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Slain in the Spirit:

Pentecostal-evangelical Christianity and the Rise of Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence in Melanesia

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Abstract

Within Melanesia, there has been a startling rise in new forms of brutal, dehumanizing, public violence directed towards accused witches and sorcerers in recent decades. This new suite of horrific practices departs radically from traditional practices and is much more widespread geographically. In this thesis, I argue that the rapid growth of Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical forms of Christianity are a crucial factor in the emergence and diffusion of this new violence. Building upon existing studies, I show how the deepening influence of these Christian modalities in Melanesia has intensified the ontological reality of witchcraft and sorcery, powerfully associated witchcraft and sorcery with Satan and sin, thereby constructing these realms as the epitome of evil, and portrayed witchcraft and sorcery, and the individuals accused of practicing them, as entities that must be continuously and viciously defended against and destroyed through spiritual warfare. I argue that all of these attributes provide a powerfully enabling religious framework for the real life violence that is enacted upon accused witches and sorcerers. To make this point even stronger, I also show in the thesis how, in extreme cases, these Christians have sometimes condoned, facilitated and personally committed brutalized violence on suspected witches and sorcerers.

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Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive

This whakataukī (proverb) embodies the core purpose of this thesis and pursuit for higher education, in that it is not to solely fill my kete mātauranga (basket of knowledge) or rourou (food basket) but that it is for all of my whānau to thrive from.

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1. Introduction

> Most often the sin and the sinner appear to be inseparable in the eye of some churches and, by their precepts, both are to be pulled out, root and stem, and fed to the fire, hung or drowned. (Kolma, 2019, para. 7)

Figure 1 Sorcery-related violence in Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG)

Note. A woman who was accused of practising sorcery by people in her village, in August 2012. From *Crying Meri: Violence Against Women in Papua New Guinea* by Vlad Sokhin, 2012 (http://www.vladsokhin.com/work/crying-meri/). Copyright 2020 by Vlad Sokhin.

Figure 1 shows a woman accused of sorcery, blindfolded and naked, with a deep *bus naip* (machete) wound on her lower back. During this incident she was also beaten and burned with hot iron bars. She is the centre of a spectacle of violence, sitting in front of a crowd of onlookers who are staring at her in this profoundly vulnerable state. They see her as evil, inhuman, and deserving of this ghastly fate. There were plans to burn her alive, but a group of Catholics had intervened. The woman was rescued and survived the ordeal by fleeing the province to hide from her tormentors. As for the torture that she experienced, no one was prosecuted.

While deeply disturbing, this kind of violence has now engulfed contemporary Melanesia and speaks to a tragic new reality facing individuals accused of witchcraft and sorcery: brutal, horrific violence, inflicted with a range of tools and weaponry, enacted in public by large vigilante mobs, and designed to utterly humiliate, dehumanize, and annihilate. While emerging against the backdrop of a long standing culture of domestic, gender-based, and inter-tribal violence (Jolly, 2012), regional and international media outlets, human rights organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as academics, particularly anthropologists, all agree that this kind of violence, despite being severely underreported (Forsyth, 2015, p. 335; Haley, 2010) has become both more frequent and more widespread. In this light, Papua New Guinean scholar and Lutheran Pastor Jack Urame (2015) argues that

> Today sorcery-related violence, in particular witch-hunts, are spreading from one place to another. In societies where sorcery killing seldom happened, it occurs quite frequently today, and in places where it was never experienced before, it is beginning to happen. These new trends of sorcery violence bring new challenges and therefore it is important to understand the underlying factors of the increase and spread of sorcery killing. (p. 28)

Following Urame's suggestive lead, we are forced to ask: what exactly is driving this increase in new forms of violence? It is this question that lies at the core of my thesis.

Existing anthropological research has explained the escalation in terms of a wide range of social, economic, and cultural factors, including socio-economic dislocation that has enabled disenfranchised men to act violently (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a); the collapse of traditional authority structures which allows perpetrators to perform violence (McDonnell, 2015); a culture of silence whereby people quietly accept witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as customary behaviour (Urame, 2015); new kinds of economic inequality that foster interpersonal jealousies, resulting in accusations (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a; McDonnell, 2015; Taylor & Araújo, 2016; Urame, 2015); as well as urbanization and land disputes in rural areas (Auka, Gore & Koralyo, 2015; McDonnell, 2015; Taylor & Araújo, 2016). Health and legal factors have also been highlighted by other observers, such as the overarching beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery as causes of sickness and death (Stewart & Strathern, 1999); declining medical services (Cox & Phillips, 2015); the rising HIV epidemic, which largely affects those otherwise supposed to be young and healthy (Haley, 2010); the lack of law and order (Jorgensen, 2014) caused by the limitations of police (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a; Urame, 2015); and inadequate legislation (Forsyth, 2015; Keenan, 2015; McDonnell, 2015); and,

lastly, the broad space opened for the practice of magical violence through colonial pacification (Keenan, 2015; Stewart & Strathern, 1999).

