The birth of the “salon”:
Poverty, “modernization,” and dealing with witchcraft in southern Tanzania

ABSTRACT
In this article, we explore the social process of modernization through an examination of the transformation in the delivery of antiwitchcraft services that has occurred in southern Tanzania under the pervasive influence of transnational ideoscapes of market liberalization and public-sector reform. We argue that the anthropological association of witchcraft with the modern in Africa overlooks witchcraft’s explicitly unmodern associations in popular discourse and state policy. These latter associations contrast with the practice of antiwitchcraft specialists who seek to enable the realization of modernity both through dealing with witchcraft and through the self-conscious adoption of specifically modernizing practices.

T his article contributes to ongoing debates about the status of modernity as a category within anthropology through an exploration of transformation in practices directed against witches in southern Tanzania. We show how a particular imagination of modernization derived from internationally promoted reforms in public services and from market liberalization is driving transformations in the delivery of antiwitchcraft practices, transformations doubly modern in Arjun Appadurai’s (1996:7–9, 33) sense of a collective work of the imagination mediated through global flows and in its explicit orientation toward achieving a contemporary vision of modernization. The example of one healer’s attempts to modernize the ways in which people can access witchcraft-suppression services offers a privileged insight into the reconstruction of a new modernity in Tanzania after socialism and under the pervasive influence of the transnational ideoscapes (Appadurai 1996:33) of public-sector reform. Focusing on the relations and institutions through which certain constructs of the “modern” are materialized through specific practices and institutions in specific times and places allows for a reappraisal of anthropological theories about modernity as they are made to apply to Other people and places.

The “modernity” of witchcraft?
Some recent anthropological accounts of Africa have emphasized the continuing salience of ideas about witchcraft for understanding contemporary sociality in all its forms. Such studies aim to challenge the conventional modernist assumptions about the persistence of witchcraft into the 21st century that have been used to imply that communities in Africa, and in other regions where people practice witchcraft, are somehow premodern, irrational, and, by extension, not worthy of full global citizenship (cf. Farmer 2001; Richards 1996; Rutherford 1999). Contrary to assertions that witchcraft is the hallmark of the unmodern, these studies show how witchcraft, along with equivalent discourses of the unseen, is an integral

MAIA GREEN
University of Manchester
SIMEON MESAKI
University of Dar es Salaam
aspect of contemporary disparate modernities. For urban and rural, elite and peasant farmer, nouveau riche and dispossessed, witchcraft is an idiom through which the various dimensions of the universe—social, moral, and natural—are experienced and acted on. Witchcraft in diverse settings can become a means of making sense of the contradictions of the contemporary capitalist world (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxix), of dealing with the ambivalence of state power under undemocratic regimes (West 2001), of adapting to the demands of structural adjustment (Sanders 2001), or it can be a vehicle for the articulation of personal, local, and national political relations (Dolan 2002; Rowlands and Warnier 1988).1

As a phenomenon of the contemporary world, witchcraft is undoubtedly “modern,” an attribute largely derived from the vagueness and ambiguity of witchcraft discourses, which can adapt and become relevant to myriad social environments and social relationships (Geschiere 1997:10). But, although some accounts seek to represent witchcraft as essentially modern, they are less concerned with critically interrogating the specific constitution of the distinct modernities of which it is apparently a part.2 When the category “modernity” is perceived as more than merely indicative of a contemporaneous state of being, it is frequently apprehended as encapsulating those somewhat taken-for-granted effects of transnational capitalism on contemporary social relations: the increase in scale of contacts, market incorporation, and potentially totalizing integration into a global social order (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Ferguson 1999). Alternatively, across anthropology, more generally, modernity as a category is often treated as the abstract episteme of the modernism caricatured by postmodernists like Fredric Jameson (1991), that is, as a related set of narratives and perspectives that privilege Western thought and power, naturalizing social relations of capitalism, globalization, and inequality (cf. Englund and Leach 2000; Latour 1993).

More fundamentally, in accounts of witchcraft and other cultural practices of the occult, the modern as a category applied to social practice is essentially a category applied by us as analysts rather than by our informants. It is we, rather than they, who categorize divination by e-mail as, if not modern, as such, then as an artifact of millennial capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:20) or the profusion of alternate worlds of the imagination as constitutive of modernity (Appadurai 1996). To assert this is not to deny the validity of the classificatory exercise but, rather, to bear in mind that what social theorists mean by the category “modern” is not necessarily the same as what is meant by diverse others making use of the same terminology to different ends. In social theory, as in other discourses, the content of the category of the modern has highly specific and historically determined referents. Somewhat surprisingly, then, despite the emphasis on the importance of the modern in witchcraft studies, whatever “the modern” may be represented as being, it is rarely approached within such studies as the specific focus of ethnographic inquiry.3 Perhaps this is to be expected. Informants may represent issues related to witchcraft as attributes of the present or as a consequence of modern life, but they are less likely to perceive witchcraft practices as constituents of the modern (Sanders 2003), especially when the constructions of modernity espoused by contemporary African states are likely to be informed by a highly modernist opposition between what is represented as a “traditional” past associated with “customs” and a future of planned development in which the irrationality of “traditional” superstition is reduced to “culture.”4

If witchcraft discourses and practices are attributes of the modern and are utilized self-consciously for what are perceived as the modern ends of individual accumulation and personal development (Bond and Ciekawy 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Dolan 2002), they are nevertheless categorized by people living in communities in which witchcraft is an issue as simultaneously part of indigenous and national traditions (van Dijk 1995). Such practices may be claimed as antithetical to an imposed modernity and, by extension, to imported means of dealing with witches; hence, the dismissal of colonial efforts to use legislation in the battle against witchcraft, rather than against witches, and the postcolonial state’s recourse to the courts in an effort to punish individual witches in Cameroon (Geschiere 1997:169). Equally, ideas about witchcraft are liable to condemnation by modernizers as backward, retrogressive, and irrational, a position adopted by majority Christianities and by much of Islam as well as by “progressive” governments and their donors in many countries in Africa.

This negative evaluation of witchcraft is reiterated at community level, although in a slightly different form that emphasizes the damage done by witches to community aspirations for development and for the better life associated with positive representations of the modern: good housing, Western-style manufactured clothing, labor-saving devices, vehicles, better health, and, more recently, new ideas of physical beauty. Witchcraft is often viewed as antithetical to a desired modernity because of the ways that witches are thought to attack those individuals striving to achieve modernity for themselves through what have been represented by some anthropologists as distinctly untraditional styles of accumulation and consumption (Bond and Ciekawy 2001; Geschiere 1997; Moore and Sanders 2001).5 The explicit unmodernity of witchcraft, then, from the community perspective, contrasts with anthropological efforts to resituate witchcraft in the modern.

Just as anthropologists strive to manipulate what is, after all, an essentially modernist dichotomy between tradition and modernity (cf. Kapferer 2002:16) to locate...
Traditional medicine and modernization

Green had previously examined the practice of one very famous female antiwitchcraft specialist in fieldwork in southern Tanzania carried out in the 1990s. Her focus then was on the core symbolism of the witchcraft-suppression rituals, which centered on the purification of alleged witches in a ritual that involved shaving off the head and body hair. She wrote about the ambiguous location of such practices as both traditional, in that they were informed by practice oriented at constituting relations between people and spirits, and modern, in that they played on the symbolic use of “modern” artifacts to address the antimonism of witches (Green 1994, 1997, 2003b). This article describes how the practice of that specialist has changed in the avowedly self-modernizing hands of the descendant who claims to have inherited her powers. What previously had been available in one place only, had been steeped in the mystique of spirits associated with particular territories, and had demanded an extended stay on the part of those seeking treatment is now widely advertised through a range of media and can be fairly rapidly obtained at several locations in the region. Moreover, these changes are part of an explicit strategy on the part of their initiator to modernize his practice, which covers both shaving witchcraft and what is labeled “traditional” healing in Tanzania.

