

## Representing African reality through *knotty terms*

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We are very aware that we represent reality through terms and the whole conceptual contents they imply. And a frequent problem we have to face when we are researching African realities from an anthropological point of view is precisely the discomfort in using some of these terms, which we can understand as *knotty terms*.

The adjective “ethnic” as it appears when we talk about “ethnic music”, “ethnic food” or “ethnic clothing” is a good example for this. We also have problems with “tribe” and derivatives such as “tribal society” and “tribalism” and especially also with terms such as “witchcraft” or “sorcery”. We often see anthropologists excuse themselves when they are forced to use these terms but in spite of this, they still use them or they try to find other substitutes that most often are just not fully convincing. The problem becomes even more complicated when we observe that despite the efforts made by some anthropologists in order not to use them, these terms have been adopted by Africans themselves and have become a widespread use. It is clear that the interest in this question lies in the fact that it not only represents an epistemological issue for anthropology but has an important ideological and therefore social dimension as well.

The problem with these *knotty terms* lies not only in the fact that they may have a contested analytical value, something that after all happens with many concepts in the human and social sciences. Hardly could we find unanimity among the specialists in the different concepts that we use in the scientific practice. Anthropology, like other disciplines, is neither monolithic nor static. The problem of these terms is also the fact that they can connote a pejorative dimension, an inheritance and result of the old evolutionary vision of anthropology that not only classified societies that it studied but also arranged them into a hierarchy.

Thus, a concept of very frequent use within African studies, as for example is the case of “tribe”, has fallen from sometime ago into a true disrepute. It is quite vague and has been criticized for its evolutionist implications, as well for its low analytic and comparative value<sup>1</sup>. It has been often denounced that while using the term “tribe” or “tribalism” -the latter with clear pejorative dimensions- to reflect African reality, for the European cases people speak of “nationalities” or “separatist movements”<sup>2</sup>. Today, within the political context, the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance: M. H. Fried, “On the concepts of ‘tribe’ and ‘tribal society’”, in: J. Helm (ed.). *Essays on the problem of tribe*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, pp. 3-20; Maurice Godelier, “The Concept of Tribe: Crisis of a Concept or Crisis of the Empirical Foundations of Anthropology?”, *Diogenes* 21/81, 1973, pp.1-25.

<sup>2</sup> Makhtar Diouf, *Sénégal. Les ethnies et la nation*, Paris: L'Harmattan 1994, p. 9.

“tribe” is being used less and anthropologists prefer very often -and according to the specific context- the terms “stateless society”, “ethnicity” or “ethnic group”<sup>3</sup>. Also, many archaeologists prefer more neutral terms such as “middle-level” or “transegalitarian societies” for this kind of social organization. Precisely because of its evolutionary implications, the term “tribe” can be not only inaccurate but also entail clear connotations that refer to the colonial view about the administered African countries and that have to do with backwardness, primitivism and similar ideas.

The very term “ethnicity” with which some take refuge in order to avoid the term “tribe” can be problematic as well. Not only because of definition’s problems<sup>4</sup> but also because there is the trend to employ the term more for the non Western Other, although in fact the concept can be applicable to any society. Edward T. Hall, for example, also spoke of an “English-British ethnicity”<sup>5</sup> and in the case of the autonomist or separatist European movements anthropologists also speak of “ethnicity”<sup>6</sup>.

In spite of this, “ethnicity” is a concept that we do not hear too much just beyond the academic circles but it is not so with the adjective “ethnic”, an adjective that may accompany the most diverse cultural manifestations. In this way, people speak of “ethnic music”, “ethnic food” or “ethnic clothes”.

If we now focus on the case of music, it is clear that under the concept of “ethnic music” are labeled very diverse kinds of music, some oft also belonging to the Western area. But that the denomination of “ethnic music”, when it is applied to African cases, has embedded in it the colonial or neocolonial gaze is proven by the fact that very often this concept is used to categorize African types of music for whose equivalent Western types of music other names are used.

The idea behind the concept of “ethnic music” also applies to the not less problematic category of “World Music”. This category refers to a type of music with structures of pop, rock, jazz, etc., a type of music that when it is executed by Westerners is labeled simply as popular music, rock or jazz. It should not be forgotten that at the beginning, the World Music label, originally was particularly

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance Aidan W. Southall, “The Illusion of Tribe”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 5, 1970, pp. 47-48.

