



WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

29.01.2020, 17:00 Uhr, HS-C

IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

Peter Geschiere

The 'Witchcraft of the House' Is Going Global—Occult Threats and Transcontinental Migration



Peter Geschiere is emeritus professor for the Anthropology of Africa at both the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University; he is also co-editor of *ETHNOGRAPHY* (SAGE). Since 1971 he has

undertaken historical-anthropological fieldwork in various parts of Cameroon and elsewhere in West and Central Africa. His publications include *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Post-colonial Africa* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 1997), *Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Univ. of Chicago Press 2009), *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust: Africa in Comparison* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013) and 'A "Vortex of Identities" – Freemasonry, Witchcraft and Post-colonial Homophobia in Cameroon,' *African Studies Review* 60(2), 2017, p. 7-35.

During my first longer term research in Africa, my Maka friends (SE Cameroon) taught me that *La sorcellerie de la maison* (they had appropriated the French term *sorcellerie* as an everyday term) was the most dangerous occult attack. In my 2013 book *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust – Africa in Comparison* I took this idea as a starting point for a global comparison indicating that the close link between 'witchcraft' and intimacy - the idea that the most dangerous occult attacks come from close by - recurs in different settings all over the world. However, this is only one side of the coin. 'Witchcraft' is supposed to provide at the same time openings to the outside world. It is this ambivalent position on the interface of the inside and the outside, thus having the potential to link the local to the global, that makes these ideas so relevant for understanding the present-day predicament of many migrants. Especially in African settings the idea of 'the house' seems to have a dazzling elasticity, making it capable of bridging even transcontinental distances. New means of communication help to make the threats of the 'witchcraft of the house' an everyday reality for migrants all over the world.

I hope to add a few remarks about our more recent research on African imaginaries linking Freemasonry and other secret associations of outside provenance to same-sex practices, and thus to 'witchcraft' and illicit enrichment. The association of 'witchcraft' and intimacy seems to suggest ever new variations!