While there are a plethora of factors identified by academics to explain the rise in new forms of violence against accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia, there is a key influence that few have given sustained attention, namely, the deepening influence of Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical variants of Christianity throughout the region. Hereafter these three forms of Christianity – Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical – will be referred to, following Coleman et al. (2015), as P/e. The growth in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence has been mirrored by a corresponding increase in P/e Christianity especially since the 1970s (Douglas, 2001; Eriksen & MacCarthy, 2019; Macdonald, 2019). Eriksen and MacCarthy (2019) state that, "the new religious landscape developing in Melanesia in the period from the 1970s until today has been dominated by Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and prayer groups" (p. 347). These forms of Christianity are thus relatively new to Melanesia compared to mainline, mission based denominations, however, they have now engulfed the region. For example, Gore (2019) argues that "the growth of Pentecostalism in the South Pacific Islands exceeds church growth rates anywhere else in the world" (p. 297). Similarly, Gibbs (2004) compared Papua New Guinea censuses from 1966 to 2000 and showed that citizens who identified as "Other Christian", a category which included "Evangelical Alliance, Baptist, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons" significantly increased from 229,165 people in 1966 to 1,275,222 people in 2000 (p. 97), accounting for 25.8% of all Christians in the country in that year. More recently, Gallagher and Gallagher (2019, p. 325), using statistical information from 2010, have shown how Pentecostal and charismatic followers alone account for more than 1.8 million people within Papua New Guinea, or 20% of the total 8.7 million population (see also Barker, 2012). These various examples clearly show a rapid explosion in P/e Christianity within Melanesia in the last 50 years.

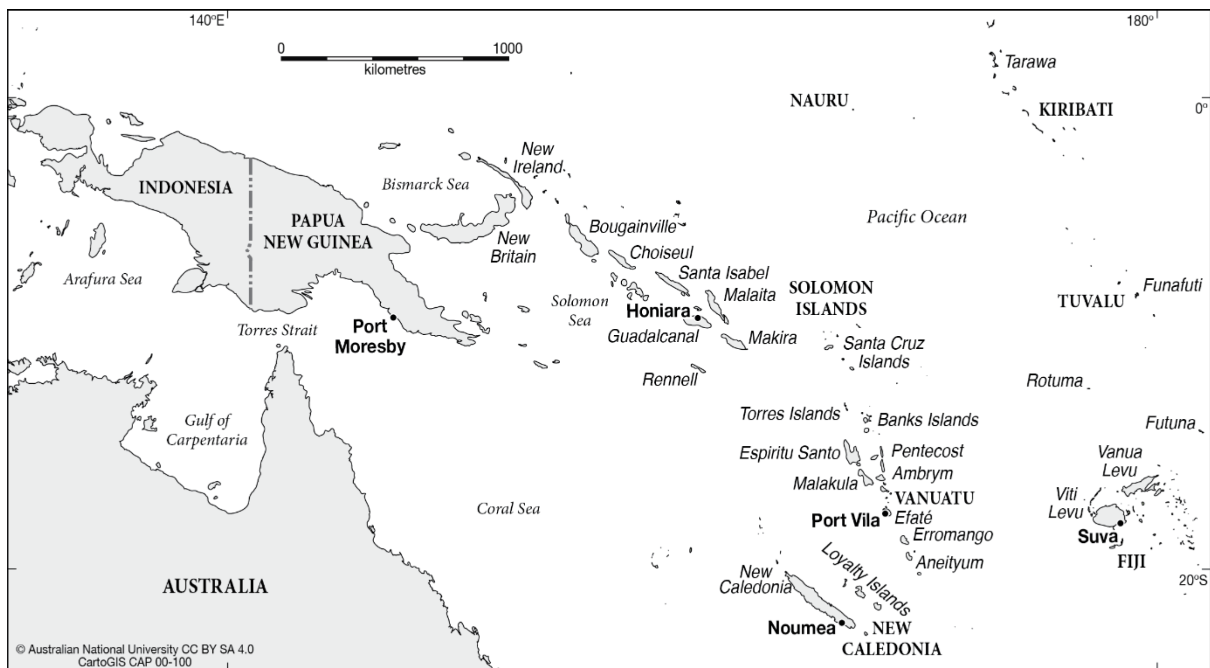
The influence of P/e Christianity has also infiltrated other mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches, thus indicating the wider influence of these forms of Christianity in the region. For example, Eriksen and MacCarthy (2019) show that among Trobriand Islanders of Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea, "most United Church [Methodist and Presbyterian] congregants now consider themselves 'revived' and practice a faith that incorporates many aspects that could be considered Charismatic" (p. 346). Similarly, Bratrud (2019) states that while over 1/3 of the population in Port Vila, Vanuatu are affiliated with Pentecostal

churches, this statistic does not include the "'Pentecostalization' of the Presbyterian, Catholic and Anglican churches in the country" (p. 111). These statements show then that not only has P/e Christianity grown exponentially in Melanesia but it has left a permanent imprint upon Melanesian Christianity as a whole. When one considers that over 90% of Melanesians are Christian (Trompf, 2012), this amounts to a Pentecostalisation of Melanesian society.

My argument is that P/e Christianity provides a set of moral, ritual and theological terms that synergise with the brutal torture and killing of accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia. This occurs through a reinforcement and intensification of the ontological reality of witchcraft and sorcery practices; the extreme association of Melanesian traditional religion and more specifically, witchcraft and sorcery, with Satan, sin, and evil; the use of aggressive ritual practices such as spiritual warfare to destroy witchcraft and sorcery and deliver society from those agents believed to be practicing them; and, finally, the direct involvement of P/e Christians in recent witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as complicit witnesses, facilitators and participants. My argument thus speaks directly to Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes' (2017a) recent observation that "what is missing from this Melanesian literature, in our view, is a perspective on the underlying dimensions of religious change and worldviews in these new forms of violence" (p. 15). This thesis is thus a direct contribution towards this lacunae and examines how these particular forms of Christianity have shaped Melanesian people's attitudes of suspected witches and sorcerers and contributed towards their violent treatment, in particular, by leading people to think of accused witches as potent, hyper-real expressions of evil that need to be destroyed for the safety of the community.

