification.

whether I had really killed Ablai (the name of the person /child she was alleged to have killed). I did not kill him so I said no. I bought a fowl from the money that I had secretly tied at one edge of my cloth. I was declared innocent. I also drank the concoction.....that was what happened when I came here. I have since been living here....” (Bangbebu, a female resident informant).

In the first instance, when a person is accused of witchcraft and is either sent or voluntarily move to the Gnani community, the first thing that is done by the Tindana is to consult with the deity, known as *ten* to determine whether the accused person is guilty of the accusation or not. This process involves ‘speaking’ with the *ten* through the slaughter of a fowl. What must be emphasized is the fact that the slaughter of for example goats, sheep, cattle and birds (fowls, guinea-fowls, doves) to gods or deities is not alien to most traditional communities in the northern region and across many communities in Ghana. Indeed, it forms part of the nature of worship in African Traditional Religion. It signifies offerings to the gods. Fowls are the most common that are used among most ethnic Dagombas and other ethnic groups of northern Ghana. This could be due to the fact that the fowl is a common bird to rear in the savanna northern belt of Ghana. The slaughter of the fowl is preceded by making the accused person sit down. It is the responsibility of the alleged witch or wizard to provide the fowl. Alternatively, when an accused person is accompanied by a family member to the camp, the family member may provide the fowl. “*My children bought the fowl for the process....they brought me so they provided it...*”, Neena, a resident informant noted. Sometimes the camp authorities will assist in the provision of the fowl if accused persons are not immediately able to do so. The accused person must however pay for the fowl later. “*If a witch or wizard come without a fowl, we provide the fowl....but the person must pay back when he/she gets one....*”, Achiri, a relevant actor noted. The provision of the fowl by the traditional authority is understandably so because those who move to the camp alone might have left all their belongings at their original communities. Out of haste to escape from angry community members, some of them leave their communities unprepared. They will therefore not have either the fowl or the required money to purchase the fowl for the process.

Interspersed with some incantations, the position of the fowl after being slaughtered determines whether an alleged witch or wizard is guilty or not guilty of the allegations. The innocence or guilt of an accused is thus determined by the final posture of the fowl as it dies

(ActionAid, 2008: 26). Regarding the interpretation of the posture of the fowl, Charlie, a relevant actor noted that “...it is believed that when the fowl is slaughtered and thrown in the air and it falls on its stomach, it means the person is innocent and when it falls on its back it means the person is guilty”. Tuunteya, a resident informant also noted that “The fowl can move round for some time and finally falls and this is interpreted by the priest...my fowl fell on its stomach”. Tuunteya’s assertions imply that she was declared innocent once the fowl fell on its stomach. Again, to prove the fact that he was innocent of the accusation, Kanna, one of the male resident informants emphasized that “the fowl fell on its stomach which meant that I was not guilty”. Aje also noted that “they killed some fowls to indicate whether I was guilty or not. After that sacrifice I was proven innocent”.

All the resident informants I interviewed noted that after the slaughter of fowls, they had been proven to be innocent of all the accusations, yet they all chose to remain in the camp. Thus, they denied that they were witches and wizards. “I don’t have anything that can kill a human being”, Kanna emphasized. When asked whether they really believed in witchcraft, they noted that witchcraft never existed. For instance, Tata noted that “there is no witchcraft. If your fellow human being wants to tarnish your image, he/she will accuse you of witchcraft. Why will I want to bewitch my fellow human being? I did not do anything...where could I have gotten witchcraft from?” Similarly, Kparibu noted that “...I don’t think there is witchcraft. Even if other people think there is witchcraft, I don’t think so. Someone who doesn’t like you will always think you have witchcraft but I don’t think there is witchcraft”. Aje however resignedly emphasized that “...well I believe in it (referring to witchcraft) because they have accused me. If they have accused me of witchcraft which I didn’t do why wouldn’t I say I believe in witchcraft?” With no possible ways of defeating the witchcraft label, Aje had accepted her situation with some level of pains and sadness.

7.3.2 Stage Two: Exorcising the Powers of Witchcraft and Cleansing

Once an accused person is found guilty through the position of the fowl, what is followed is exorcising the accused person’s witchcraft powers. Green (2005: 249) refers to this process as suppression of witchcraft powers. It is believed that shrines have enormous powers to exorcise the witchcraft spirit inherent in the accused (ActionAid, 2008: 26). This process is marked by the drinking of some concoctions by accused persons. Kirby (2009: 66) refers to the process of drinking the concoctions as the “drinking oath”. “All persons are supposed to

take the concoction”, Achiri noted in an interview. Depending on the strength of a person’s supposed witchcraft powers, an accused person could be made to drink the concoction a number of times. Emphasizing the fact that she did not have witchcraft powers and as such was innocent of the accusation, Kparibu, a resident informant noted that “...*I took the concoction just once*”. The process of drinking these concoctions is referred to in Dagbani as *buguli nyubu, sabli gmebu or sabli dihibu* and can also be prepared by a Mallam¹⁹ (Mahama, 2004: 189). The purpose of taking this drink is that apart from disempowering alleged witches and wizards of their powers, it is intended to cleanse them thus prevent them from engaging in witchcraft practices in the future. “*Once you take the concoction, you cannot engage in witchcraft again.....whether you have powers or not*”, Tooini, a resident informant emphasized. Charlie, a relevant actor also noted that “...*made to drink the concoctions, the person is no more spiritually powerful and so therefore is harmless*”. Achiri also noted that “*once an alleged witch/wizard goes through the process, he/she cannot be called a witch/wizard*”. Therefore, by standard practice, exorcised and cleansed alleged witches and wizards are not to be considered witches and wizards again. However, as will be seen later, this is more applicable within the Gnani community. This is not the situation in the case of people living outside the community, an issue that is also discussed in a later section of this chapter. By drinking the concoctions, they are also indirectly warned not to engage in witchcraft practices in future, failure of which the gods will strike them dead. “...*Once you refuse and do, you will be strike to death by the ten...*”, Tigya, a resident informant emphasized. Similar to this, Green (2005: 252) notes that in some parts of Tanzania, witches, if caught, can be disempowered, taken to specialists and given medicine which is guaranteed to kill them if they ever return to their witchcraft habits. This and related to these findings, raise the question of why original community members refuse to accept them back to their original. This is also discussed into detail later in this chapter.