Traditional healing here refers to the practice of those medical specialists working in the domain of relations between people and spirits (cf. Boyer 1990). The term does not indicate that such practices are traditional in terms of historical practice or in opposition, other than rhetorical, to the modern. Dealing with witchcraft is encompassed by traditional healing because of the role of divination in diagnosing witchcraft attack, because such attacks often manifest themselves in illness, and because of the relationship between healing and power. This fraught relationship between traditional practice and what constitutes the modern, or at least the desirable aspects of it, is one that antiwitchcraft specialists themselves are forced to confront on a daily basis as they deal with the changing demands and expectations of clients caught up in Tanzania’s attempts to implement various incarnations of modernization. As we show here, the modern in Tanzania, as elsewhere, is a social construct devoid of universal content. Rather, specific constitutions of the modern are invoked at particular times and in particular places to envision particular projects of transformation, of modernization. Transformations in the delivery of antiwitchcraft practice in this instance were driven by the personal vision of their initiator, Shaibu Magungu, and his effort to make his practice modern as a commitment to “development” (maendeleo). Our research revealed that Magungu’s vision of modernity as development is shared by the users of antiwitchcraft services, who have come to regard these services as a precondition for the achievement of their own smaller-scale projects of modernity.

Dealing with witchcraft in Tanzania

Tanzania is particularly fertile ground for the study of witchcraft. Among the poorest countries in the world, and among the least developed in Africa, it is wholly enmeshed within the new political relations of development assistance structured around poverty reduction and liberalization policies. An infant multiparty democracy supports a mature single-party regime built on the foundations of a weak colonial administration reworked through African socialism. A strong national culture nurtured through a national language (Kiswahili) and careful policies designed to stifle “tribalism” coexist with over 100 different ethnic groups, all with their own languages and customs. Witchcraft (uchawi) transcends local and national culture and is part of daily life in all social settings and in all locations.

Although the specific manifestations of witchcraft and the attributes of witches vary from one place to another and from community to community, uchawi displays certain characteristics and witches certain attributes that allow for intelligibility between different witchcraft traditions. Whether witches are said to be elderly women, as in Sukuma communities, or young children who have inherited witchcraft paraphernalia from their parents, whether witchcraft powers derive from a physical site within the body or from substances purchased from other communities to the east or west, discourses on witchcraft in Tanzania consistently address themes of envy, greed, consumption, cannibalism, and death. They are, then, firmly implicated in local and national debates about poverty and development (Green 1994; Sanders 2001) at the same time that they demand strategies for dealing with witchcraft and those alleged to practice it. These
strategies vary markedly between the northwestern and southern parts of the country. In the northwest, notably among the Sukuma, the country’s largest ethnic group, the submerged violence of witchcraft is met with explicit violence commonly directed against those who are elderly, female, and vulnerable, who are most likely to be accused.\(^9\) Expulsion and murder are not uncommon (Bukurura 1994; Mesaki 1994). And, as the marketized economy of the occult (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:27) mediates the access of witches to the medicines and potions with which to commit their secret crimes, it also now mediates the execution of witches through the secret hiring of young men willing to hack them to death.

### Witchcraft-suppression practices in southern Tanzania

In much of southern Tanzania, and along the coast, ways of dealing with witches are more benign. Witchcraft is conceptualized as a life-threatening activity, and witches embody the antithesis of normal moral values, but witchcraft is viewed as, in some sense, an affliction that, through the human habit of acquiescence to greed and excess, can affect almost anybody (Green 1997). Witchcraft derived from the power of medicines can be suppressed through the use of other medicines administered by specialists as part of a ritual of cleansing known as “shaving witchcraft” (kunyoa uchawi) or, more recently, as “getting oneself cleansed” (kujisafisha).\(^10\) Shaving as a legitimate kind of antiwitchcraft practice in southern Tanzania goes back to at least the beginning of the 20th century.\(^11\) It is associated with a limited number of specialists, some of whom have a long history of this work, who attract clients from a wide area. Although the content of the ritual procedure of shaving has remained fairly constant, at least since the 1970s, the specific institutional forms through which shaving witchcraft is provided to communities and individuals have changed in parallel with institutional changes in the country. This symbiotic relationship between the institutional possibilities of antiwitchcraft practices and the wider institutional context occurs because of the historical relationship between structures of governance and rural populations in Tanzania, which situated both traditional healing and witchcraft within the areas of social action demarcated for state control (Feierman 1986:208).

The colonial ordering of traditional medicine and the constitution of the political category of traditional society through the modality of indirect rule gave way, after independence, to a strong single-party state committed to the modernization of rural society through socialism (cf. Chachage 1988; Mamdani 1996). The ideological and institutional forms through which such changes were to be effected differed, but both rested on tight control of rural society and its healers. During the British colonial period, itinerant shavers of witchcraft were permitted by the authorities to travel around rural districts offering services and were even encouraged to shave the entire adult populations of the villages created as part of the large-scale modernization programs justified by the eradication of tsetse and agricultural development. Postindependence policy, similarly based on resettlement through villagization, also allowed specialists to visit villages. In the early 1980s, the attitude of local authorities changed. Specialists were no longer allowed to shave villagers or to tour the area looking for clients. Travel was restricted. Village governments, acting for the ten-house cells, the lowest tier in the state party machine (Caplan 1992; Moore 1988), issued permissions to travel and tried to resolve rural disputes, including those involving allegations of witchcraft. Individuals deemed by local authorities to have specific witchcraft problems were permitted to travel to a select number of antiwitchcraft specialists, of whom one in particular became nationally famous. Bibi Kalembwana, of Ihowanja village in Malinyi Division in the district of Ulanga, acquired a virtual monopoly on antiwitchcraft practices across at least the three contiguous districts of Ulanga, Kilombero, and Songea, although a significant proportion of her clients came from farther afield, from Iringa, Mbeya, Mwanza, and Dar es Salaam (Green 1997, 2003b).\(^12\)

Kalembwana’s practice was based on a combination of long-established purification procedures and distinctly modern components of bureaucratic practice. The purification aspects of the rite involved shaving off all of an individual’s head and body hair and administering special medicines to that person to suppress his or her witchcraft powers. Purification was appropriate for dealing with witchcraft imagined as the embodiment of excessive physicality and desire, as something dirty and antisocial (Green 1997, 2003b). Similar practices were performed by other well-known witchcraft suppressors, either as individuals or as part of the so-called witchcraft suppression movements, which also have a long history in the area (Larson 1976; Redmayne 1970; Willis 1968).\(^13\) Kalembwana’s practice, like that of the antiwitchcraft movements, with which it had much in common (Auslander 1993; Marwick 1950; Richards 1935; Willis 1968), did not deal only with alleged witches. Accuser and accused arrived together and received exactly the same treatment. Witches were not identified as such and were not differentiated within the ritual from those who had accused them of witchcraft.

Clients who came to Kalembwana’s homestead for shaving remained in a special camp for several days, during which time they provided labor for her fields and homestead, adhering in the camp to certain prohibitions regarding food, fire, water, and sex. They were taken in the early morning to a forested area on the margin of the village where they were made to sit on special medicine sprinkled on the ground, wearing clothing that was not only old, in the...
sense of worn and soiled, but also traditional, that is, non-Western. It was here that people were shaved, starting with their heads, including their eyebrows. After discarding their old clothes, they were given more medicine, some cooked in a meal consisting of chicken and flour that clients had brought with them and that accuser and accused ate together. Certificates were issued to those who had been shaved stating that they had been shaved by Kalembwana in Ihowanja, and people were then permitted to return to their homes. People said that, after undergoing this treatment, anybody who returned to witchcraft again, even many years later, would certainly die, and tales of such deaths were widely told (Green 1994, 1997, 2003b).