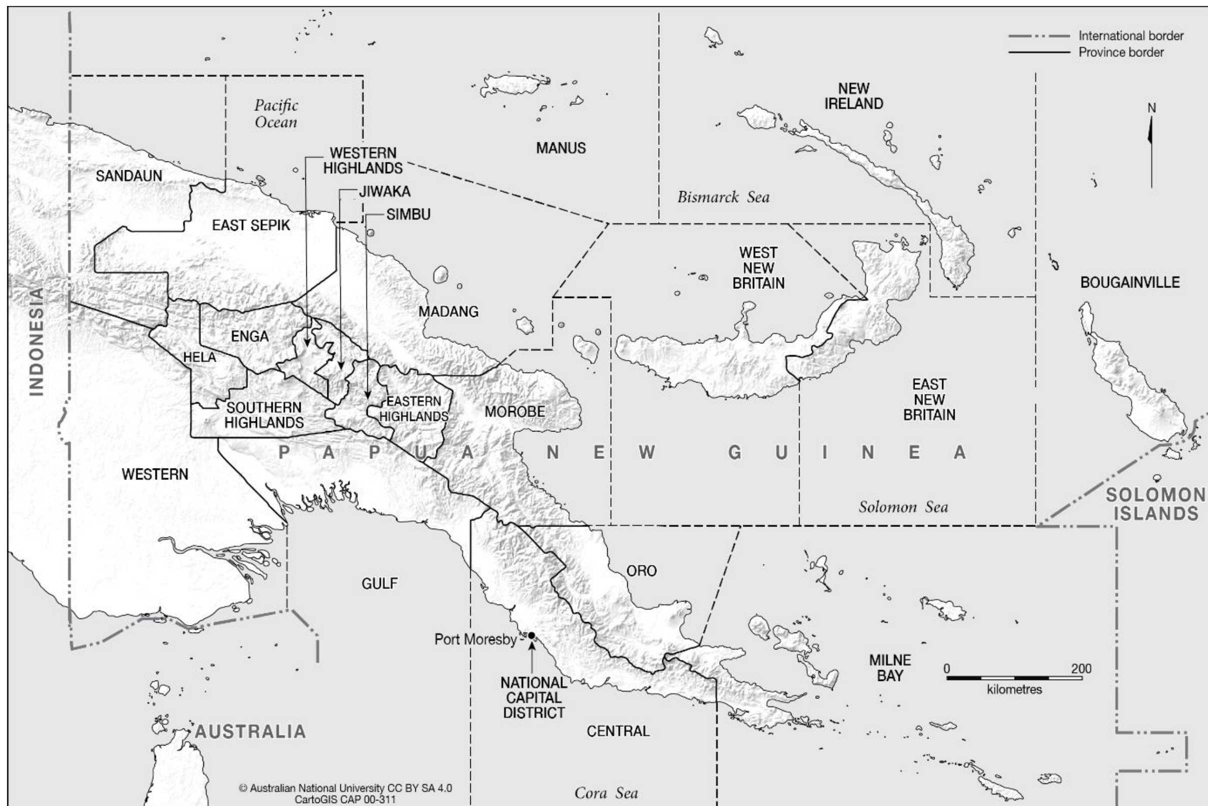
My thesis focuses upon the region of Melanesia (see Figure 2. below), especially the countries of Papua New Guinea (see Figure 3. below), Vanuatu (see Figure 4. below) and Solomon Islands (see Figure 5. below), as it is within these places that the overwhelming majority of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence incidents in the contemporary era are occurring (Bratrud, 2017; Eriksen & Rio, 2017). There also appears to be a particular concentration of brutalized violence against accused witches and sorcerers in the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea, something I discuss in Chapter 3 (Gibbs, 2012; Haley, 2010).

Figure 2 Map of Melanesia



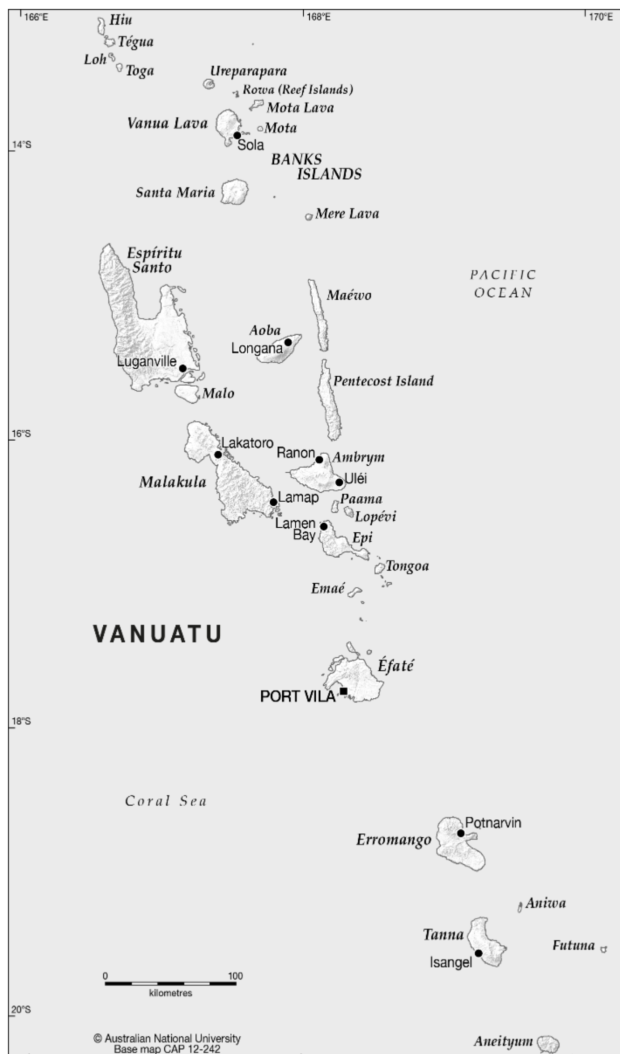
Note. From *Melanesia*, by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, n.d. (http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/melanesia). CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 3 Map of Papua New Guinea



Note. From *PNG Provinces*, by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, n.d. (http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/png-provinces). CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 4 Map of Vanuatu



Note. From *Vanuatu base*, by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, n.d. (http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/vanuatu-base). CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 5 Map of Solomon Islands

Note. From *Solomon Islands base*, by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, n.d. (http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/solomon-islands-base). CC BY-SA 4.0.