7.3.3 Stage Three: What Next after being Exorcised and Cleansed?

The third stage is marked by the decision to go back either to their original communities or to other communities once the concoction is taken and the person is given clearance by the *ten*.

¹⁹ A Muslim leader believed to possess spiritual powers. The role of the mallam is very important in the daily lives of Dagombas. They occupy an important position in the chief’s palace.

Although all the resident informants told me they were innocent of the accusations and given the necessary freedoms by the *ten* to move out of the camp, they nonetheless chose to remain in the camp and to live there. Aje for instance noted that “...*after the sacrifice and I was found innocent my son said I should come home but I told him that I will remain here*”. Their reasons to remain in the camp are discussed into details in the next sub-section. In an interview with Ndeya, she emphasized her resolve to remain in the camp despite the fact that she was declared innocent. She noted that “...*we have just buried my friend. We have been living here for the greater part of our lives. I was found innocent several years ago....but I have been living here and just like my friend, I will die and be buried here*”. Adika, a male resident informant when asked why he still lived in the camp despite the fact that he was found to be innocent, he rhetorically answered ...*you want them to kill me?*”

In all parts of the world, there are various ways of identifying and dealing with witchcraft and people accused of witchcraft. In the past, Schnoebelen (2009: 2) cites execution by hanging, drowning and burning as some of the ways by which witches were punished. These forms were accompanied by torture, starvation and abandonment (Schnoebelen, 2009: 2). During the colonial period in Africa, Danfulani (1999: 167) also identifies exposure and public ridicule by the cult of masquerades, as well as teasing songs, usually composed by women as some other approaches. Specifically, in Dagbon, Mahama (2004: 188-189) identifies the approaches in order of severity; payment of fines for first time offenders, payment of fines and a slave boy or girl (*sogu nyaanga*) for second time offenders. The severest were crushing of the big tow of alleged witches, beating them up or exiling them, as well as death by stoning. It must be noted that the payment of fines can still be found in some communities in the Dagbon traditional area as well as among other ethnic groups in Ghana. The fear of being subjected to some of these punishments, such as being tortured, hanged or even sometimes killed served as push factors which encouraged most of the resident informants to move to the Gnani camp for safety as I noted previously. Finally, the general process of identification once an accused person enters the camp makes the identification process assume the status of institutionalization. The institutionalization is partly seen in the light of the Tindana’s responsibility to identify and declare accused persons guilty or innocent, providing them shelter and taking care of their health and basic food needs when necessary.

7.4 Reintegration Question: What are the Factors Responsible for Residents' Decisions to Remain in the Camp?

It is significant to note that the process of allowing an accused person to remain in the camp or go home after going through the processes of exorcism and cleansing rests with the person, the family or both. However, an approval must be given by the gods before a resident could be reintegrated into his or her original community. "...*Once you are found innocent, the gods will guarantee you the right to leave this place, if you are also guilty and you take the concoctions, you do not have powers again...so you can go back*", Achiri remarked in an interview. If an accused person decides to remain in the camp for some time, and later changes his or her mind to relocate, another process of sacrifice is involved, and the payment of some amount of money. The reasons behind the payment of the money were not however made clear by informants in this research. Could these payments be for the services rendered to the resident or to compensate for the likely loss of work and income? Whatever the case might be, during the interviews, all the resident informants, though were found to be innocent of the allegations after going through the identification process, had chosen to remain or stay within the camp for a number of reasons. These reasons are discussed below:

7.4.1 Stigmatization

Stigma is a negative construct; it is a mark of shame that communicates to others the fact that a person is not able to fulfill social and cultural role expectations (Green, 2009: 15). Based on this understanding of stigmatization, and related ones, stigmatization was identified in this study as one of the main factors which dissuaded all the resident informants from being reintegrated into their communities of origin. In the following, I will raise the issue of fear of stigmatization from two angles. The first one is stigmatization from members of the Gnani community. The other form of fear of stigmatization is from outside Gnani, including the original communities of resident informants. Regarding fear of stigmatization within Gnani, Toka, a relevant actor for instance noted that "...*I think with Gnani camp particularly, stigma is not so much because yes the camp is a bit isolated from the main community, you will only know that this is the camp by the nature of the buildings. I don't really see stigma; not within Gnani but outside Gnani it is there*". This assertion could partly be attributed to community members' belief that once they are declared innocent and cleansed, they become powerless

and thus 'harmless'. Therefore, by relating well with them may not have any 'harmful' or negative effects on them.

All the resident informants were of the opinion that they were free to integrate with the Gnani community members without hindrance. For instance, they attended community gatherings they were invited to, such as naming ceremonies, funerals and community festivals. Bangbebu, a resident informant noted that "...*My daughter has just returned from a naming ceremony. I was invited to attend but I am very old now to do so. It is my daughter who takes care of me, who stands in for me*". Also, in one of my visits, I observed some community members visiting some of the resident informants (and some of their colleagues) in their various homes and under some trees to interact with them. From my observations, I realized that the residents were quite happy to receive the community members and this was an everyday affair. Some of those who do petty trading such as soap and salt businesses were free to move from house to house to do business. They could also visit the market such as during market days to sell their produce. Pointing to one of the resident members returning from the main community centre with her basket of soap on her head, Achiri a relevant actor emphasized that "...*as you can see....nobody regard them as witches. They sell their goods just like others. It is sad all of them cannot do this....because majority of them are old*". From the various statements above, one will say that stigmatization is not a problem within the Gnani community. There was however stigmatization of the children and grandchildren of the resident informants who served as caregivers/caretakers to the residents of the camp. For example, Toka, a relevant actor noted the following:

"They have a school in the community (Gnani) and children in the Gnani camp have access to it. But usually the stigma is more evident in the children when they go to school because everybody in the school knows that this child is from the camp. His mother is a witch. His 'whatever' is a witch and so the children feel the stigma more because they interact with the larger community in school".