Bibi Kalembwana died in 1997. By then, Tanzania had formally ended its commitment to socialism. The first multiparty election had been held in 1995, resulting in a victory for the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). Liberalization, already established through the encroaching informal sector, which expanded as the state monopolies creaked to a close (Tripp 1997), was officially sanctioned in public policies under the influence of donor-driven reforms. Political liberalization accompanied the economic transition, heralding new personal freedoms in villages that ceased to be the socialist state–controlled units of production and consumption and legal regulation and that were now rural living spaces within which other political associations, personal freedoms, and the free market could, in theory, at least, flourish. Individuals involved in witchcraft disputes no longer had to secure permission from state and village officials to seek specialist intervention or to travel. Despite the significance of these changes, they took considerable time to filter through into public awareness of the new landscape of legality and governance, especially in rural areas. Moreover, Kalembwana’s monopoly was institutionalized to such an extent that even after rural people were free to travel to specialists in other parts of the country for the first time in years and local government had ceased to actively send people for shaving as a dispute-resolution mechanism, hundreds of people a week were still regularly making their way to Ihowanja during the dry season.14 Although other traditional healing services were available at Kalembwana’s place, including medicines that could protect people from witchcraft, by far the majority of people came for shaving. The remote location of Ihowanja, one day’s walk from Malinyi, itself a day’s bus journey from the Kilombero district center, Ifakara, did not deter them. People also regularly made the two-day journey on foot from villages around Mahenge, Ulanga’s district capital, and the four-day journey on foot from the rural villages of Songea.

Major changes in antiwitchcraft services

Given the extent to which Kalembwana’s practice was established in the region, its national reputation, and its strong relations with local authorities, one might have expected that antiwitchcraft practices would continue to be centered on her home village, Ihowanja, with little change, even after Kalembwana’s death.15 Indeed, for several years prior to her death, the bulk of day-to-day work had been supervised and carried out by Kalembwana’s assistants, her three adult grandchildren among them. But Kalembwana’s practice did not remain in Ihowanja. En route to a meeting in the western Tanzanian town of Mbeya in September 2000, Green was very surprised to see a large painted signboard bearing Kalembwana’s name at the side of the main road from Dar es Salaam, next to the junction that would have taken the traveler eventually to the Bibi’s old village. The sign boldly informed all who read it that Bibi Kalembwana was no longer in Ihowanja but at a place called Mkasu, near Kiberege, along the same road but about 300 kilometers (around 180 miles) closer to the national capital, Dar es Salaam. All of the services that had previously been available at Ihowanja were, the sign announced, now available at Mkasu, instead. The sign was large, like a road sign, with the writing painted in yellow against a dark green background. At the top and bottom of the board were neatly painted national flags, just like those on the signs announcing the contractors and sponsors of the numerous new construction and road projects in this aid-dependent country.

A further visit by Green to Ulanga and Kilombero two years later held even more surprises. A previously unremarkable piece of scrub on the outskirts of the fairly nondescript village of Kiberege had been transformed into a settlement, with numerous houses and shelters clearly visible from the murram (mud) road. Along the road itself, several small shops and food venues had sprung up around a bus stand constructed from bamboos, next to another large, green-painted sign announcing that this location was the “headquarters” of Bibi Kalembwana, traditional healer (mganga wa asili). This sign featured a three-legged, round stool, signifying tradition in relation to power and healing, a national flag, the word welcome (karibu), and, in the top right-hand corner, a small image of Mickey Mouse rendered in black and white. Underneath Mickey was written, in bright white lettering, Mambo yote salon, roughly translatable as “everything salon.”16 Changes were obviously happening and, judging by the signboards, were intended to be noticed. Mesaki, also an anthropologist with expertise in witchcraft, had noticed the signboards, too, and had established a good relationship with their initiator, Shaibu Magungu, Kalembwaba’s senior grandson, who had previously worked as her main assistant in Ihowanja.17 Magungu was keen that people understand the changes he was trying to bring to the antiwitchcraft practices he performed. He welcomed our proposal to come and find out more about them. In July and August 2003, we spent six weeks in the districts of Ulanga.
and Kilombero, researching changes in antiwitchcraft practices in the area.18

These changes turned out to be significant. Whereas throughout the 1980s and 1990s shaving had been available in very few locations, and shaving by Kalembwana only at Ihowanja, Kalembwana’s services were now claimed to be available in another three locations: Mkasu (Kiberege), which functioned as a kind of practice headquarters; Mwaya, a village 40 kilometers (about 25 miles) south of Mahenge town; and Nangeru village in Songea rural district. Other large signboards announcing the move away from Ihowanja had been placed at key locations where people en route to Ihowanja could potentially be diverted: at the marketplace in Ifakara, by the bus stand in Ifakara, and at the ferry crossing on the Kilombero River, all points at which people going toward Ihowanja would either seek transport or pass through (see Figure 1). Each sign was painted in the same shade of green and had the national flag and Kalembwana’s name prominently displayed. Not only were antiwitchcraft services more dispersed and, hence, more widely available but the process of dealing with clients had also been speeded up substantially. People arriving for shaving no longer had to remain in the camp for several days, unless they were menstruating women, in which case they were prohibited from entering the special section where shaving took place. In addition, the requirement that people coming for shaving had to do work for the mganga (pl. waganga) had been lifted.19

Those arriving in the afternoon or evening were now shaved the next morning, when possible, or, at Kiberege (Mkasu), when the volume of people coming for shaving made economies of scale desirable, every two days. Kiberege is readily accessible by road from Dar es Salaam via Mikumi, a mere 20 kilometers (about 13 miles) or so from the end of the tarmac at the Ruaha River hydroelectric station at Kidatu. It is also a stop on the TAZARA railway linking Tanzania and Zambia, which transects Kalembwana’s southern Tanzanian client base. This railway line links the communities between Dar es Salaam and Makambako (Iringa), which benefit from what is popularly called “Kipisi” (the piece), a regular rail service that provides a cheap and predictable link between them.20 TAZARA makes Kiberege accessible to clients from Songea, from Njombe, and from the communities near Ihowanja as well as to those coming from the capital.21 Shaving days at Kiberege are synchronized with TAZARA timetables.22
Efforts had been made to standardize practice at the new outlets offering Kalembwana’s services. Magungu and others spoke of them as branches (matawi), like the branches of a cooperative or a bank. In addition to time spent at Kiberege and Ihowanja, we visited the Mwaya branch, run by Sadat, Magungu’s second-born son. The branch at Mwaya is primarily oriented toward serving local people, many of whom come on foot. Those who can afford to pay for transport prefer to come to the headquarters at Kiberege. The Songea branch, operated by Magungu’s younger brother, is similarly directed at a local clientele. Fees are standardized along with practice across each branch operated by Magungu, the total payable for shaving being 2,520 shillings at the time of our visit. As in the 1990s, the total fee comprised several discrete payments. These were a fee for shaving (2,000 shillings), the cost of the certificate (500 shillings), and the 20 shillings in coins that replaced the previous two-shillings, the cost of the certificate (500 shillings), and the 20 shillings in coins that replaced the previous two-shilling portion of the payment destined for offering to the spirits from whose powers the efficacy of the antiwitchcraft medicine derived.