Before proceeding, I would first like to touch on global perspectives of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in relation to Christianity as it is important to set the global backdrop against which I discuss Melanesia. The intersection of witchcraft-related violence and Christianity has been occurring as early as the 5th century in Europe (Sanders, 1995). From the 14th until the 19th century this violence intensified, with Christians torturing and killing accused witches (Ben-Yehuda, 1980; Douglas, 1970/2010; Games, 2010; Henderson, 2016; Migliore, 1983; Sanders, 1995; Stewart & Strathern, 2004). This era saw the Catholic Church issue a papal bull in 1484 that legalized the killing of suspected witches (Kors & Peters, 2001), as well as the notorious European Witch-craze, which resulted in the death of an estimated 100,000 - 200,000 accused witches between the 14th- 17th centuries (Ben-Yehuda,

1980; Hutton, 2017). Similar Christian violence also occurred in North America in the 17th and 18th centuries (Games, 2010; Rapley, 2007), including the infamous 1692 Salem Witch trials, that were based on Puritan beliefs and resulted in the hanging of 19 accused witches (Boyer & Nissenbaum, 1976).

The intersection of Christianity, witchcraft and sorcery, and violence has been observed in a wide range of cultural contexts outside Europe. The Africanist anthropological literature has rigorously explored the significance of witchcraft and sorcery within contemporary society (Anderson, 2006; Baloyi, 2019; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993; Geschiere, 1997; Meyer, 1999; Moore & Sanders, 2001). The intense interest that P/e Christians have in identifying and ritually eradicating witchcraft and sorcery has also been noted (see Asamoah-Gyadu 2015, p. 26; Dijk 2006, p. 104; Onyinah 2004, p. 332). While these accounts do not make an explicit connection to how this may translate into real-life physical violence enacted on suspected agents, research has shown there is an increase in "brutal" and "barbaric" violence towards witches within recent decades (Niehaus, 2006, p. 192). Moreover, Federici (2018) states that the torture and murder of alleged witches "intensified across Africa in the 1990s in ways unprecedented in the precolonial period … according to one account, between 1991 and 2001, at least twenty-three thousand 'witches' were killed in Africa, the figure being considered a conservative one" (p. 63). Known forms of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence include mutilation, sexual violence, stoning and burning accused witches to death, which also parallels the Melanesian context (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Behrend, 2011; Niehaus, 2006). This nexus of factors has also been observed for Amazonia (Taussig, 2010; Whitehead, 2002; Whitehead & Wright, 2004; Wright, 2013), India (Chaudhuri, 2012; Varma, 2007), Indonesia (Bubandt, 2014; Kapferer, 2003), Sri Lanka (Kapferer, 2003) and the Caribbean (Corten & Marshall-Fratani, 2001; Onyinah, 2013). What we can say then, is that the surge in witchcraft and sorcery related violence and its connection to P/e Christianity in Melanesia, while especially intense, is part of a broader global trend in this direction.

1.1 P/e Christianity and Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence in Melanesia

While the interrelationship between witchcraft and sorcery and P/e Christianity is an established topic of enquiry within Melanesianist anthropology (Bratrud, 2017, 2019; Forsyth & Eves, 2015b; Geschiere, 2017; MacCarthy, 2017; Macdonald, 2015; Strong, 2017), the

specific relationship between P/e Christianity and the violence associated with witchcraft and sorcery-related accusations is only beginning to receive concentrated attention. Rio (2014) expresses thoughts that align closely to my argument:

> There are good reasons for thinking that recent up-scaling of beating, burning or killing of witches in Melanesia can be related to the Pentecostal beliefs that align witchcraft with evil and individual morality, even though this connection has not yet been articulated in academic writing. (p. 331)

Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes (2017a) also trace out the confluence of these factors in stating how:

> the arrival of a wave of Pentecostal Christianity over recent decades has also changed the landscape of witchcraft and sorcery in this region … There are reports that a new form of aggressive opposition is taking hold between church movements and witchcraft, and in the last decade, the issue of witch killing and torture in Melanesia has caught the attention of both the media and anthropologists. (p. 15)

As another example, Jorgensen (2014) highlights witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in the context of Telefolmin society, Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea:

> I am convinced that one of the things that changed between 2004 and 2011 was that an 'anti-witch' package—that is, a set of ideas about conducting violence against witchcraft suspects—had made its way to Telefomin … the main elements of this package were a template for the use of torture and violence against suspected witches —rather than a set of ideas about witchcraft *per se.* (p. 276-277)

Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes (2017a) expand upon these initial thoughts made by Jorgensen to connect Pentecostalism to this upsurge of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in Telefomin, by saying,

> Jorgensen asks what motivates the mobs of boys to carry out torture and kill their fellow villagers. Here, it should be recalled, the period when the boys were growing up was marked by an intense Pentecostal activity, in a nationwide Manichean epoch in which evil was targeted through individualized searches for moral ruptures. (p. 15)

This supporting passage essentially states that these groups of young, disenfranchised men, armed with weapons, are enacting brutal violence on suspected witches because this realm of cultural belief was labelled by P/e Christianity as the source of potently evil, menacing

spiritual forces that need to be ritually or physically annihilated. This is a key idea that lies at the heart of my argument.