It is important to raise the question of why children and grandchildren of resident informants were reportedly experiencing stigmatization from within the Gnani community. What reasons account for this? This study could not establish these reasons. Answers to this questions call for another study, with special focus on the children/grandchildren/caretakers of resident informants. Turning to the reasons behind the absence of stigmatization within

Gnani, one factor is the belief among community members that the resident informants, once they have been exorcised and cleansed, become harmless. “...*They cannot bite nor chew again*”, Achiri emphasized. It could also be attributed to the cordial relationship which often develops between the resident informants and members of the Gnani community. As Ati, a relevant actor noted “...*their relationship with the people is cordial...the people see them as persons with dignity*”. What must also be noted is the fact that some of the residents had moved out of the camp and had been given pieces of land to put up houses in other areas of the Gnani community. Thus, some of them have legitimately become members of the Gnani community and were no more living within the camp or seen as witches or wizards. The lives and activities of these former residents of the camp could be sufficient reason not to stigmatize the others living in the camp. This is because these former members might have lived beyond reproach to have qualified to be given lands of their own. This implies therefore that stigmatization from within the Gnani community could not be a push factor that could motivate the resident informants to leave the Gnani camp and reintegrate into their original communities and other communities.

Regarding the fear of stigmatization from outside Gnani, including the original communities of resident informants, the fear of being stigmatized by members of their original communities, discouraged the resident informants from being reintegrated or even accepting reintegration. “...*It is outside the community people see them as witches...*”, Ati noted. Though all of them were exorcised and cleansed of their powers and were believed not to have the powers to bewitch again, they expressed fear that they could be stigmatized by members of their original communities if they ever return. “*I do not want to go back. I will be seen as a witch...though I am not...*”, Tata, a resident informant emphasized. Kanna, another resident informant, told me that “*I have never gone back to my place since I came here. What will I take from that place if the people do not like me and have sacked me?...they say I am witch so I will be here*”. The statements by Tata and Kanna highlight the significance of negative labeling in stigmatization. This brings the question of social relationship and stigma into perspective. As Fernando (2006: 24) for instance notes, stigma demonstrates a reflection of the way people relate to each other or the way society relates to a person or group of people. Thus, for example, to refer to people as ‘schizophrenic’ or ‘psychotic’ invalidates everything they do or say. Fernando further points out that by this designation, ‘psychotic’ people are assumed to be ‘alien’ to society, who should not be trusted or even taken seriously.

By extension to the fear of stigmatization by the resident informants of the camp as emphasized by Tata as well as Kanna in the statements above, with the witchcraft label hanging on their necks, they may be assumed to be alien to the communities from where they originally hailed from. Also, despite the fact that they were declared innocent and therefore 'harmless', whatever they may do or say, may be taken with a pinch of salt. Again, it is also likely that the level of interaction between reintegrated residents and other members of their original communities may consequently be affected negatively. The long term result of this may be the likelihood of reintegrated resident informants living isolated lives within their own communities. As Fernando (2006: 24) notes, exclusion may also lead to discrimination, reflected through prejudice or institutionally mediated processes. Thus, the residents of the camp, in expressing their fears of being stigmatized in their own communities, viewed stigma as a serious threat rather than a challenge which could be worked out.

The manifestation of power and its related question of status loss are worth emphasizing in the fear of stigmatization as well. Green (2009: 23) for example, highlights that stigmatization has a devastating and paralyzing effects on those with least power. He also emphasizes that the loss of status for people with discrediting labels is a key component of stigmatization (p. 21). In this sense, the power structures of the communities from where most of the resident informants hailed from, by their classifications as 'witches' and 'wizards', had placed them at the lower level of society. In most of these communities, as 'witches' and 'wizards', they were regarded as outcasts. By their 'attitudes' and 'actions', they had been viewed as undesirable elements for which reasons they would likely be despised if they should decide to return. Also, and in relation to status loss, though the residents of the camp might have lost their social statuses the moment they were labeled and moved out of their original communities, the fact that they lived together and shared common attributes as 'witches' and 'wizards' contributed to them identifying themselves as equal with no apparent status differences. The experience of status loss could however be felt, should they return to their original locations and begin to experience stigmatization. Closely related to power and status loss is the issue of discrimination. As Kippax et al., (1991 in O'Connor and Earnest, 2011: 39) argue, discrimination is a product of existing institutions as well as power differences. O'Connor and Earnest (2011: 39) also note that society acts out stigma by employing discrimination. Thus, reintegrated resident informants might likely suffer from certain discriminatory practices from their original communities by not being invited to

community gatherings such as naming and wedding ceremonies, as well as funerals and festivals. This might come about as a result of the concept of ‘othering’, whereby stigmatized individuals are categorized as ‘other’ or ‘them’ in order to separate ‘them’ (Green, 2009: 18). Should they voluntarily attend those gatherings, the tendency of feeling unwelcomed by other community members could be apparent.