Magungu insists that he operates only three branches and makes no claim to count Ihowanja as a branch, although antiwitchcraft services continue to be provided there. Indeed, those operating from Ihowanja claim their location as the ultimate and sole source of antiwitchcraft services, rather than merely one branch among others, because the origin of the special powers from which the witchcraft-suppression ritual derives its effectiveness is located there in the territorial place of the empowering spirit. The public are less sensitive to such differentiations and consider all outlets as dispensing services associated with and authorized by Bibi Kalembwana. Their perception partly reflects the effectiveness of Magungu’s advertising initiative, which was not restricted to the highly visible signboards. Informants recalled how, prior to the opening of each branch, notices were pinned on trees along the routes between villages and district centers and along the paths to outlying villages, informing people that the service would soon be available and where. Magungu had also taken out advertising slots on national radio and in the press. Aspects of his practice are also regularly featured in the lifestyle pages of various national broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

Shaving revisited

When people arrive at the Kiberege headquarters or at the Mwaya branch for cleansing, they first follow a series of signs directing them to Kalembwana’s place. This is on the edge of the village in each case, at the margins of miombo forest. At Kiberege, visitors are received by a guard wearing a clean khaki uniform, with a laminated ID tag at his breast pocket (see Figure 2). The guard directs guests to a large, thatched shelter with open sides, where a clerk seated behind a desk takes personal details. At Mwaya, which is a much smaller operation, people remove their shoes, as instructed by a notice, and follow signs to a smaller shelter to await reception by an assistant of the mganga. In both places, they are instructed to remain in the shelter set aside for people coming for shaving, not to eat or drink water after 7:00 p.m. if they are to be shaved the next morning, and only to take fire from the mganga’s assistants, not to light fire themselves.

People who are to be shaved spend the night in the shelter. People seeking healing sleep elsewhere. In the morning, those to be shaved are taken by an assistant wearing only a traditional cloth to a special semisacred section set aside for shaving. They also wear traditional clothing, a sheet or kikoi for the men and, for the women, two pieces of kanga or kitenge, the brightly colored cloths commonly worn by women in East Africa, one of which is discarded prior to entering the shaving place to leave the breasts exposed. Shaving is performed in single-sex groups. Women go first. With their hair unbraided in readiness for what is to come, they are made to sit at places marked out for each person by a symbol drawn with sprinkled powder on the ground. The powder is medicine against witchcraft. Incantations are made. All of the head hair, including eyebrows, is shaved. People shave their own body hair and await the meal of chicken and ugali (maize meal), which is prepared by assistants of the mganga. The meal, cooked with more antiwitchcraft medicine, is eaten in groups made up of those who have “brought each other for shaving.”

Being shaved, discarding soiled clothing, administering and ingesting medicine, and eating together are the main components of the ritual, after which certificates stating that the named individuals have been shaved at Bibi Kalembwana’s place are issued. These elements are the same as in the early 1990s, when shaving was performed under the direction of the Bibi herself. The main innovation in this part of the procedure is the kind of blades used for shaving. Clients who come for shaving bring with them two new razor blades, in line with government health and safety recommendations related to the prevention of HIV. Used blades and their paper wrappers are discarded in pits along with piles of hair and clothing at the edge of the section reserved for shaving.

Purification as a public service

Magungu had established his new headquarters at Kiberege in 2000 and the branch at Mwaya some two years later. An initial attempt to establish a branch at Luri, a remote high-altitude settlement north of Mahenge town, had failed because of the difficulties that frail or elderly clients had in reaching it. Despite this setback, the Mwaya
Figure 2. Guard and client-information sign at main entrance of Kalembwana’s Mkasu headquarters operated by Magungu, August 2003. Photo by M. Green.
branch appeared to be fairly well established by 2003, as was Kiberege. Both places had large, thatched shelters to accommodate both “witches” and those who had brought them and special cleared areas in the bush for shaving. More critically, they were firmly on the national map as primary destinations for people requiring antwichcraft services. Magungu’s Kiberege headquarters are now so well-known in Dar es Salaam that when we boarded the bus at the bustling city terminal at the start of our fieldwork, we were immediately asked by curious conductors if we were going to see the Bibi. When we arrived at Kiberege and the bus pulled up opposite the sign at the entrance to Magungu’s place, the conductor shouted out, not just for our benefit, that we had arrived at the “(hair) salon.”

The popularity of Magungu’s branches has had a negative impact on those specialists continuing to offer shaving services at Ihowanja, including Kalembwana’s other grandchildren, who remarked on the dramatic decline in numbers visiting for shaving. The reduction in visitors was also commented on by ward staff, bus workers, and the youths who had previously been able to earn a living running bicycle “taxis” ferrying the better off the 30 kilometers (about 20 miles) from the bus stand at Malinyi to remote Ihowanja. Residents of Ihowanja and Malinyi reckoned that fewer than eight people a day visited Kalembwana’s old village during the dry season, and not all of these specifically came for shaving. In contrast, large numbers of people were visiting Kiberege and Mwaya, the majority for antwichcraft services. Mwaya regularly attracted around 20 persons a day. When the branch first opened it was not unusual for in excess of 70 people to arrive daily for shaving, often coming from the same village. Kiberege attracts even more. At least 30 people a day arrived there during the month of August 2003, and shaving was conducted in large groups of around 70 or more people. The total number of people seeking access to witchcraft-suppression practices at that time was probably equivalent to 1990 levels, despite the shift in the location of services and enormous changes in the political and institutional environment that had removed the role of local government in witchcraft disputes, a role that, in authorizing disputants to go to Kalembwana for shaving, had contributed to the consolidation of Kalembwana’s monopoly on antwichcraft services during the 1980s.

Residents of villages in Ulanga and in Kilombero with whom we discussed the changes, many of whom had personal experience either of Ihowanja or of the newer branches, were of the opinion that there was no essential difference in terms of content between being shaved in the old days in Ihowanja and being shaved currently elsewhere under Kalembwana’s name. The basic structure and content of the ritual is the same as it was when Green first visited Ihowanja in 1990. People are given three types of antwichcraft medicine, essential prohibitions about fire, food, and clothing continue to apply, and people still have to bring a live chicken, salt, and some flour with them to the event. A portion of the payment in coins continues to be set aside for the spirits whose power ultimately renders the ritual effective. The main changes in shaving witchcraft (kunyoa uchawi), then, are not concerned with ritual content so much as with the mode of delivery. The significant changes here are in the dispersal of services, the faster throughput for clients seeking the service, and the greater emphasis on client choice regarding which location to patronize. People commented on the shorter stay and on the local availability of services. These aspects were much appreciated by the majority of people with whom we spoke.

Ending the requirement compelling people to labor for the mganga was also significant. Magungu and his son both said that labor was no longer necessary because it added to the burden of people who already had serious difficulties caused by their involvement in a witchcraft dispute. This presentation of changes in the delivery of shaving supports a representation of shaving as a service oriented toward the needs of clients and is concerned with caring. The wording on the certificates has also been amended slightly from that used in the 1990s. Whereas previously certificates had confirmed that people were, indeed, “shaved for witchcraft” by Kalembwana, those issued today by Magungu at his various branches mention only “shaving.”

Perceptions of what shaving entails have also altered. In the 1990s being shaved was regarded as a major personal event of ritual significance, involving a long journey and an extended stay at a remote location, and was novel enough to be a topic of continual discussion in many villages. Twenty years plus of shaving at Ihowanja has permitted its evaluation in somewhat different terms. Although the ritual significance of shaving continues to be acknowledged, in particular, the importance of medicine, shaving has come to be perceived as a “public service” (huduma ya umma) and, as such, a normal part of the institutional landscape in Ulanga and Kilombero. The representation of shaving as a public service was not confined to those directly engaged in providing it, that is, descendants of Kalembwana and other waganga involved in what they regard as the delivery of antwichcraft services. Ordinary people also spoke of shaving in the language of service delivery to explain what shaving does and why it is necessary. Shaving can suppress the powers of witches. This is necessary to address the suspicions of kin and neighbors that people enmeshed in bitter quarrels may be involved in witchcraft. The perception of shaving as a public service and in institutionalized terms echoes Steven Feierman’s understanding of witchcraft-suppression practices in Tanzania as “public medicine,” concerned with “control over the social conditions of health” (1986:206).
That “cleansing” (kusafishwe), or “being shaved” (kunyolewa), can be performed for all those who require it, either at Ihowanja or more recently at the various branches, has contributed to its institutionalization and to the perception of antwitchcraft practices as an essential public service, like health, education, law and order, and government. In the popular view, what these practices do is reduce the number of witches, making it possible for others to build their lives and resources without fear of inciting the envy of witches. This perception of the services formerly offered by Kalembwana and now by Magungu was shared by many local government staff in Kilombero district, including senior officials, who appreciate the contribution shaving makes to law and order by resolving witchcraft disputes in the villages. Those involved in witchcraft disputes seem genuinely to settle their differences after being shaved or, at least, to be able to resume their lives in some proximity to one another.