<sup>4</sup> Today anthropologists are very aware of the conceptual problems of this term. Obviously it is not within the scope of this paper to enter in this discussion. Nevertheless the main problem lies in understanding “ethnicity” in a misleading and stuffy form in the same way as “ethnie” or “ethnic group”, i.e. as a human collective whose members share determined cultural attributes and show some kind of social articulation. But if we understand “ethnicity” more as idea-force, as a conscience and discursive way in order to understand a certain kind of collective identity or as “social dynamics” in terms of Dominique Darbon (1995: 223), its presence in Africa, as in many other parts of the world, is undeniable. And as a matter of fact it is not relevant at all if this ethnicity is due to endogen factors or has its origins in colonial policies or academic constructs, in a manipulated history or in myths. Important is above all the fact that today people may experience ethnicity and seek to bring about a concrete social and political articulation according to this idea-force.

<sup>5</sup> Julie Drew, “Cultural composition: Stuart Hall on ethnicity and discursive turn”, *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory* 18/2, 1998, pp. 171-196.

<sup>6</sup> Especially from the 80’s onwards. Nevertheless today the term is less used in this context.

identified with African music, but later in commercial fields has been associated with the music of the Third World. Baaba Maal, the well-known Senegalese musician when asked how he felt about his music being categorized as "World Music", answered the following:

"I don't care. I did not like that name 'World Music' in the beginning. I think that African music must get more respect than to be put in a ghetto like that. We have something to give to others. When you look to how African music is built, when you understand this kind of music, you can understand that a lot of all this modern music that you are hearing in the world has similarities to African music. It's like the origin of a lot of kinds of music."<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the concept of "World Music" is used to sing diversity, but at the same time to frame this diversity within structures of social hierarchy<sup>8</sup>. The "World Music" operates according to dynamics of exclusion<sup>9</sup>. We have not to wonder, then, that people speak of it as "that insulting term for non-Western pop"<sup>10</sup> or that going further, people consider this 'trade in World Music' as a "reminiscence of the colonial trade patterns"<sup>11</sup>. Precisely, the Guinean musician Mory Kanté has rightly complained of the image that the West gives of African musicians associating them with tribal music. In his own words: "People speak of African music as ethnic music but it is also universal music"<sup>12</sup>. And in fact, with the adjective "ethnic" that people in the West use so often to refer to the music, dance, clothing, food, etc. of non Western cultures, if we analyze it deeply, it is easy to see that it also has connotations that suggest the existence of upper and lower forms<sup>13</sup>. So, for instance, in a customer review that appeared on the internet about the reedition in 1999 of the Bossa Nova CD *Eu e a brisa* of Johnny Alf we could read the following:

"Like everything made by Alf, it is very sophisticated, romantic with a little bebop flavour. It is not ethnic music, but good Brazilian jazz. Music with a capital M."<sup>14</sup>

This anecdotal comment makes clear therefore that one thing is "ethnic music" and the other music with a capital M. The use of the adjective "ethnic" clearly reflects a very concrete way of understanding the world. As we said before, it is not easy to find unanimity of views on what actually "ethnic" or

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://www.worldbeatplanet.com/baaba-maal/intervw.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Josep Martí, "World Music, ¿El folklore de la globalización?", in: *Voces e imágenes en la etnomusicología actual. Actas del VII Congreso de la SIBE*, J. Martí and S. Martínez (eds.), Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2004, pp. 411-417.

<sup>9</sup> D.C.Martin, "Les 'musiques du monde': imaginaires contradictoires de la globalisation", in : D.C. Martin (ed.), *Sur la piste des OPNI (Objets politiques non identifiés)*, Paris, Karthala, 2002, p. 398.

<sup>10</sup> Ian McCann in his liner notes to Zairean singer Ray Lema's 1990 album *Gaia*, in: Tony Mitchell, *Popular music and local identity*, London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996, p. 55

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Keith Negus, *Producing pop*, London: Edward Arnold, 1992, p. 167.

<sup>12</sup> M. Rodríguez, "Entrevista a Mory Kanté", *La Vanguardia*, 15.2.1997, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. Keith Swanwick, *Music, Mind, and Education*, London/New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 103. See also J. Martí, *Más allá del arte. La música como generadora de realidades sociales*, Sant Cugat del Vallès: Deriva, p. 25-26.

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://www.amazon.com/eu-brisa-LP-JOHNNY-ALF/dp/B0040Q73OG>

“World Music” means. But apart from these conceptual problems, what is clear is that the differentiated use that is made of the term, rock or pop for some musicians, and ethnic or World Music for others, clearly reveals the deep ideological problem.