Most of the resident informants were of the opinion that witchcraft accusations had left deep scars on their lives, so that no matter how they were exorcised and cleansed, they will still remain ‘witches’ and ‘wizards’ in the eyes of people from their communities and even beyond. Thus, the witchcraft label had become albatrosses on their necks. In relation to this, Kwatra (2012: 11) notes that the trauma of being stigmatized serves as a discouraging factor to reintegration by residents of all the camps in the northern region of Ghana, including the Gnani camp. The witchcraft label itself sends a stigmatizing signal to members of society, including people from their original communities. Also, having lived within the camp as ‘witches’ and ‘wizards’, might further intensify stigmatizing attitudes by people from their original communities. In this sense, they may not be viewed as people with the potential to hide their stigmas since they have already been characterized by members of their original communities with the witchcraft label, or as people who possess undesirable characters, for which reasons they must suffer. Finally, Green (2009: 29-30) highlights the fact that stigmatization leads to an oppressed identity and this further limits the power of the stigmatized to resist stigmatization. This provokes a rhetorical question of whether a would-be reintegrated resident of the camp will be able to resist stigmatization, when he or she is already classified as undesirable by community members, and therefore occupy the lower ebb of the power structure of that society? Resistance to stigmatization, influenced by society’s power structures, can further be jeopardized by the fact that any pattern of stigmatization is likely to further sustain the interests of certain groups and classes of people (Page, 1984: 156). Original community members, who have a lot of powers and so are influential in communal decisions, may move against the likely tendencies of reintegrated residents to resist stigmatization. This may be seen from the authority of local chiefs which is discussed into detail in another section of this chapter. The inability to resist stigmatization could therefore compel some resident informants to remain within the camp. Parker and Aggleton (2003: 16) highlight the idea that to be able to fully understand and initiate, influence or even enhance changes to the stigma phenomenon of all forms, it is significant to focus broadly on

how some individuals and groups come to be socially excluded, and about the forces that create and reinforce exclusion in different settings. They also suggest that grassroots community mobilization which actively resists stigmatization is equally vital (p. 18). In essence therefore, to fully understand the fear of stigmatization as expressed by the resident informants in this study, it will be quite useful to fully understand how power is structured in their original communities of origin and how this influence everyday lives.

7.4.2 Suspicion and Fear of Fresh Attacks

Besides stigmatization, some of the resident informants expressed the possibility that they could easily be made suspects at the least problem if they should return to their original communities. They also expressed fear that the consequences of these suspicions could be new or fresh attacks. Neena for example noted that “...it is like a sign post has been hanged on my neck showing that I am a witch...My son....I will be the first person to be accused when a fly even dies from an unlikely source...”. The expression by Neena clearly shows her fragility of being made a suspect again should something bad happen in her original community should she return. She could particularly be made a suspect should any ugly thing happen to the person (alleged victim), through whose allegations she got banished to the Gnani camp. In other words, the suspicion will continue to haunt her for the rest of her life. Tipagya also emphasized that “I will not go back. If I go and anything happens again, they will say I am responsible again...”. Corroborating this, Tooya, a relevant actor noted that “if they go home....and someone is dead, they will say they are responsible”. Kwatra (2012: 11), in a study commissioned by ActionAid, identified that the fear of being accused again after being reintegrated is one of the main factors which dissuades alleged witches and wizards in all the witch camps from moving back to their communities of origin. Kwatra makes reference to a 2008 survey conducted by ActionAid which found that 40% of women who were reintegrated returned to the camps within a year as a result of the fact that they had been accused again.

There was also the issue of people, that is in the original communities, questioning the efficacy of the powers of the Tindana in Gnani. It was discovered that the belief in the powers of the Tindana to exorcise witchcraft and cleanse a witch and wizard among most community members (from original communities of resident informants), had waned over the years. Toka, a relevant actor, expressed the concern that most people believe that some of the

alleged witches and wizards leave their powers behind in the 'bush' before they get to the camp and thus later be able to retain their powers. She emphasized that "...*For some, especially over the years, people have lost faith in the efficacy of the works of the spiritual priest and at the camps. And so even when the priest says ok this woman is free she can go back to the community, the community is still skeptical*". Toka further noted that:

"There is the belief that before they get to the camp, for that cleansing process, the accused witches are able to remove the spirits and leave it on the way so they get to the camp clean..... The camp leader then says she is innocent and so after the process it is believed that they are able to pick it back again on themselves and so they are witches again".

Toka's assertion is to the effect that since alleged witches and wizards usually leave their witchcraft powers on the way before they get to the camp, the Tindana is not able to discover their powers and so is unable to cleanse them. This, in the longer run, seems to increase original community members' suspicion of the powers of alleged witches and wizards should they return.

Related to suspicion was the fear of being subjected to fresh attacks should they make the mistake by going back to their original communities. When asked whether she will go back to her original community given the opportunity, Fabla noted that "*I will not go back. If I go back they will kill me so it is better to stay here than go back and meet my untimely death*". Kanna also noted that "*my stay here is far better than going back to my village and get killed*". Most of the resident informants indicated that they may not be able to escape possible attacks by their original community members this time around should they be accused again. They could possibly end up being lynched by marauding youths. In relation to this, Palmer (2010: 6) argues that most often, members of their original communities promise brutal punishments on them, should they return. As a result of this, they prefer to remain in the camp for the remaining parts of their lives. Kparibu emphasized that "*if I die, they can perform my funeral rites in the village but I will not go back*". Toka, a relevant actor also noted that:

"...when there is a witchcraft accusation, a lot of emotions are involved, a lot of pain. This is something people believe in so much and so if I believe that this is the woman

that killed my son, this is the woman that caused me this sickness, or that caused me my barrenness or something that is so painful to me..... it is very hard to accept the fellow back if even they say she is innocent”.

The assertion by Toka highlights the fear that usually grips most residents of the camp when individuals and organizations make attempts to reintegrate them into their original communities. It also shows that people, who are affected by the witchcraft accusations, are usually not willing to accept the residents back to their communities, even in situations when they are found or declared to be innocent by the Tindana. The unwillingness of these people to accept the residents back, are usually borne out of a loss of something precious and valuable, which are blamed on the residents. At the least misfortune to these people (alleged victims) therefore; the likelihood of raising accusing fingers at reintegrated residents will likely be the outcome. In other words, new allegations might arise.