**The drive for “modernization”**

Magungu is seeking to improve and modernize the delivery of his antwitchcraft as well as traditional healing services in quite specific ways. He aims to improve the client experience, to make services more efficient, and to give clients a choice of service location. Magungu uses modern public information strategies like advertising through a range of media to achieve this. Some of his efforts, in particular, the signboards, are influenced by the social marketing campaigns for better health in the region, which promote, through ubiquitous signage and advertisements, the use of Salama (safe) brand condoms and insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets (Lengeler et al. 2003:164). He has also produced a planning document that sets out detailed objectives for the development of his practice, with a view to attracting external financing for improvements. The perception of kunyolewa as a public service has implications for the changes brought about in its delivery, which intentionally parallel the ongoing drive for a particular kind of modernization in other public services as part of an externally financed program of public-sector reform.

The reform of public services has been a key component of development assistance in Tanzania since the mid-1990s in the attempt to make government more efficient and accountable as well as to increase the affordability of services. Programs of reform across the public sector, ranging from the civil service to health, education, and local government, are being implemented in a package of measures that aims to enhance the responsiveness of services to local needs and to modernize delivery. Modernization in this context does not rest on technological innovations or on infrastructural investment, although these may be included, but on techniques and social technologies of governance (Harrison 2002:465). What is now claimed to be built through development assistance is not the roads or factories that characterized development as modernization in the sixties and seventies but “capacity” and institutions. Like the antecedent discourse of modernization premised on technological inputs and mechanization, the new modern is premised on ideas of technology but centered on improving social organization and relations, that is, on technologies of the social. This vision of modernization is legitimated scientifically through rationality as the prime justification for reorganization (Harrison 2002:474). Techniques of the New Public Management, of which public-sector reform is part, emphasize the importance of establishing rational and efficient systems based on evidence and on the implementation of mechanisms that allow for the ongoing monitoring of inputs, outputs, and outcomes (Harrison 2001).

Public-sector reform is not merely a system for delivering public services. In aid-recipient countries it is also part of an explicit transfer of the moral and political values associated with neoliberalism. Public-sector reform, as part of the New Public Management, is not merely concerned with managing public resources but also with state-society relations and managing the public. These reforms imply an assumed reconstitution of political subjects as users of public services in quite specific ways. The new subject is a citizen of a multiparty democracy living in a free-market society who uses his or her purchasing power to select between the services on offer and to hold service providers democratically to account (World Bank 2003). Notions of choice, value, and efficiency and the idea of a contract between service providers and service users inform the design of public-sector reform programs, which promote concepts such as “public–private partnership” and “competition” (Minogue et al. 1998).

The discourse of reform as the axiomatic basis of relations between government and donors in Tanzania is strongly associated with efforts to bring about development (maendeleo), currently defined in terms of the locally adapted but internationally determined goals of eliminating poverty (Green 2003a; Kelsall 2002). The association of reform and (maendeleo) development entangles ideas about reform with notions of progress and, rhetorically at least, with the reduction of poverty. But it also implicates ideas about reform with the institution of the project (mradi) as the accepted mechanism for achieving development in Tanzania. The notion of the “project” in Tanzania, derived from an extensive history of aid dependency through projects and programs, has come to refer to a range of initiatives at all levels through which people, as individuals or organizations, seek to improve something to achieve maendeleo. An individual may describe his or her plan to build a better house or to start a small shop as a project, for example. As projects are about improvement
and development, when applied to the individual or family, the notion conveys investment, income generation, and the expectation of profit. Economic prosperity, after all, is the means to achieving maendeleo (Green 2000a).

The concept of “project” also conveys the donor-assisted initiatives directed at public improvement that are prevalent in the country, across government and non-government sectors, and that encompass the numerous personal patron–client, benefactor-assisted transnational dyads that characterize the economic asymmetry inherent in Tanzania’s relationship with richer nations. It is assistance (msaada) and investment that transform visions of progress into a project as the means of making development happen. It is the construction of the project as a documented program of investments and outcomes that is the first step toward making a project, as a specific web of social relations, a reality (Green 2003a). Magungu’s effort to transform the delivery of traditional services is informed by these ideas about development as a project and by the new conception of modernization in development assistance as reform in public services. Not surprisingly, then, Magungu has written up his proposals for ongoing improvements in the recognizable format associated with what are called “project documents” used by development agencies to structure, manage, and monitor the range of activities their funding supports. Magungu hopes that his project will attract assistance from as yet unspecified donors and that donor funds could be used to extend modernization to the infrastructure of the clinic and environs. For the present, he has focused on reforming the ways in which his services are delivered, treating clients more as consumers and giving them the option of locally available, more efficient services.

Magungu’s attempt to modernize his practice is not unusual among traditional healers in what amounts to a very dynamic part of Tanzania’s health system. Traditional healers in Tanzania have a record of innovation in client services and relations (Gessler et al. 1995:152) while retaining a strong commitment to traditional modes of diagnosis and medication.43 The receptiveness of traditional healers in Tanzania to what appears modern, where appropriate (Semali 1986:87), underlies their enthusiasm for the Traditional and Alternative Medicines Act, which became law in 2002, that will foster the sector’s closer integration into the formal medical system.44 Traditional healers welcome the act because it accords them recognition as a legitimate part of the medical system and as specialists in their own right (see Gessler et al. 1995:154). The inclusion of healers who base their treatment on divination, who collaborate with spirits, and who are likely to become possessed in the course of their medical duties may at first sight seem to contradict the modernizing objectives of public-sector reform. It does not. Integration into the health system situates traditional healing within the management frameworks of the new modernization, incorporating the traditional sector in the vertical management chain of the total health-sector program, even if this positioning is ultimately conceptual.45

Poverty, development, and witchcraft

The relation between development and modernization as a desire for improvement is central also to the understandings of those who feel they have no choice but to make use of witchcraft-suppression services. Development as a personal achievement conveying increased wealth and a better standard of living, manifested in improved housing and displays of consumer goods, as well as what is considered an urban sensibility that looks down on backward rural customs, is a national aspiration, fueled by a national culture that has systematically promoted various incarnations of development since well before independence. Development as maendeleo is coterminous with popular representations of the modern in the sense of “contemporary” (kisasa) because it is through personal development (maendeleo ya mtu binafsi) that one can achieve the necessary wherewithal to purchase contemporary things (Green 2000a). Poverty is antithetical to development in this sense, just as it contravenes the representation of modernity that the state is trying to promote through its reform programs, which are intended to support its overarching goal of reducing poverty.

As in other communities in Africa, witchcraft discourses here are partly discourses on success, failure, and inequality as manifested through the visible indices of consumption and tragedy. Witchcraft can be used to explain unusual events with negative consequences, deaths, and accidents. It is also invoked to account for the failure of others to achieve what they set out to accomplish, evidenced by a spoilt crop, a ruined business, or a blighted career. Witchcraft, in the form of the malicious use of medicines that empower witches to harm, can be guarded against through special protective medicines (kinga), widely available from traditional healers. There is also a market in medicines that can enable individuals to achieve and succeed, in business (dawa ya biashara), in farming, in court cases, and in attaining promotion (kupandishwa cheo).