The implicit semantic problem of the adjective “ethnic” is also found in the very conceptualization of some academic fields whose denomination enclose the prefix “ethno”, so as it is the case in ethnomusicology<sup>15</sup>. The ideology that underlies this denomination makes that in words of Kay Kaufman Shelemay exist: “...musicologists who study the West and ethnomusicologists who study the Rest”<sup>16</sup>. Also the term ethnophilosophy, a concept very focused on African reality, regardless of the controversies that its contents raise, does not escape these issues either. After all, the prefix “ethno” is indeed likely to indicate a field of “native” knowledge whose status is relative to a canonical counterpart within non-“ethno”, Western science<sup>17</sup>. And one of the criticisms that has been made to ethnophilosophy is that –as Y. M Guissé wrote- “L’ethno-philosophie est à notre avis, la forme plus achevée de ‘cette compromission idéologique’ s’appuyant sur une démarche essentiellement folklorique et exotique sur les travaux de l’ethnologie coloniale”<sup>18</sup>.

Within the *knotty terms* problem it is extremely instructive to reflect on a term which has caused quite a few headaches to anthropologists: that of “witchcraft”. In the fieldwork I’m carrying out in Equatorial Guinea, Fang people use the term *ngbwo* for what we anthropologists usually understand as “witchcraft”. Nevertheless, in some occasions, I have been faced with the fact that according to the different individuals I interviewed, the same phenomenon was sometimes labeled as *ngbwo* while for others it was not *ngbwo* at all<sup>19</sup>. That such discrepancies occur is something at which we have not to wonder at all. The notion of *ngbwo* does not correspond to a perfectly defined and bounded semantic field, something that is complicated more with the introduction in Africa of the concept of “witchcraft” as it was used by the European tradition. In Equatorial Guinea, for example, during the Spanish colonization, people understood “witchcraft” as phenomena that the Equatoguineans conceptualized in a very different manner. It was thus understood as “witchcraft” (*brujería*) not only sorcery practices but also practices related to different rituals concerning the worship of ancestors (*melan*) as well rituals related to a variety of therapeutic practices. Or furthermore people labeled as “witchcraft” *tout court* all religious beliefs that tried to resist Christianity<sup>20</sup>. Anthropologists have already

<sup>15</sup> Which contrasts with “musicology”. Cfr. J. Martí, Op. Cit. (2000), pp. 21-30.

<sup>16</sup> Kay Kaufman Shelemay, “Crossing Boundaries in Music and Musical Scholarship: A Perspective from Ethnomusicology”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 1996, 80/1, p. 14. See also the criticism made by John Blacking to the restrictive use of the “ethnic music” concept in: “L’homme producteur de la musique”, *Musique en Jeu*, 28, 1977, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Hviding, “Nature, culture, magic, science: on meta-languages for comparison in cultural ecology”, in: Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson (eds.), *Nature and society: anthropological perspectives*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 168.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Ibrahima Sow, *La philosophie africaine*, Dakar: Ifan, 2010, p. 251.

<sup>19</sup> This is the case, for instance, in which some individuals can convert to a tiger.

<sup>20</sup> Florence Bernault, “Magie, Sorcellerie et politique au Gabon et au Congo-Brazzaville”, in: Marc Mve Mbekale, *Démocratie et mutations culturelles en Afrique noire*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005, p. 30.

denounced, that very often while in the West people speak of “religion” to refer to the set of beliefs which conform to Christianity, for structurally similar beliefs but that are produced in the African context are used terms like “magic” or “witchcraft”<sup>21</sup>.

But aside from these completely inappropriate uses of the term “witchcraft” when applied to areas that clearly deserve another better name, there are many anthropologists who would prefer to rule out completely the term “witchcraft” for African realities, or at least, if they can not dismiss it because a better alternative for this has not been found, they feel the need to justify it or at least to apologize for continuing to use the term “witchcraft”<sup>22</sup>.

The main reasons people give for that are principally:

1. The fact of considering the term “witchcraft” all too tied to Western contextual reality, which makes it inappropriate to describe local specificities of other societies<sup>23</sup>.
2. As a result of the previous point, the concept of “witchcraft” has connotations of moral nature, intrinsically linking witchcraft with evil. This becomes often distorting because this feature is not always given in African traditions.
3. The term “witchcraft” also refers to the ideas of primitivism and backwardness that the colonial gaze has traditionally applied to African peoples administered by European powers.