Finally, Eriksen and Rio (2017) argue that P/e Christianity has amplified witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in the Vanuatu context:

> The Pentecostal way of life is a form of constant warfare, which also results in the direct attacks on the specifically local diversity of spiritual forms. Pentecostalism invests a lot of energy into this local diversity but only in order to attack it and try to overcome it with its own form of universalism. In the recent decade in Vanuatu, this has also resulted in violent attacks on accused witches, and sometimes even the murder of witches. (p. 202)

The anthropological research discussed above illuminates the direct relationship that P/e Christianity plays in exacerbating the violence associated with witchcraft and sorcery accusations in Melanesia. While the literature on this particular interrelationship remains small, interest in the topic continues to grow and my own thesis directly contributes to this emerging field of enquiry through advancing a set of specific factors present within P/e Christianity that directly shape violent attitudes and practices.

1.2 P/e Christianity: A Template for Torture

Expanding on the important leads discussed above, the purpose of this section is to identify the core theological and ritual attributes that define P/e Christianity and which position it as a powerful influence in intensifying violence enacted upon accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia.

As a family of Christian traditions, P/e Christianity, especially its Pentecostal-charismatic modalities, has undergone enormous growth over the last century, in the process reshaping global Christianity (Jenkins, 2011). Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life (2011) state that there were over 500 million adherents of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity worldwide in 2011. This corresponds to 26.7% of the world Christian population and 8.5% of the world population. Allan Anderson, a leading authority on global Pentecostalism, supports predictions that up to 828 million people globally will have converted to Pentecostalism by 2025 (Anderson, 2013, p. 307). This shows how expansive these forms of Christianity are and also how much more widespread they will become in the future.

Evangelicalism is a renewal movement that emerged in the 1740s as a distinct form of Protestant Christianity (Bebbington, 1989; Noll, 2015). As a direct result of expanding European imperialism, the evangelical mission movement soon rapidly globalized the evangelical faith from Europe and North America to Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Derived from the Holiness movement of the 19th century, Pentecostalism emerged as a form of 'supercharged', experientialist and extremely pietistic evangelical Christianity (Synan, 1997). Since Pentecostalism stemmed from evangelicalism, Pentecostals share many foundational theological ideas such as being "born again" and giving particular emphasis towards the working of the Holy Spirit (Eriksen & MacCarthy, 2019, p. 351; Anderson, 2013). However, Pentecostalism is more specifically concerned with the *charismata*, or spiritual gifts, such as healing, prophecy, visions, deliverance from evil spirits, and of specific importance, speaking in tongues (Bartle, 2005; Rio, MacCarthy & Blanes, 2017a). From the 1960s onwards, the spiritual gifts that defined Pentecostal worship started to infiltrate mainstream churches, a process known as the Charismatic Movement. Bartoș (2015) thus describes Christians in the context of the Charismatic Movement as people who have "experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit without leaving the denomination to which they belonged" (p. 32-33). From this, the neo-charismatic movement known as the "Third Wave" of Charismatic Christianity, or the Signs and Wonders Movement, emerged from the 1980s onwards, which is described by Jorgensen (2005) as a "burgeoning of pentecostalist churches across vast regions of the globe" (p. 445). Wagner (1983), who coined the term "Third Wave", explains this movement, by saying,

> I see the third wave of the eighties as an opening of the straight-line evangelicals and other Christians to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that the Pentecostals and charismatics have experienced, but without becoming either charismatic or Pentecostal. (p. 2)

Christians within this movement experienced a shift from reformed and conservative evangelical teachings to then focusing on supernatural signs and wonders such as prophecy, healing and discernment (Jorgensen, 2005).

I argue that the theological and ritual orientations and sensibilities shared by P/e variants of Christianity provide a powerful explanation as to why new forms of brutal torture and violence inflicted upon accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia has seen a remarkable increase over recent decades. I maintain that these forms of Christianity lead their adherents to approach witchcraft and sorcery in intensely combative and dehumanizing ways, thereby providing a conducive ideological and ritual template for the performance of real acts

of violence. The three attributes I focus on are: (1) A deeply experientialist theology that positions spiritual forces of good and evil as hyper-real entities in a constant battle with each other; (2) the specific construction of witchcraft and sorcery as the epitome of this evil; and, finally, (3) an elaborate repertoire of ritual techniques of spiritual warfare designed to annihilate evil spirits and forces (Eriksen & MacCarthy, 2019; Hovey, 1990; Robbins, 2004).

P/e Christianity is deeply concerned with the presence and action of spiritual forces in the world. Archer (2015) describes Pentecostalism as an “affective-experiential” mode of Christianity that exerts intense focus on spiritual forces in the world (p. 322). The key positive spiritual force is the Holy Spirit which they honour over the spiritual powers of Satan that are deemed evil (Eriksen & Rio, 2017). Within this pneumatological scheme, spiritual realities are powerfully amplified and in constant war with each other. The workings of the Holy Spirit are viscerally and intensely experienced, and sought after at all times, while the workings of Satan are similarly seen as always present, lurking in wait to imperil and endanger P/e believers. The P/e Christian, more than adherents of any other popular Christian tradition, lives in a world saturated in spiritual experience, both ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ and is thus more subject to arranging their lives according to their ongoing influence.