For most people living in poor rural communities, success in the personal struggle for development is seen realistically to depend largely on factors beyond an individual’s control. Arbitrary employment decisions, the vagaries of farming, and market fluctuations render life unpredictable for the majority, as do the numerous demands for support from kin. In this context, witchcraft comes into its own as an explanation for why some people have not managed to achieve and why others have fallen victim to poverty. Poverty leaves people bitter and jealous
when they see what others have achieved and moves some beyond victimhood to the practice of witchcraft (cf. Favret Saada 1980). Witches are, thus, as likely to come from among the poorest of the poor as they are to be successful in their own right. Likewise, their victims may be the better off, whom they envy, or the poor who have already been thwarted by witchcraft in their efforts to get out of poverty.

That witchcraft discourse here can account for poverty or wealth and set up rich or poor as attacker or victim is a clear example of the ambiguity that Peter Geschiere (1997:10) has suggested contributes to the tenacity of such discourses in much of Africa. In southern Tanzania, the ambiguity that contributes to the perpetuation of witchcraft simultaneously contributes to the perpetuation of witchcraft-suppression practices, ensuring the ongoing existence of a diverse client group in need of services. The existence of antitchcraft practices that can credibly deal with witchcraft and that can do so relatively harmlessly doubtless contributes to the local institutionalization of witchcraft (cf. Douglas 1991:726–730) as a serious practice but one that can be invoked without the immediate violence of the northwestern Tanzanian (Sukuma) responses.

If witchcraft works against development, it follows that antitchcraft practices are prodevelopment, an essential service that enables individuals in communities to begin to work toward achieving development for themselves. Witchcraft-suppression services delivered in a distinctly modern manner remain based on traditional practices involving shaving, medicine, and purification. The modernity of such practices is not now merely symbolic, as earlier accounts of witchcraft-suppression practices, Green’s included, suggested (Auslander 1993; Green 1994, 1997; Marwick 1950; Richards 1935). The routinization and bureaucratization associated with them is to some extent necessitated by the volume of clients and the demands of patient management. They are also a consequence of the close and symbiotic relationship between the traditional and formal medical sectors, leading, as in South America, to the increased medicalization of non-Western indigenous medical practice as it strives to model itself on the formal system (Pedersen and Baruffati 1989). Practices of certification and record keeping characterize current practice across a range of traditional medical services (Gessler et al. 1995:151).

The birth of the salon

Witchcraft-suppression practices in this part of southern Tanzania are situated within a national popular discourse about poverty, modernity, and development. It is this discourse, as much as the dispute among Kalembwana’s descendants, that has fueled the transformation of anti-witchcraft practices into a public service intended to provide clients with accessible and efficient points of delivery. Witchcraft-suppression practices performed under Magungu’s management using the name of Kalembwana have, through advertising and promotion, become part of the burgeoning market for traditional healing in which the client is reconstituted as a consuming agent who selects from among services on offer. The constitution of the client as a consumer of services meshes with the post-liberalization economic ideology of the free market (soko huria) and the imagined target subjectivities reconstituted through public-sector reform. It is necessitated in part by the formal ending of Kalembwana’s monopoly on anti-witchcraft practices, which was created through the involvement of local government in witchcraft disputes. In postsocialist Tanzania, local authorities at district and village level are no longer permitted to involve themselves in such disputes, other than to report to the legal authorities people accusing others of witchcraft.

That the new user of antwichcraft services is primarily a consumer who has a choice is reflected in the new language used to describe the witchcraft-suppression process. In the 1990s, when people were generally sent to lhowanja by village governments and party officials or were taken there, sometimes by force, by irate neighbors, the process was known as “kunyolewa,” connoting the passivity and lack of agency involved in “being shaved” (Green 1994). In 2003, the process was widely referred to as “kujisafisha,” to “cleanse oneself,” the reflexive ji in Kiswahili implying the agency of the active subject. This is not to suggest that the element of obligation no longer applies. It does, in the sense of moral compulsion to go in the event of an accusation or dispute, but, whereas in the past people could be taken for shaving without their consent, the current institutional context emphasizes freedom of choice and that those who go for cleansing do so on their own initiative, voluntarily.

These changes in the perception of witchcraft-suppression services and in the assumed subjectivities of users render the term salon to refer to a place where shaving is available more than simply humorously ironic. Brightly painted hair salons are fast becoming a feature of even remote rural towns and larger villages in Tanzania. As a visible indicator of the new consumption oriented toward the self in the liberalized economy, their utilization has become the subject of discourses about moral responsibility and obligation (Stambach 1999:261–262) as well as providing an example of the kinds of private services available to paying consumers with choice who can afford to use them. The representation of what is offered as an “everything salon” signifies more than shaving. After people have been shaved, they are permitted to seek other kinds of traditional treatments and services, including divination, medicines, and treatments through which
everything—recovery from illness, succeeding in business, falling in love, and getting a good harvest—is, indeed, possible. The brightly painted signboard and Mickey Mouse indicate an aspirational modernity, that such practices, although authentically indigenous and traditional, as indicated by the stool, are up to date (kisasa). Importantly, the signs also convey a humorous openness about the institution of shaving. Freed from restrictive government regulation, it can come out in the open as a resource that serves the people.

If “modernization” has produced the salon here, it has not produced the “clinic,” in Michel Foucault’s (1973) sense of the term. Witchcraft-suppression services have not become wholly enmeshed in a new system of knowledge, and their modes of delivery have not become components of a reformed way of viewing the client subjects’ subjectivity. Witchcraft continues to demand purification and medicines to suppress inherent human desires, although these remedies can be administered slightly differently than previously. That this seems to be the case probably reflects the conceptualization of the witch as an individual with excessive desire and human impulse, a construction that works as well with the new consumer as a subject of witchcraft-suppression services as it does with the traditionally constituted subject enmeshed within the web of village and kinship obligations. In fact, current antiwitchcraft practices constitute both subjects simultaneously, just as they themselves are constituted as modernized traditional medicine. Witchcraft-suppression practices remain essentially unchanged despite their modified package of delivery.

Conclusion: Anthropology, witchcraft, and the project of modernity

Recent ethnographic writing on the notion of modernity has begun to challenge assumptions about the homogeneity of the modern and, indeed, to assert an anthropological preoccupation with the unmodern, paradoxically, as firmly located within the modernist vision. Marilyn Ivy’s (1995) account of Japan, for example, describes how the representation of the unmodern is made to work within a self-consciously national culture as that which has to be rejected to achieve true modernity but that, at the same time, is valorized as the location of authentic cultural tradition. The interplay between representations of tradition and of a contemporary Japanese modernity is essentially “national cultural.” As such it depends on notions of what other nations are and, hence, what Japan is not. Consequently, the Japanese notion of the modern is both determined by and a reaction to other international representations of the modern, in particular, those emanating from and associated with the United States of America (Ivy 1995:11). As a category of social practice and as a social practice of categories, which are the evolving products of dynamic relationships between different levels of social agents—states, cultures, and corporations, for example—modernity cannot be either totally homogenizing or fully known (Tsing 1993:88). Moreover, evading expectations to the contrary requires paying “careful attention to particular cultural agendas” (Tsing 1993:88). These agendas are much in evidence in anthropological writing about witchcraft in Africa, which, in situating witchcraft practices within an imposed category of the modern, makes claims to acknowledge the modernity of Africa while at the same time effectively denying the bases of local processes of categorization.