In many instances too, I identified that a lot of family members of the resident informants, including some of their own sons and daughters, may not accept them back when they decide to return. Should they even be accepted back home, the likelihood of being accepted with some level of hesitation and distrust could be high. *“In a lot of cases, their own children do not want to see them...they see it to be good staying in the camp...”*, Kanta, a relevant actor noted. In the longer run, the returnees fear that they may not be given the necessary support, love and care they expect to get from their own children. The reason could be that whether found guilty or innocent, a serious and irreparable damage has been done to the families of alleged witches and wizards. It is believed that it will be unwise to accept back a person who has brought disgrace and shame to the family. In the midst of this, opting to remain in the camp after being exorcised and cleansed, become the common choice for most of the resident informants.

7.4.3 Absoluteness of the Authority of Chiefs

The absoluteness of traditional chiefs in terms of authority is another factor that accounts for the refusal of most of the resident informants to be reintegrated into their original communities. It is quite relevant to emphasize that it was partly upon the authorities of these chiefs that some of the resident informants got banished from their original communities. In most of the cases, these chiefs were not prepared to welcome the alleged witches and wizards back to their communities. For example, Fabla, a resident informant noted that:

“When I was allegedly accused of killing my rival’s baby, I was summoned to the chief’s palace....I was asked to leave the community the next morning. I could not appeal his decision...Had to obey because that is what the tradition says. You cannot question the mind of the chief.....left the next morning to Gnani”.

Toka, a relevant actor also noted that “...*the woman may want to go back but in a lot of the cases, the chief says, whatever it is, don’t come back here. You are banished from the community*”. From the statements by Fabla and Toka, it could be seen that the absolute respect and obedience to customs and traditions of the various communities, especially the commands of the various community chiefs, discourages most of the resident informants from getting reintegrated. The commands of these chiefs are usually considered as orders that must be obeyed by members of their communities, including the ostracized alleged witches and wizards. This finding was not however surprising because as Assimeng (1999: 115) emphasizes, Ghanaians are generally noted for their respect for authority and of ‘things coming from above’. Since the authority and directives of these traditional chiefs are believed to be hemmed in custom and traditions, as well as emanating from ‘people of authority’, subscribing to their commands by the resident informants is expectedly easier and common. In other words, because of the reverence given to the chieftaincy institution, declarations, rulings, commands and authorizations of chiefs bear greater influence and are rarely questioned. Also, with the country remaining largely rural and traditional, chiefs are still considered icons for many people. Social and political influences at the local levels are still hemmed on chiefs despite the fact that Ghana has a modern democratic system with an executive President. Though this apparent authority of chiefs is gradually losing value in most sprawling urban communities in Ghana in general, and in urban areas in the Dagbon traditional area in particular, people from rural communities still value and respect the authorities and directives of these traditional authorities. It is important to emphasize that all the resident informants hailed from rural areas. Therefore, the likelihood of them respecting the orders of their traditional chiefs when they are asked not to return will be high. Thus, when the chiefs banishes alleged witches and wizards from their communities and decides that they should not return, it is often very difficult to challenge these directives.

7.4.4 Costs of Sacrifices

Once a resident informant chooses to remain in the camp for some time and later decides to return, either to her original community or another community elsewhere, some form of sacrifices is again required in addition to the payment of some amount of money. The costs of these sacrifices serve as a factor which discourages some resident informants from relocating outside the camp. The process, like the other processes, varies from camp to camp. Toka, a relevant actor emphasized that:

“Releasing her (reference to an alleged witch), she still needs to go through another ritual process before she can leave the camp. So usually that is how it is. In each camp, is quite different. It comes with some costs. In the Gnani camp for example, there is some cash amount that needs to be paid, then the woman will have to get a goat or is it a sheep for the performance and even some fowls”.

When Toka was asked about who bears the costs, she continued. *“That is the irony. Here is a woman who is in the community or camp and cannot even feed herself and then she is leaving and has to pay all these. So usually it is the family. That is why the family’s interest in taking her back is very important. It is the family that has to pay all that”.* The comments by Toka indicate that firstly, for those who cannot afford to pay and buy all the items mentioned, and whose family members are equally poor, they will be condemned to the camp for life. Secondly, those without family members at all, seen in non-visits and abandonment, will equally be compelled by their circumstances, to live their remaining lives within the precincts of the camp. As to why residents have to pay before they are reintegrated, this study could not establish that.

Regarding the number of reintegrated alleged witches and wizards in recent times, the leadership of the camp could not recollect the last time a resident of the camp had been reintegrated into an original community. A document from the Municipal’s office of CHRAG indicates that only 4 out of 760 accused witches and wizards had been reintegrated in 2003, 2 out of 775 in 2004 and 1 out of 798 in 2005. The statistics above shows a gradual increase in the total number of people admitted to the Gnani camp over the three year period. There was at the same time a gradual decrease in the number of people reintegrated into their original communities. Referring to the issue of reintegration, Palmer (2010: 6) posits that once purified as well as threatened by a swift and brutal death at the hands of the gods, should they

practice witchcraft again (p. 17), alleged witches and wizards are in theory, free to go. However, few of them feel the need to go out of the camp. Kirby (2009: 69) also highlights that, “the people whom the media purports to protect, are the ones most strongly opposed to the “solution” being offered-sending them back home”. “The women themselves say they would prefer to stay in the camps rather than face discrimination or risk violence or death back home” (Kwatra, 2012: 3). The collective resolve of all the resident informants not to return to their communities was aptly captured in Teeya’s comments that “*I will not go home. Had it not been because of this place, I would have been dead by now*”.