It is understandable, therefore, that at first we feel the need to avoid this term when talking about African cases, not only for semantic reasons but also for the negative values that are associated with it. But on the other hand, the use of terms of European origin such as “witchcraft”, “sorcellerie”, “bruxería” or “brujería” is a reality in the same African context although the semantic field of

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance Lluís Mallart i Guimerà, *Sóc fill dels evuzok*, Barcelona: La campana 2004 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1992), p. 104. Another problem that I do not go to discuss here is that of the distinction between “magic” or “witchcraft” and “religion”. A clear distinction between these phenomena is practically impossible and really, as many anthropologists have already recognized, it doesn't make much sense to try to find different origins for them. See for example Graham Cunningham, *Religion & Magic. Approaches & Theories*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> The anthropologist Lluís Mallart, for instance, who has practically devoted all his professional life studying the Evuzok in Cameroon, has expressed on numerous occasions his discomfort by the use of the term “witchcraft” in his work on the Evuzok. In a personal communication it made me know his discomfort by being entitled his doctoral thesis *Magie et sorcellerie evuzok* (Nanterre: Université Paris X, 1971). In his other work “Ni dos ni ventre” he refused to include the term “witchcraft” in the title though given that it was not possible to do without it, he ended up making appear the term in the subtitle. Cfr. “Ni dos ni ventre. Religion, magie et sorcellerie chez les Evuzok (Cameroun)” *L'Homme*, XV, 1975, pp. 35-65. Regarding this, see also: Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the occult in postcolonial Africa*, Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1997, pp. 13-14 and note 1 p. 225.

<sup>23</sup> Malcolm Crick, “Two styles in the study of witchcraft”, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 4, 1973, p. 18. In this regard see also: Peter Pels, “The Magic of Africa: Reflections on a Western Commonplace”, *African Studies Review* 41/ 3, 1998, p. 201; Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders, “Magical interpretations and material realities. An introduction”, in: H. Moore and T. Sanders (ed.), *Magical interpretations, material realities: modernity, witchcraft, and the occult in postcolonial Africa*, London; New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 4.

these terms does not match exactly that which can be found in African languages alluding to hidden powers of the most diverse sign.

In fact I do not see it as easy and moreover not necessary that anthropology do without the term of "witchcraft", and this not only because of the circumstance that it has been assimilated and is commonly used by Africans themselves, a reason that as pointed out by some anthropologists would justify its use<sup>24</sup>. If we think a little about this it is easy to realize that within the European context, this term -like so many others- is subjected to a continuous process of resemantization so that although we retain the term over time, everything involving the concept has not always been exactly the same. The negativity at the societal level that has traditionally been associated with the term, that which was considered "superstition" or even what Freud might have considered as "collective neurosis" can be diluted in other views understanding then witchcraft as a "culturally acceptable view of reality"<sup>25</sup>.

The following anecdote that I experienced many years ago can be symptomatic of these changes in social perception of the term "witchcraft", to which I was speaking about: at the end of the eighties I mediated between a local television channel that wanted to do a report about witchcraft and an older woman named Cecilia who lived in a little Catalan town and was professionally engaged in the world of the occult. She had a large clientele and having been initiated into traditional witchcraft practices, she did not hesitate to incorporate progressively throughout her professional life new concepts and techniques of new age spirit. The report by the television was released with the title "Coses de bruixes" (witches' stuff)<sup>26</sup>. When Cecilia saw the report on TV she was initially bothered about being treated as a "witch". But later she thought it over, liked more and more that denomination and ended up presenting herself to her customers as a "witch". After all, there began to appear at that time in the Spanish media professionals of the occult who within the new context of the so-called "urban witchcraft" did not have any hesitation in presenting themselves as "brujas" (witches) before their audiences. The same happened in the Anglo-Saxon area where the emergence of the Wicca movement resemantized the term "witch" in a positive way.

If by some specialists witchcraft is considered as something fixed in time, as a residual phenomenon of the past and that therefore refers to backwardness, the problem is actually in the same researchers who deem it so. That witchcraft is something that can be closely linked to modernity is something that already has been shown by many anthropologists<sup>27</sup>. This is true for the African case and

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<sup>24</sup> See for instance: Diane Ciekawy and Peter Geschiere, "Containing Witchcraft: Conflicting Scenarios in Postcolonial Africa", *African Studies Review* 41/3, 1998, p. 13. And it is exactly the same with other of these knotty terms such as "tribe". See for example: P. H. Gulliver (ed.), *Tradition and Transition in East Africa: studies of the tribal element in the modern era*, London, 1969, pp. 2, 7-8, and 24 (quoted in Archie Mafeje, "The ideology of tribalism", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9/2, 1971, p. 254).