In emphasizing the modernity of witchcraft, anthropologists render witchcraft discourses and practices not only as discourses about modernity (cf. Sanders 2003) but also as the modality of being modern for particular people in particular places (Van Binsbergen 2001:241). Various problems attend this kind of approach, apart from the obvious imposition of categories and assertions of intentionality about social practices that are not necessarily oriented toward such levels of signification (cf. Green 1996). Indeed, it is the intention of the analyst, not of the informant, to confront the categorical assumptions of a Western sensibility through the relocation of such practices within the category of the modern and, hence, as being about modernity. Further, although such accounts emphasize the modernity of cultural practices more often popularly associated with the unmodern, they generally do not examine the local manifestations of modernization. Such tactics certainly provoke reflexivity around the meaning of modernity. But in creating categorical unease (cf. Ivy 1995:1), they create a situation in which not only is the modern anticipated but also what is claimed as modern is incomparable across contexts as very different kinds of knowledge. Latour (1993:91) has characterized this kind of anthropology, in which like is not compared with like, as asymmetrical. He proposes that one way out of the trap of such an anthropology, which accords a different status to knowledge and practice in modern and nonmodern societies, is to ensure that anthropology does not differentiate on this basis in its objects of study. Similar practices oriented at similar ends should, he asserts, be the bases of comparison cross-culturally. Although this goal may be problematic to achieve in relation to witchcraft and other practices of the occult, which have radically different statuses in different social and political contexts, it is certainly possible in relation to explicit projects of modernization.

Modernity and modernization are not abstract universals or categories that refer to globally identical phenomena and processes. Notions of modernity and associated practices are embedded within specific cultural constructions that vary historically and geographically. Modernity is not
something that simply happens as a consequence of other abstract processes reified as agents of causation (cf. Tsing 1993:888). Where the category of the modern exists, it is enmeshed within specific institutional forms intended to realize its achievement as a vision of progress (cf. Rabinow 1989). We have shown how these forms in Tanzania derive from international visions of modernization in relation to techniques of governance and public-service delivery, on the one hand, and, on the other, how communities and individuals appropriate development-inspired notions about modernity through the idea of the project (mradil). In Tanzania, as elsewhere, ideas about modernity and how to achieve it are perpetually changing. Dynamic visions of progress inform the transformation of individual lifestyles as people achieve development, just as they inform the innovations introduced by Magungu in his effort to modernize the delivery of Kalembwana’s services.

Witchcraft-suppression practices in southern Tanzania have become part of a particular discourse about modernization and a means through which a modern status can be achieved by some individuals. This is not because witchcraft is necessarily about modernity or because southern Tanzanians have no other means of engagement with the modern. People in southern Tanzania engage with current notions of modernity in all kinds of ways, from accessing debates on the radio to making use of modernized facilities at local schools or hospitals or choosing to keep “modern” breeds of chickens (kuku wa kisasa). Within this discursive space, dealing with witchcraft helps people modernize, just as modernizing antiwitchcraft services seems the right thing to do in a modernizing nation.

These visions of modernity are changing. Socialist planned modernization through agricultural development has been superseded by the transnational vision of liberalization and reforms in the practices of governance, which are adapted as they inform new visions of progress. If viewed as indicating not a state but an imaginary rupture with a representation of the past (Meyer 2000:242, after Habermas), modernity, like tomorrow, never comes. It is not intended to. Modernity, here, conveys a desired outcome, a vision of future, a project (cf. Asad 2002:59). These orientations are explicit in the projects of modernization current in Tanzania, just as they were present in previous incarnations of modernization. The collapse of socialism and economic changes mean that people are freer now to take control of their own projects and achieve modernity for themselves. By studying how people make modernity and the institutions and social relations involved in particular processes of modernization, rather than assuming that some of the things people do are in fact about modernity, we can begin to erode the asymmetry of anthropology and embark on truly comparative social analysis.

Notes

Acknowledgments. The fieldwork on which this article is based was carried out between July and August 2003. It would not have been possible without the help and support of numerous individuals and institutions, for which we are extremely grateful. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology and the University of Dar es Salaam. The respective District Commissioners’ Offices of Ulanga and Kilombero and the staff of Ulanga and Kilombero District Councils kindly provided us with letters of identification and generously granted us the time on several occasions. We are indebted to Shaihu Magungu, Sadat Magungu, Saidi Kapindula, and Hamisa Yusufu Kyelula for their cooperation and openness to this project over many years. Particular thanks are owed Justin Kuoko and Eugen Chalala for their contribution to fieldwork in the longer term. Thanks are also owed to all of the residents of Mahenge, Mwaya, Ihowanja, Ifakara, and Malinyi, where the research was carried out, for their cooperation and hospitality. The research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom’s Global Poverty Research Programme. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the session on “Religion and Visions of Progress” at the 102nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, November 19–23, 2003, and at seminars at Manchester University and the School of Oriental and African Studies. We are grateful to participants for their comments and to Janice Boddy for her critical insights as our AAA discussant. Thanks also to Lorne Larson, Sam Maghibimbi, David Hulme, Katherine Snyder, Stephen Harrison, David Mosse, Claire Mercer, Jamie Monson, and Nicky Oliver for insights that have helped shape the analysis and to Virginia Dominguez and her excellent editorial team for their clarity in sharpening the argument.

1. For an overview of recent anthropological studies of witchcraft, see Bond and Ciekawy 2001:13–17.

2. Of course, anthropologists have approached the constitution of diverse modernities and notions of the “modern” ethnographically; see, for example, Miller 1994 on Trinidad and Ferguson 1999 on Zambia.

3. For a critical perspective on the way that modernity comes to assume explanatory significance in such accounts, see Englund 1996.

4. On the relation between rationality and a presumed irrational “culture” as the basis of Otherness, see Scott 2003.

5. But see Englund (1996), who makes the point that what is being critiqued by community condemnations of consumption is not consumption per se but failure to meet traditional moral obligations, rendering witchcraft allegations a critique not of modernity, but of morality.

6. Bruno Latour’s comment that “atemporality, in itself, has nothing temporal about it. It is a means of connecting entities and filing them away” (1993:75) is relevant here.

7. The majority of witches are adults, but in some Ulanga and Kilombero communities people say that children can become witches through inheritance. Interestingly, we were told by several people that shaving may actually foster witchcraft by inheritance, as middle-aged parents who get taken for shaving instruct their children in the use of the occult things that the adults will no longer be able to use after being shaved. This situation explains, we were informed, why at least two decades of shaving and access to a range of antiwitchcraft practitioners over much of the 20th century had not been able to eradicate witchcraft.

Among the Nyakyusa in the 1930s witchcraft powers were said to be derived from a python embedded within the human body (Wilson 1963).
The notion that communities to the east have more powerful witchcraft, which they sell to their western neighbors, is widespread, certainly in southern Tanzania. In Ulanga, people say that witchcraft comes from Nzindo communities to the east, which are said to get it from Mweru and others along the coast, which, in turn obtain witchcraft medicines and substances from Pemba. People on Pemba are said to get their witchcraft powers even further east, from the Gulf states and India.


9. Witchcraft here, as elsewhere, is ultimately about murder; the ultimate objective of witches is to kill their victims. In much of Africa witches are associated with cannibalism, grave robbing, and vampirism of various sorts.

10. On the conceptualization of medicines as transformative substances in Pogoro traditional practice, see Green 1996.


12. Bibi means “senior woman” or “grandmother.” Kalembwana was widely known as simply the “Bibi.” “Going to the Bibi’s” is a euphemism for going for shaving.

13. For a critique of the distinction some analysts have made between witchcraft-suppression practices and the movements that perform them, see Green 1997.

14. Green observed this traffic during a brief revisit to Ihowanja in July 1996.

15. Kalembwana’s death was reported in all of the national papers at the time.

16. In Kiswahili mambo refers to things in the abstract, “matters” as opposed to “things” (vitu).


18. As part of this research, we visited Ifakara and Kiberege in Kilombero District, and Mahenge, Mwaya, Malinyi, and Ihowanja in Ulanga District.