P/e Christianity’s experientially focused cosmology, defined by a perpetual battle between the forces of good and evil, positions witchcraft and sorcery as especially potent manifestations of satanic power (Bratrud, 2017; Gore, 2019). Literature has shown that witches and sorcerers have been reimagined from being evil spiritual forces that cause sickness, death, and misfortune, to those who, more specifically, perform the “work of Satan” (Gibbs & Wailoni, 2009, p. 84), and are “demons” (Eriksen & Rio, 2017, p. 201). This process of aligning traditional aspects of religion with Satan or the Devil is known as diabolisation and is a process central to the construction of accused witches and sorcerers as evil figures deserving of annihilation (Macdonald, 2015; Meyer, 1992, 1999). In her work among the Ewe of Ghana, Meyer explains the concept as follows:

> The Devil was the link between the missionaries’ and the Ewe’s worldview: to state that Ewe religion was a work of Satan made it meaningful in the light of Christianity, and subordinate to it … The missionaries diabolised the Ewe’s religious concepts and, above all, religious practices, and this resulted in the overall construction of Ewe religion as ‘heathendom’ and implied an undifferentiated attack on the Ewe’s own ideas of good and evil and ways of dealing with them. By diabolising Ewe religion as a whole, the morals entailed by it were declared satanic and inappropriate for Christians. (Meyer, 1999, p. 84-85)

Diabolisation is a crucial theme running throughout the thesis as it reveals the change in cosmological evaluation that witchcraft and sorcery have undergone as a result of P/e Christianity and its intense focus on the workings of supernatural evil in the world. Given that witches and sorcerers were, for the most part, traditionally considered as agents corroding the social fabric, their reimagination as satanic did not require an overhaul of their moral value. Instead, existing ideologies of witches and sorcerers as dangerous were intensified by P/e Christians who transformed these entities into hyper-real, satanic agents looming large in the religious imagination, and whose amplified social threat needed to be abolished.

As shown in the quote from Meyer above, a crucial effect of P/e diabolisation has been to flatten the specificity of local witchcraft and sorcery beliefs into expressions of the monolithic "satanic" category (Meyer, 1992, p. 111). Within Anthropology, witchcraft and sorcery have been considered as distinct religious modalities since Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (1937). However, due to Christian diabolisation, the practices of witchcraft and sorcery have become mutually defined as evil in contemporary times. In this thesis, when either "witchcraft", "sorcery" or other neo-Melanesian pidgin terms such as *poison, sanguma, puripuri, blak pawa,* and *wiskrap* are specifically stated, I will use the term the source has used to preserve the accuracy of the specific reported case (Eves, 2013, p. 1). Nevertheless, I do use "witchcraft and sorcery" together, largely because, as my thesis shows, in contemporary Melanesia witchcraft and sorcery have undergone a conceptual fusion within the Christian framework as a result of the influence of Christian morality. This cosmological flattening is touched on by Strong (2017):

> Even as diverse ideas about witchcraft and sorcery are found across the country, PNG national culture is increasingly occupied by a common set of Christian ideas and symbols, especially those of evangelical, charismatic, or Pentecostal varieties … symbols and ideas associated with traditional or customary pasts become associated with Satan. (p. 74)

As well as constructing witches and sorcerers as potent expressions of satanic force, P/e Christians, particularly those belonging to Pentecostal churches, practice spiritual warfare, focused, deliberate prayer designed to purge their world of these dreaded entities and to achieve victory over evil spirits. The term spiritual warfare, first introduced in Wagner's work (1986), is defined by Jorgensen (2005) as "[engaging] the enemy by aggressive confrontation through prayer" (p. 446). In this light, Rio (2014) describes how Pentecostal Christians "move into suburbs with what they call "spiritual warfare" and clean out and exorcise whole neighbourhoods for signs of witchcraft" (p. 331- 332). Within P/e

Christianity, then, witches and sorcerers are not only considered as hyper-real, satanic entities, but also as targets of systematic ritual attack. I see spiritual warfare waged vehemently against witchcraft and sorcery as the key P/e attribute that promotes real life violence, a line of argument which builds upon, McAlister's (2014) explanation of how:

> In some [E]vangelicals' narratives, warfare prayer ends with God killing people who are working for demonic causes, such as an Alaskan woman who protested the use of prayer in school board meetings and then died of a heart attack. In such cases, violence or death are God's judgment and are part of the overarching cosmic system of perfect justice that Evangelicals long to help bring about. (para. 10)

In this sense, the destruction of witchcraft and sorcery through spiritual warfare easily leads into acts of physical violence that pursue the same objective, a key line of thought underpinning this thesis. For P/e Christians, spiritual evil is considered as hyper-real, witchcraft and sorcery is the epitome of this evil, and an elaborate repertoire of spiritual warfare is employed to purposefully eradicate these forces. These are all features that I argue have powerfully shaped the Melanesian context and which have importantly contributed to a rise in violence directed towards accused witches and sorcerers in the region. This incessant need to seek out, fight against, attack, and destroy evil spirits that continuously plague social life is a crucial attitude espoused by P/e Christians that, in this thesis, I argue contributes directly to the real life acts of physical violence inflicted upon those accused of witchcraft and sorcery.

1.3 Methodology

The aim of my research project was to gain a thorough understanding of the role played by P/e Christianity in contributing towards the new forms of violence against accused witches and sorcerers taking place in Melanesia. Due to geographic, time and financial constraints, I was unable to undertake ethnographic fieldwork and instead have fulfilled this objective through using secondary sources. As a result, this thesis draws upon relevant academic and non-academic literature for the material I analyse. Among the academic sources I employ are books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government documents and official reports. From this broad range of sources, I have obtained rich ethnographic and eyewitness information on witchcraft and sorcery-related violence beginning from the early colonial period through into the contemporary era, allowing me to effectively outline the important changes that have

taken place to this realm of cultural practice and to identify the changes made by P/e influence.

In chapters that explore the contemporary situation in Melanesia (Chapter 3 and 4) and the connection between the recent upsurge in new forms of violence and P/e Christianity (Chapter 5), I have drawn extensively upon a variety of media articles from online newspapers such as the Papua New Guinean daily newspapers *Post Courier* and *The National* as well as *Pacific Island Report* as a rich source of data. This is mainly because these journalistic sources provided recent and raw descriptions of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence that appear less frequently in academic literature. In circumstances when I have directly quoted an online article and a page number is not available, I have provided the paragraph number or corresponding section. While I understand that doubts may be raised about the reliability and accuracy of journalistic articles, using these examples in the thesis was essential in demonstrating the dramatic change in the nature of the violence that is taking place.