<sup>25</sup> Keith Thomas, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6/1, 1975, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> *Cosa de bruixes*. TVE "Panorama". Released by TVE in 30.5 and 16.7 of the year 1988.

<sup>27</sup> See: Geschiere, Op. Cit. (1997); Laura S., Grillo, "Divination: Epistemology, Agency, and Identity in Contemporary Urban West Africa", *Religion Compass* 3/6, 2009, pp. 921-934; Todd

it is also so for those particular cases of witchcraft that we know in the West, and which are not limited to the Wicca movement. If we compare the witchcraft of our postmodern world today with that which we find in many African societies there are notable differences, among others the degree of social relevance. But despite this, there is nothing that hinders us to associate witchcraft with modernity and postmodernity.

The terms may easily possess a "floating meaning", i.e. they can express at once old and new senses which in addition to conceptual differences, can even show occasionally contradictory aspects, and "witchcraft" is no exception to this reality<sup>28</sup>. In this respect the distinction which Putnam makes between "concept" and "conception" can also serve us. As he said, quoted in Tambiah, the concept "temperature", for example, has not always had the same conception in Western history<sup>29</sup>. The same can be said for "witchcraft". The fact of applying the term to certain aspects of the African reality should not imply that we have to assume all the same conceptual contents of the term "witchcraft" for this reality as it is understood traditionally for European cases. On the contrary, with this, by the fact of taking into account the African empirical examples – in addition to the fact that it also represents an important incentive for the research of witchcraft in Europe<sup>30</sup>– what we are doing is conceptually enriching the term "witchcraft". It has not to be restricted to a closed and idealized notion as it has been transmitted in the West. We already know that witchcraft is not manifested in the same way in Europe, in Africa or in other parts of the globe. Thus, for example, in our fieldwork in Africa, we are not any more surprised if people speak of "good witchcraft" to us, and therefore we must have already superseded that traditional identification made between witchcraft and the evil, an identification based on stereotypes of a theological good/evil polarity and which, actually, such as Ronald Hutton stated, it is either fully applicable to the European case<sup>31</sup>.

In the context of the colonial (or neo-colonial) ideology, it is true that people exploit the discredit of a tag –that of the "witchcraft"– to discredit colonized societies. But the problem is not in the tag itself but in the fact that with it we qualify societies already discredited in advance. Here we have to do with a bad use of concepts for ideological reasons.

There is also another argument to keep in mind in order to maintain the term "witchcraft" for African realities: not to fall into the *ideology of the difference* that

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Sanders, "Reconsidering Witchcraft: Postcolonial Africa and Analytic (Un)Certainties", *American Anthropologist* 105/2, 2003, pp. 338-352; Blair Rutherford, "To Find an African Witch", *Critique of Anthropology* 19/1, 1999, pp. 89–109; D. Ciekawy and P. Geschiere, Op. Cit.; Jane Parish, "Black Market, Free Market: Anti-Witchcraft Shrines and Fetishes Among the Akan", in: H. Moore, and T. Sanders Op. Cit. (2001), pp. 118-135.

<sup>28</sup> In the same way as the term "witch". Cfr. Ronald Hutton, "Anthropological and historical approaches to witchcraft: potential for a new collaboration?" *The Historical Journal* 47/2, 2004, p. 432.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, religion, and the scope of rationality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. Keith Thomas, "The relevance of social anthropology to the historical study of English Witchcraft", in: Mary Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft confessions and accusations*, London: Tavistock, 1970, pp. 47–81.

<sup>31</sup> R. Hutton, Op. Cit., p. 433.

some African scholars have rightly denounced for the Western scientific practice. Thus, for example, as regards African music, the musicologist Kofi Agawu complains about the obsession that the West shows in order to particularize "African music". According to him, there is a persistent focus in Euroamerican discourses on "African rhythm" while, on the other hand, the capacity of Africans in domains such as harmony, melody, and musical forms are made invisible<sup>32</sup>. Kofi Agawu speaks here of the "ideology of difference"<sup>33</sup>. This ideology particularizes the Other, extolling even its uniqueness in some concrete aspect, but this implies at the same time its exclusion of what is considered important and which is also identified with the West. And as D. Masolo, based on the ideas of Mudimbe stated, "exoticizing the Other by ascribing to it uniqueness has become the hidden hand of subtle marginalization"<sup>34</sup>, something which is very characteristic for the colonial discourse.

