MODERN MAGIC IN NIGERIA: Witchcraft accusations, child abandonment, and child trafficking in Akwa Ibom State

Actor Network Theory - Michel Foucault

THE DISCIPLINARY FUNCTION OF WITCHCRAFT

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Abstract

This thesis explores the possible link between branding children as witches, child abandonment and the risk of child trafficking in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. By combining the theoretical perspectives of Michel Foucault’s “governmentality”-analytics and the Actor network Theory, witchcraft is examined as a ‘productive power’ and as a ‘pastoral’ and ‘disciplinary’ power technique, as well as a network-actor that comes into being, as a relational effect of its network associations. In a five-part analysis, the thesis further explores and finds witchcraft to be related to the occurrence of misfortune as well as serve as an explanatory function; that the identification and construction of “child witches” is based on a perceived motive of malice, which in effect modifies the behaviour and actions of individuals; that witchcraft is performed as accusations, confessions, deliverances, exorcisms, business and legislation, which create different realities for different actors; that witchcraft can be understood as a levelling and normalising mechanism, which is used to maintain a social order; and that a connection can be rendered visible between child witchcraft stigmatisations, child abandonment and child trafficking by uncovering the phenomenon of trafficking ‘ritual oaths’.
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