1.4 Chapter Overview

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 describes traditional, pre-Christian expressions of witchcraft and sorcery in Melanesia. Topics that I discuss throughout this chapter include the traditional beliefs and practices of various ethnic groups throughout Melanesia; the social evaluation of witches and sorcerers; the key methods for confirming the identity of witches and sorcerers; and, finally, the various means of resolution, retribution and redress for suspected witchcraft and sorcery attacks. My discussion thus provides a historical backdrop against which changes produced by modernity can be clearly traced out.

Chapter 3 describes the upsurge in new forms of violence against accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia in recent decades. Using a range of examples, I assess the increase of new forms of violence across a number of levels: the geographic and social expansion of this violence to new areas; changes in the quality, technology and temporality of violence; a change in the perpetrators of violence; the increasingly public expression of these situations; and, lastly, the strongly gendered bias to the violence.

Chapter 4 explores the various responses that Melanesian national governments, the Australian national government, various international NGOs, churches, academics and local

‘grassroots’ organisations have devised towards combatting the rise of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as a Melanesian societal problem. This chapter also examines the current explanations advanced by academics for the rise in violence, including social, economic, cultural, health and legal perspectives.

The thesis then culminates in Chapter 5, where I critically examine how the ideologies and attitudes of P/e Christianity have exacerbated violence against accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia. I examine how P/e Christianity intensifies the ontological reality of witchcraft and sorcery, morally condemns these realms as satanic, empowers its followers to actively combat these forces themselves through spiritual warfare and, quite crucially, often directly sanctions brutal violence towards accused witches and sorcerers.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by positioning my findings in relation to existing anthropological knowledge about P/e Christianity and witchcraft and sorcery in Melanesia, as well as offering my own take about potential paths forward.

2. Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Violence in a Traditional Melanesian Perspective

This chapter provides an overview of the anthropological research that has been conducted on witchcraft, sorcery and violence in traditional Melanesian societies, with 'traditional' taken to mean the state these communities existed in at the time they first encountered European cultural forces. It is important to provide a pre-colonial, pre-Christian perspective on witchcraft and sorcery and the violence associated with these cultural realms, in order to clearly illustrate the changes that have taken place in contemporary Melanesia. I acknowledge that different parts of Melanesia experienced colonisation and missionisation at various times. Coastal communities throughout Melanesia experienced sustained colonial contact with Europeans from the end of the 19th century, while inland and mountainous areas such as the Papua New Guinea Highlands were not reached until almost halfway through the 20th century (Lindenbaum, 1981; Trompf, 1991). The majority of examples discussed within this chapter are based on peoples and places within Papua New Guinea as the Melanesian anthropological literature has historically focused more on this country than Vanuatu and Solomon Islands owing to its size and enormous cultural and linguistic diversity (see Appendix for the names of all cultural groups mentioned in the thesis). Nevertheless, I have drawn from a wide range of Melanesian research on traditional witchcraft and sorcery to provide an accurate representation of pre-colonial situations across the region.

I begin by describing the traditional social evaluation of witches and sorcerers within different cultural groups. I then go on to discuss customary ways of identifying a witch or sorcerer, including processes of accusation, confession, divination and other culturally-specific techniques. Finally, I present the range of action taken against an accused witch or sorcerer, ranging from passive tolerance, voluntary or imposed exile, compensation payments, physical punishments and death. It is against this traditional background that the accelerations and intensifications of violence present in the contemporary situation will be viewed and explained in terms of new religious processes.

2.1 Witchcraft and Sorcery in Traditional Melanesian Culture and Society

Witchcraft and sorcery are integral components of traditional Melanesian cosmologies. For the overwhelming majority of cultural groups in the region, these realms of cultural belief

and practice were utilized to explain sudden, unexpected, or tragic illness, death, or misfortune (for some examples see Brown, 1977; Lawrence, 1981; Lederman, 1981; Malinowski, 1925/1974; Riebe, 1987; Sillitoe, 1998; Stephen, 1987b; Tonkinson, 1981). The anthropological literature on witchcraft and sorcery in Melanesia also clearly shows how these cultural realms were tightly related to processes of social control. The fear of being accused of witchcraft or sorcery discouraged people from behaving in ways that were considered as unacceptable, such as being anti-social or not participating in ongoing cycles of exchange and reciprocity (Lindenbaum, 1971; Bowden 1987).

While witchcraft and sorcery traditionally shared a number of important cultural and social attributes, there were nonetheless very significant differences in how they were socially evaluated, a distinction that within anthropology has been very strongly informed by Evans-Pritchard's seminal studies of the Azande (1937). Patterson (1974), for example, argues that witches traditionally were "persons [who] are credited with uncontrolled unconscious, dangerous, disapproved powers" (p. 144). Stephen (1987a) also gives insight into the evaluation of the traditional Melanesian witch, by saying that

> The witch, though apparently human, is the vehicle of inhuman, destructive power … characteristically possessed by some witch creature or substance, or supernatural being … thus beneath the apparently harmless exterior of some ordinary member of the community is a fiend of sheer destructive malice. (p. 275)

Sorcerers, on the other hand, while also considered as possessing supernatural powers, exercised them ritually, controlling them for either the harm or benefit of others (LiPuma, 2000; Stephen, 1987b). The sorcerer's role was traditionally considered as "religious experts of all kinds attributed with socially valued ritual powers … a mediator of sacred power; his interaction with the spirit world – in controlled dreams and trance states – is compared with that of the shaman" (Stephen, 1987b, p. 7). Traditionally, sorcerers were believed to ritually manipulate personal items of their intended victims, such as fingernail clippings, hair and leftover food, in a technique called "Personal Leavings and Food Remains Sorcery" (Patterson, 1974, p. 141). Alternatively, they could use rituals to inflict disease upon someone, known as "Disease Sorcery", or employ "Assault Sorcery", where the victim had sharp objects magically inserted into their body (Patterson, 1974, p. 142). The outcome of these techniques depended on the intention of the sorcerer to make the target either sick or die.