There is therefore also the danger of falling into this trap by what refers to attempting to deny the validity of the term 'witchcraft' for African cases. If "witchcraft" basically means a set of practices and beliefs that are concerned with the use of purported supernatural powers applied to the everyday world, why do we want to reserve the term "witchcraft" only for the West? It is obvious that witchcraft's manifestations will not have the same characteristics in Europe as in Africa. But as I said before, it seems more effective to modify and/or extend gradually the concept through the new data that we may get from African cases rather than consider the term closed and therefore invalid to be used beyond European reality. After all, as Peter Geschiere wrote, "these notions, now translated throughout Africa as 'witchcraft', reflect a struggle with problems common to all human societies"<sup>35</sup>.

Anthropological practice in African societies cannot be separated from general dynamics of alterization processes that condition the gaze between the One and the Other. These processes of alterization are characterized by the fact of representing and treating the Other through strategies such as synecdochization, exotization, undervaluation, overvaluation, misunderstanding and exclusion. Through synecdochization, the part for the whole, something that is only a particular aspect of the Other is generalized. Exotization enhances that of the Other which appears strange before the eyes of the subject. Undervaluation or overvaluation imply valuing the Other below or above to what would be a balanced look. Misunderstanding involves failure to understand something correctly and by exclusion the Other is excluded from what is considered belonging to *us*.

And part of the problem of the *knotty terms* lies in the way we view and treat the other through these alterization processes. These processes of alterization help to configure the meanings and connotations of these terms.

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<sup>32</sup> Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music. Postcolonial notes, queries, positions*, New York/London: Routledge 2003, p. XX.

<sup>33</sup> Cfr. Kofi Agawu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> D.A. Masolo, "Presencing the Past and Remembering the Present: Social Features of Popular Music in Kenya", in: Ronald Radano, Philip V. Bohlman (Eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 360.

<sup>35</sup> P. Geschiere, *Op. Cit.*, (1997), p. 223.



And obviously, these same terms, through the academic legitimacy that they flash around, help to maintain a distorted view of the Other. And this is true not only for traditionally problematic terms like the ones that are dealt with in this paper, but also is extensible to the anthropological gaze in general. Exotization and sometimes also undervaluation have to do with the aforementioned negative connotations of terms such as *tribe* and derivatives as well as the *ethnic* adjective. The above provided example of the importance which Western musicology attaches to African rhythm has to do with overvaluation. Misunderstanding is something consubstantial to the little accuracy of many supposedly *etic* anthropological concepts when they are applied indiscriminately to non-Western societies. Attempting to deny the validity of a general term like "witchcraft" for African cases also has to do with alterization resorts such as synecdochization and exclusion. In this way it can be interpreted that concepts like *ngbwo* (Fang), *apeth* (Dinka), *mangu* (Zande), for instance, are considered to have enough consistency in order not to be subsumed within the general term of "witchcraft", as well as, and falling in what Agawu called the "ideology of the difference" that the validity of the term "witchcraft" should be reserved only for the reality of the West. It is the same problem that we can observe with the concept of "World Music", a label that is reserved for the Third World while for Western popular music we use categories such as rock, pop or jazz.

Terms such as "tribe", "tribalism", "World Music", "witchcraft" as well many others which are accompanied by the adjective "ethnic" or the prefix "ethno" can be easily understood as *knotty terms* because of the difficulties that their use poses to the researcher. The problem lies not only in the ambiguity of the terms -something that happens with many other terms. And I would dare to say even that the main problem is not the derogatory connotations that they may have in itself either. That "witchcraft" is problematic we do know. But it is problematic for African cases and for Europeans. Pretending to reserve the term "witchcraft" only for the Euro-American context and to deny its validity for African traditions, means not only ignoring a reality, but also plays along with the old colonial gaze. In fact this is what we do with the other terms discussed in this paper: the main problem is circumscribing them predominantly to the African (or Third World) reality. This is the very reason why, for instance, the musician Arto Lindsay said that the World Music concept is simply hateful, imperialist and racist<sup>36</sup>. The problem, therefore, first and foremost is the different application of these terms according to whether it is about the Western or of the African context. And this fact undoubtedly contributes also to the misinterpretation of African society.

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<sup>36</sup> Esteban Linés, "Entrevista a Arto Lindsay, músico y guitarrista norteamericano", *La Vanguardia*, 13.6.2002, p. 40.

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