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has looked at two related issues. The first part of the chapter was dedicated to the process of identification once an alleged witch and wizard sets foot into the Gnani camp. The discussions indicate that there are three stages involved in this process; the slaughter of a fowl to establish guilt or innocence, exorcising the witchcraft powers and cleansing, and the question of deciding to remain in the camp or go back to one’s community of origin after being exorcised and cleansed. In going through these stages or processes, the role of the Tindana is very essential. The chapter further demonstrated that despite that all the resident informants reported that they were found to be innocent of the accusations; they nonetheless chose to remain in the camp. What factors could be responsible for their decisions to remain in the camp? Answers to this question led the discussion to the second part of this chapter. The second part of this chapter argues that from the public’s perspective and assessment of the situation and conditions of the residents of the camp, they should be ‘liberated’ and reintegrated into their various communities. However, as this study has clearly showed, there is more to the question of reintegration than meets the eye or what some members of the public perceive the situation to be. Taken the perspectives and experiences of the resident informants, as well as a number of relevant actors, this chapter has succinctly demonstrated that issues of stigmatization, suspicion and fear of fresh attacks, economic costs of sacrifices, distrust of the efficacy of the powers of the Tindana as well as the attitudes of traditional chiefs from the original communities of alleged witches and wizards served as challenges to the question of reintegration.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

Though the witch camps phenomenon, as a problem, have existed for years, they only attracted wider public focus in the recent past. As a critical social problem, many individuals and groups have come out to condemn the existence of these camps. This condemnation arose out of uniformed information, or the lack of it, on the significance of the witch camps. This has partly been as a result of little research that the practice has received. In order to contribute with more knowledge about these camps, this study was conducted in one of the camps; the Gnani witch camp. This chapter looks at the conclusions that can be drawn from this study as well as point to areas for future research. From these conclusions, and in order to adequately and comprehensively respond to the phenomenon for policy-making, some recommendations are offered as well.

8.2 Concluding Remarks

In the first place, the study has shown that the social positions of the residents of the camp, such as their gender, age, levels of education and economic position, before they moved to the camp, played various roles in the accusations. Unlike other studies, whereby gender, economic positions, age and level of education are seen as underlying causes which predisposes people to witchcraft accusations (Green, 2005; Miguel, 2005; Macfarlane, 1999), this study has focused more on how such factors informed how the residents of the Gnani camp were able or unable to defend themselves when they were accused. Although both men and women may be suspected, women were most likely to become defenseless compared to men. This is partly informed by the social structures of the various communities, where most of the resident informants hail from. Accused women for instance, challenged with the traditional belief of women keeping mute in public compromised fair hearing. By this, they only listen to the men who preside over the traditional adjudication of their cases. Thus, the right to the natural process of a fair hearing is significantly curtailed by traditional jurisprudence. Also, by tradition, men are required to provide protection to their families. With this belief in mind, the acquisition and possession of witchcraft powers by men is considered a normal practice and therefore justified. On the part of women, since they are

required to be given protection by men, their possession of witchcraft powers is viewed as forbidden and therefore frowned upon. Also, this study has also shown that compared to the rich, poor people are least likely to defend themselves when they are accused. This is because they enjoy less support from other community members. Finally, old age and its associated problems of poverty, physical weaknesses also predispose older people in society from being defenseless in the wake of accusations. Regarding the movement of people to the camp, this study has demonstrated that movement out of their original communities to the camp is informed by gossips or rumors. These rumors are usually smeared with the potentiality of attacks. To avoid the possibility of attacks or the likelihood of being hauled before traditional chiefs (who might after all, potentially rule against them), most of the residents leave their communities, sometimes under the cover of darkness to the Gnani camp.

Considering the importance of witchcraft as a function of social relationships, this study found that paternal aunties are more predisposed to accusations with the added difficulty to defend themselves. This study has shown that paternal aunties are traditionally considered to be jealous and are therefore engaged in the alleged killing of their brother's children and blocking their progress in life. In most parts of Africa and for that matter Ghana, social relationship and extended family ties are significant. This is because these relationships provide some levels of support in times of needs. Based on this, this study explored the social relationships of the residents of the camp, such as their relationship with kin and kith, the traditional authority in the camp and other members of the Gnani community and amongst themselves. On the relationship between residents and kin and kith members, this study found that most of the residents are able to maintain some level of good relationships with some kin and kith members. These are demonstrated by visits of some kin and kith members to their family members, residents in the camp. The presence of caretakers, especially children and grandchildren, particularly encourages some level of family bonding. For example, the presence of these caretakers encourages some kin and kith members to visit the camp, if not to see the resident informants, but at least to see how the caregivers are living. Among those likely to visit the camp, women are most likely to visit compared to men. Regarding the relationship between the resident informants and the traditional authority, one would have thought that with the Tindana possessed with enormous powers, his relationship with the resident informants would be that of 'fear' and exhibition of unquestionable authority. On the contrary, this study has illustrated that the relationship between the Tindana and the resident

informants is good. Though there is some level of inequality and dependency between the Tindana and the resident informants, the study has demonstrated that their relationship is marked by cordiality. Resident informants are for example very free to consult the Tindana when they are faced with some challenges, such as food and health related problems. Related to the relationship between resident informants and other members of the Gnani community, this study has shown that resident informants are free to interact with them and are sometimes given various kinds of support when necessary. Thus, this relationship was seen to be good. For example, resident informants could attend community gatherings when invited. They also help community members in their farms during the planting and harvesting seasons and are given food grains in return after harvest. Guided by their shared social positions as 'witches' and 'wizards', informed by similar conditions under which they live within the camp, this study found that the relationship among resident informants is that of cordiality, mutually depending on each other when the need arises.

The study also enquired about how alleged witches and wizards are identified once they set foot to the camp. This involves three stages. In stage one; there is a slaughter of fowls to the *ten*. The position of the slaughtered fowl as it falls after being thrown determines whether an accused person is guilty or not. The second stage involves exorcising the witchcraft powers and cleansing. This stage involves the drinking of some concoctions. It is believed that once a person takes these concoctions, whether guilty or innocent, he or she cannot engage in witchcraft practices in the future. The final stage involves the decision to leave the camp. Though all the resident informants were identified as innocent of the accusations when they were taken through the identification processes by the Tindana, they nonetheless chose to remain in the camp. Four reasons were identified as basis for their decisions to remain in the camp instead of being reintegrated into their original communities. These were stigmatization, suspicion and fear of fresh attacks, absolute respect and obedience to the authorities of chiefs from their original communities and costs of final sacrifices to the *ten* before they leave the camp. On stigmatization for example, once they are labeled as 'witches' and 'wizards', these labels remain as albatrosses in their lives to the extent that even if they are exorcised and cleansed, the labels will still remain indelible in their lives.