19. In Kiswahili mganga means “doctor,” in general, but is commonly used to refer to traditional healers, uwanga wa asili or uwanga wa jadi, or “local” healers, uwanga wa kienyeji. For an account of the categorization of healers, see Green (2000b).

20. Kipisi refers to a shortened train that operates only in Tanzania, unlike the full-length trains that go all the way to Zambia.

21. Ihowanja area clients embark at Mlimba, one-day’s walk from Ihowanja. Conversely, when Ihowanja was the main center, clients used TAZARA to reach it, embarking at Songea, Kisaki, and Ifakara and alighting at Mlimba.

22. Jamie Monson, a historian of Ulanga and the Kilombero Valley, is currently writing a social history of TAZARA.

23. The Songea branch operator is not, in fact, a descendant of Kalembwana herself, as this brother shares only a father with Magungu, Kalembwana’s grandson through his mother.

24. Some slight divergences in practice and prohibitions distinguish Mwaya and Kiberege, but what seems to matter is the idea that practice is the same in each place and that the medicine used and the ritual of shaving are, in all key respects, identical. An example of divergence is the prohibition against wearing shoes in the camp and homestead area in Mwaya, whereas shoes are required in Kiberege. We were informed that shoes are worn in Kiberege because of the requirements of hygiene and the desire to keep the newly constructed toilet block clean.

25. The coin component informed a style of witchcraft accusation dating to the time when single shillings were in circulation and when the ant wickedcraft fee always included two shillings for the spirits. Then, touching the head with two one-shilling coins was understood as an accusation of witchcraft (see Green 1994). The practice is still current in Ulanga and Kilombero, but two 100-shilling pieces are used.

26. The division of authority and responsibility among the descendants of Kalembwana is currently disputed.

27. People who come for shaving or treatment cook for themselves.

28. The assistant wears a sheet or male wrap (kikoi). This is not the usual dress of the majority of men coming for treatment, being associated with pastoralists who have very different notions of witchcraft. Most men who come for shaving dress in a bedsheet wrapped around the body during the ritual element.

29. For an account of the symbolism invoked in shaving rituals, see Green 1997, 2003b. Here it suffices to note that such dress evokes funerals at their most polluting, prior to the burial of the body, and the obligation of women to assume the pollution of mourning.

30. Since 1997, a specialist who previously had been a collaborator of the Bibi, has been shaving. Bibi Nangonyani works closely with Kalembwana’s descendants in Ihowanja, although she delivers services in her own right and under her own, not Kalembwana’s, name.

31. The ward (kata) is an administrative unit of local government above the village and below the division.

32. This pattern was evidenced by the book each practice keeps to record the names and villages of people who come for shaving.

33. Some of these relationships up to the mid-1990s are explored in Green 1997. Green will address recent changes in the postsocialist context in a future paper.

34. The chicken has to be a traditional, in the sense of local, breed (ua kienyeji). Kuku wa kisasa (imported, lit. “modern” or “now-ish” chickens) are not acceptable.

35. This view was challenged by district staff in Ulanga and in Kilombero. They said that ending the requirement that people who went for shaving had to contribute their labor, often for several days, was a political decision by the authorities. However it happened, ending this onerous requirement has fed into the new discourse about services and supporting clients. Witchcraft accusations commonly follow a funeral. Consequently, people coming for shaving are not only reeling from the emotional shock of being accused of witchcraft or having accused others but they are also likely to have been recently bereaved. For a fuller account of the dynamics of accuser and accused relationships, see Green 1997.

36. Mzee Saidi Kapindula, senior grandson of Kalembwana, informed us that the certificates issued at Ihowanja retain the old wording. Ihowanja is not considered by Magungu or the other grandchildren to be part of the new branch system. This is a complicated issue that is beyond the scope of this article.

37. For an account on the significance of medicine among Pogoro communities in Ulanga, see Green 1996.

38. Several other waganga are engaged in antwichcraft activities in the region. Their authority to shave witchcraft is disputed by other specialists.

39. Witchcraft-suppression services are institutionalized in several senses here, first, in terms of their relationship with local institutions, such as the various local government structures that previously authorized disputants to go for shaving and that currently register and license traditional healers. Second, witchcraft-suppression practices are institutionalized in Erving Goffman’s (1961:16) sense of the term, as they take place in highly
structured and controlled social settings, governed by the authority of inheritors of various powers to shave. Finally, witchcraft-suppression practices are an established and dynamic constituent of the social institution of witchcraft in the districts of Ulanga, Songea, and Kilombero.

40. District staff in Ulanga were more ambivalent. Current policy, to encourage individuals reluctant to agree to shaving to pursue a legal claim against their accusers results in a protracted process of revenge via the courts that has mixed success. The majority of people involved in witchcraft disputes agree voluntarily to go for shaving.

41. These techniques are also represented as a science, being part of the scientific discipline of “management” and of the way that knowledge about science is delivered in educational settings, through manuals, workbooks, and exercises.

42. We owe this insight to anthropologist Aud Talle, who, in a conversation with Green, pointed out the pervasive significance of the idea of “project” beyond the formal development sphere in East Africa. An example of its application to the sphere of religion is Green’s description of an Assemblies of God pastor who uses the idea of the “project” to emphasize the difference between his church and Roman Catholicism, saying that “we don’t have projects (miradi). Our project is the spirit” (2003b:51).

43. These traditional models center on various modes of divination, which may entail possession by spirits. For an overview of modes of practice and diagnosis among healers in Dar es Salaam, see Swantz 1990.

44. Under the Traditional and Alternative Medicines Act of 2002, which has yet to become fully operational, traditional healers will be regulated by the Ministry of Health as opposed to the department of culture within the Ministry of Education and Culture.

45. Traditional healing in Tanzania has always had a symbiotic relationship with the hospital system (Green 2000b). Traditional healers try to refer patients to a hospital when they feel that patients are unlikely to benefit from treatment they can offer, a stance that is actively promoted by district medical officers.

46. *Kisasa*, for obvious reasons, also conveys foreignness; hence, items from abroad even if old, often merit the tag of “modern,” in contrast to the indigenous and traditional.

References cited

Appadurai, Arjun


Apter, Andrew


Asad, Talal


Auslander, Mark


Bond, George Clement, and Diane M. Ciekawy


Boyer, Pascal


Bukurura, S.


Caplan, Pat


Chachage, C. S. L.


Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff


Dolan, Catherine S.


Douglas, Mary


Englund, Harri


Englund, Harri, and James Leach


Farmer, Paul


Favret Saada, Jeanne


Feierman, Steven


Ferguson, James


Fisher, Eleanor, and Alberto Arce


Foucault, Michel


Geschiere, Peter

1997 *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult
The birth of the “salon” • American Ethnologist

Marwick, Max

Mesaki, Simeon


Meyer, Birgit

Miller, Daniel

Minogue, Martin, Charles Polidano, and David Hulme

Moore, Henrietta L., and Todd Sanders

Moore, S. F.

Pedersen, Duncan, and Veronica Baruffati

Rabinow, Paul

Redmayne, Alison

Richards, Audrey

Richards, Paul

Rowlands, Michael, and Jean-Paul Warnier

Rutherford, Blair

Sanders, Todd


Scott, David

Semali, I.
Stambach, Amy
Swantz, Lloyd
Tripp, Aili Mari
Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt
Van Binsbergen, William
van Dijk, Rijk
West, Harry G.
Willis, Roy Geoffrey
Wilson, Monica Hunter
World Bank

accepted December 28, 2004
final version submitted January 22, 2005

Maia Green
Department of Anthropology
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom
Maia.green@manchester.ac.uk

Simeon Mesaki
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Dar es Salaam
P.O. Box 35043
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
mesakis@yahoo.com