Furthermore, the study points to the fact that contrary to public perception that the camp serves as a place where the fundamental rights and freedoms of the inhabitants are

violated, the camp rather serves as a refuge place for people accused of witchcraft. But for the camp, some of the resident informants could have probably been killed by angry community members through mob justice. Thus, the right to life and security is only guaranteed in the camp. Regarding what constitutes daily life in the camp, it is useful to note that even though the inhabitants of the camp reportedly live happily, at least without fears of attacks and also manages to survive by engaging in various forms of economic activities, general conditions in the camp are discouraging. Shelter, health, water and sanitation and access to food remain serious challenges. Though the state has social and human welfare related programs, such as LEAP and NHIS, these schemes have not been effective in responding to the needs of the residents of the camp. It is therefore useful to point out that the existence of these conditions, in part, portray the failure of the Ghanaian state to provide basic needs to its people, especially the poor, vulnerable and those at risks.

On the need for future research works, similar studies in the future could be extended beyond a focus on one camp to all the other camps spanning the northern region of Ghana. It will be quite essential to for example, conduct a comparative study of the various camps within the region. This will show the similarities and differences on the practices and life in these camps and thus help in the designation and formulation of policies and programs. Undertaken a study on the knowledge dimension of witchcraft, covering issues such as people's understandings and conceptions of witchcraft, how witchcraft influences people's lives, the presence of witchcraft in certain families as well as the understanding that witchcraft is sometimes an inherited phenomenon, passed on from generation to generation, would be interesting theme worth carrying out as well. In carrying out all these, employing anthropological tools, seen largely in immersing self in the various camps and local communities of alleged witches and wizards, will be insightful as well as significant.

8.3 Recommendations

In the first place, I recommend a renaming of the camp in order to better reflect the 'services' it is rendering to poor and innocent victims of witchcraft accusations. The current name 'witch camp' sends a rather bad and pejorative signal to members of the general public. Like any other places where people seek refuge, such as refugee camps, an alternative or 'better' name, to reflect the safe haven purpose of the camp, will assist in enabling members of the general public, have a good understanding of the witch camp phenomenon. This will help in

determining how policies and programs are designed as responses to its solution. Also, the question of reintegration is much more complex than what is assumed by the government in its pronouncements as well as by members of the public. I therefore recommend a gradual process of reintegration. For example, education and awareness creation should move from the ‘victims’ to the ‘perpetrators’ and general public. This is where conducting educational programs at the local level will become significant. It is envisaged that in the end, these educational programs will assist greatly in enabling and enhancing family and community members’ acceptance of the residents back to their original homes. This may be done through sensitization workshops and public forums at various local communities as well as house to house campaigns. CHRAG and the DSW should be strengthened financially and human resource-wise to undertake these activities, in collaboration with existing organizations working within the camp.

Collaborating with the various organizations working in the camp will equally be essential because they may be well informed about the intricacies of the phenomenon as well as the conditions under which the residents of the camp live. The successes of these strategies will however involve engaging people, such as community chiefs and their council of elders, opinion leaders, and religious leaders, teachers from these communities, youth leaders, assembly men and women as well as household heads. The process should also be gradual and the *modus operandi* should be more focused on engaging these stakeholders to proffer logical explanations behind challenges and crises in life while de-emphasizing the argument that witchcraft is criminal and perpetrators are liable for prosecution. Adopting the latest approach may prove ‘dead at birth’ or ineffectual because witchcraft accusation is already criminal, yet people still engage in it. Again, belief in and practice of witchcraft is part of the blueprints of the people’s cultural beliefs. What must be noted is that such cultural issues are quite critical and sensitive that changing them overnight may be difficult. It may for instance be met with some resistance. It will therefore require a gradual approach.

While engaging these stakeholders in the reintegration efforts, it is significant to respond to the needs of the residents of the camp, such as the provision of food, improved housing and shelter conditions, good water and sanitation conditions as well as some level of improved health care delivery. Strengthening local and state institutions to carry out this mandate will be essential. Also, existing state programmes for which the residents, by their

conditions, are qualified to benefit from, such as LEAP and the NHIS should be strengthened to extend their services to the residents of the camp. Other private institutions and organizations can likewise be encouraged to extend their hands of support in the provision of these services. The provision of these services or basic needs should however be done, bearing in mind not to motivate other alleged witches and wizards from moving to the camp, ostensibly to enjoy these services, which might be lacking in their various communities. In other words, the provision of these services in the camp should not serve as a pull factor which will motivate other alleged witches and wizards to move to the camp. Closely related to the point above is extending a hand of support to the local organizations operating within the camp such as Songtaba as well as other organizations which might be willing to join the crusade in finding a lasting and sustainable solution to the phenomenon. ActionAid Ghana has over the years been concerned about this and has done a lot of work, together with Songtaba. It has particularly been influential in bringing the existence of the camps to the media limelight. It will therefore be a welcome initiative if other national and international organizations join AAG's efforts in order to act out action plans towards finding a permanent solution to this social phenomenon.

Finally, at the various original communities of the residents of the camp, issues of poverty, the social positions of women seen in gender inequality, old age and the challenges that come with it, lack of education, among others are critical factors which play varying roles in witchcraft labeling. As this study has clearly shown, these conditions place people at positions whereby they become defenseless when they are accused. Tackling the witchcraft phenomenon will therefore require tackling the underlying causes of the problem such as poverty, gender inequality, illiteracy and the challenges which come with old age. This will require concerted efforts by all stakeholders, such as accused persons, community organizations, national institutions and their parastatals as well as international groups, agencies and institutions. The witch camp phenomenon is more complex than the assumptions and perceptions making rounds in public cycles, especially at the corridors of media houses. Movement to the camp and life thereafter, as well as movement out of the camp revolves around safety. Closing down the camp as the government of Ghana announced in 2011 will only target the symptoms and not the underlying drivers of witchcraft and witch camps in Ghana. This call will therefore remain a mere rhetoric if all hands are not put to the wheel to tackling the underlying causes which push people to the camp.

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APPENDICES

University of Bergen

Faculty of Psychology

Department of Health Promotion and Development

Interview Guide for Resident Informants

Demographic Characteristics

- (1) Sex
- (2) Age
- (3) Region
- (4) Original Community
- (5) Marital status (single, married, divorced, separated, number of children, type of marriage).
- (6) Occupation (Previous, still active or ceased? Allowed to still undertake them at the camp?).

Identification and Relationship

- (7) Who decides that they are witches? (Themselves, husband/wife/children, traditional authority, an extended family member, other community members).
- (8) Have they been suspected initially/before? (When, how, by who and what happened afterwards?).
- (9) Do they believe in witchcraft? (Acceptance, denial, allegations/rhetoric).
- (10) When they arrive at the camp, how are they identified as witches? (Voluntary acceptance, performance of certain traditional rites, coercion/trial by ordeal).
- (11) How long they have been living in the camp (Did they go there voluntarily or involuntarily/forced to the camp? Can they narrate why and how it all happened?).
- (12) Do they pay for their stay in the camp? (or instead of work?).
- (13) Relationship with kith and kin (do they live in the camp with other relations? do their relations (children, husbands, wives, other extended relations) visit them? How often do their relations visit them? When was the last time a relation visited?).
- (14) Relationship with traditional leadership (cordial, abuses, mistreatment etc).
- (15) Relationship with other alleged witches (isolated lives, mutual suspicion, source of comfort etc.).

- (16) Relationship with other members of the Gnani community (cordial, source of power, suspicion, abuse, stigmatisation).
- (17) Has any aspect of their status influence the accusations? (Poverty, sex/gender, ethnicity, marital status (form of marriage), fertility/barrenness etc.).

Social Justice Related Matters

- (18) Social gatherings/mobility (Are they given the chance to attend other social gatherings such as weddings, naming ceremonies, traditional festivals? How are they treated/received when they do?).
- (19) Membership of social groups (do they have one themselves? do they belong to other social groups? Benefits they derive).
- (20) Health (common diseases/illnesses, source of treatment (traditional or biomedical treatment), registration with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), other health interventions).
- (21) Health bills (how do they pay for their medical expenses?).
- (22) Access to portable water and sanitation (Do they use the same water other members of the community use?).
- (23) Access to food (availability/adequacy, regularity, do their relations send them food? If they do how often?).
- (24) Kind of economic activities (before and now, types/kinds, mobility, how lucrative are these activities? How helpful are they?).
- (25) Membership of Associations/Groups (do they belong to economic empowerment associations or groups such as NGOs or women's/men's associations? How helpful are these associations/groups?).
- (26) Access to state economic interventions (do they benefit from the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) Program? Others).

Reintegration

- (27) Visit to original communities (have they ever visited their original homes/communities since they relocated to the camp? How regular?).
- (28) Life in the camp and at their original communities (which one will/do they prefer? Life in the camp or life in their original communities? Why? Given the opportunity will they go back to their original communities and why?).
- (29) Fear of the unknown? (How do they think their association with other family and community members will be if they should go back to their communities?)
- (30) State/private sector interventions (have they ever been approached by any organisation (state or private) intended to reintegrate them? Activities of these groups).

(31) Other general comments (related to what have been discussed).

University of Bergen
Faculty of Psychology
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Interview Guide for Relevant Actors

- (1) Sex
- (2) Age
- (3) Occupation
- (4) When was the Gnani camp established? (An important historical landmark/period could be investigated to establish the period).
- (5) Reason(s) behind the establishment of the camp.
- (6) Personality(ies) behind the establishment of the camp.
- (7) Treatment of suspected witches before the establishment of the camp.
- (8) Number of alleged witches living in the camp (number sent there first, number living in the camp currently, average number received in a year, number received this year).
- (9) Number of men and women (why a greater number of women compared to men? men do not bewitch?).
- (10) How the alleged witches get to the camp (voluntary, involuntary).
- (11) Relationship with the general community (cordiality, isolation, stigmatisation).
- (12) Access to water facilities.
- (13) Access to health facilities (orthodox, traditional, registration with the NHIS).
- (14) Access to the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program.
- (15) Membership of related social interventions (state level and private sector-driven).
- (16) Major kind of economic activities (mobility of the women to do it).
- (17) Issues of new allegations as they live in the camp.
- (18) Issues bordering on abuses at the camp (beatings, lynching etc.).
- (19) Response to the problem of witchery and life in the camp (state, private sector).
- (20) Human rights and fundamental freedoms (Rights to life, decent living, innocent until proven guilty by a competent court of jurisdiction).

- (21) Reintegration (has been done before? How was it done? Who led it? How are the former victims coping at their original communities? Was it the best way to do it or there are alternative ways? What are these new alternatives?).
- (22) General comments about the practice (should it continue to exist, improving life at the camp, closing it down, alternative treatment of alleged witches, way forward).

A map of Ghana showing the location of Gnani (in Red). Source: Adapted from the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, February 2005



A distance view of the *Pagkpamba Fong* that houses the residents of the Gnani camp



A view of the central part of the community



A view of river oti which passes through the Gnani community



Another view of river oti



A view of a room with a bad thatch (left) and one with a good thatch (right) and an inside view of one of the rooms (below)



Pictures showing the graves of alleged witches (late)