Despite the variety in cultural expressions of witchcraft, witches were uniformly seen throughout Melanesia as “deviants”, “vulnerable”, “anti-social”, “destructive”, “uncontrolled” and “socially unimportant” in their societies (Stephen, 1987a, p. 277). Kuma witches of Jiwaka Province (formerly Western Highlands Province) were seen as traitors to their people and accused of “kill[ing] members of their own communities” (Reay, 1976, p. 5). Also, in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, Hewa witches of Hela Province (formerly Southern Highlands Province), were “said to consume human flesh without leaving any external sign on their victim; others apparently do it openly and carelessly, even letting the bones of their victims lie around” (Steadman, 1975, p. 117). The Oksapmin of Sandaun Province despised witches to the extent where an accused witch’s mother or daughter may also be killed based on their inborn affiliation with the witch and their potential to harbour evil like their relative (Lawrence, 1981).

On the other hand, sorcerers were socially considered in a more positive light as “controlled”, “creative and destructive”, and “used in support of the moral order” (Stephen, 1987a, p. 277). This helps to account for the various roles traditional sorcerers occupied within different societies, such as an “instrument of chiefly authority and as a force for social conformity” (Stephen, 1987b, p. 9). Sack (1974) states that traditional Tolai sorcerers of East New Britain Province would use a variety of learned, magical rituals to give them the power to kill their clan’s enemies. Similarly, Kuma sorcerers “openly claim or acknowledge credit for particular enemy deaths … [and] practise on behalf of their clan, so group members respect them and may even hold them in some awe but have no reason to fear them” (Reay, 1976, p. 1). The Kove of West New Britain Province would purposefully develop a reputation of using sorcery to elicit fear among those who may oppose them as leader, but also to instill confidence in the local people as someone who can defend them from outside attacks (Chowning, 1979). Trompf’s (1991) account of the Mekeo people of Central Province, Papua New Guinea, shows how sorcerers were seen as “tools of chiefly control” to cause harm to external enemy groups (p. 93; Mosko, 2005; Stephen, 1995). While these examples reveal cultural understandings of sorcerers as agents who can cause harm to others, the difference in these particular cases is that unlike the Melanesian witch, the sorcerer is typically not a direct threat to their own community but rather seen as a source of power and control and thereby evaluated positively within society.

Gender is also a significant dimension of how witches and sorcerers were traditionally evaluated within society. Trompf (1991) and Stephen (1987a) both identify a clear gender

split, stating that women were more frequently accused of being witches and men more typically ascribed to socially powerful roles of sorcerers. Many Melanesian cases demonstrate this gendered distinction, including the customary male sorcerers of Kilenge of West New Britain Province (Zelenietz, 1981), Dobu of Milne Bay Province (Fortune, 1932/2004) and the Tolai (Sack, 1974), and the female witches of Dobu, Hewa (Steadman, 1975), Huli of Hela Province (formerly Southern Highlands Province) and Gururumba of the Eastern Highlands (Stephen, 1987a). Moreover, women accused of witchcraft in patrilocal forms of post-marital residence often lacked the support and allegiance of members within their husband's kin group so these situations usually ended in violence against the female witch, a pattern which continues today (Reay, 1976; Trompf, 1991).

However, this gender binary did not apply universally across Melanesia (Chowning, 1979). Among the Kuma, for example, witchcraft accusations were more commonly directed towards men because accusing women of witchcraft was considered "simply too obvious as targets for witchcraft accusations" (Reay, 1976, p. 8). Similarly, the Kaluli of the Mount Bosavi area, Southern Highlands Province, did not believe women were witches at all, and instead maintained that witchcraft power (*sei*) was "a destructive form of potency [that came] from the penis" (Schieffelin, 2005, p. 126). On the other hand, Kove chiefs were known to "grant a first-born daughter extraordinary privileges, not only freeing her from ordinary female tasks but taking her into the men's house and teaching her sorcery" (Chowning, 1979, p. 80). Likewise, the Gebusi people of Western Province had a logic of "direct replacement" where sorcerers targeted those whom they wished to replace or were jealous of; if the victim was a man, the accused sorcerer was more likely to be a man, and vice versa for women (Knauft, 2002, p. 15).

2.2 Methods of Identifying Witches and Sorcerers

Within traditional Melanesian societies, methods of identifying an individual as a witch or sorcerer included accusation and confession processes, divination, as well as a wide range of methods specific to certain cultural groups, all of which I cover here.

Accusations were a key way through which the identity of a witch or sorcerer was established. The Kuma (Reay, 1976), Dobu (Fortune, 1932/2004), Hewa and Huli (Himugu, 2015; Steadman, 1985), as well as Kamano, Usurufa and Fore people from the Eastern Highlands (Lindenbaum, 1971) all employed accusation processes after an unfortunate event

to help identify witches and sorcerers. These were opportunities for local people to practice their cultural right to expose who they believed were witches and sorcerers within their communities (Patterson, 1974). For example, Steadman (1975, 1985) describes the accusation process among the Hewa by stating that witchcraft accusations "may be made any time by almost any adult … in cases in which a person lies dying … he is encouraged to name the witch responsible for his death" (1985, p. 110).

Another way of traditionally identifying a suspected witch or sorcerer was confession. Various factors led individuals to confess to practising witchcraft or sorcery such as duress and intensive examination. For example, among the Duna of Hela Province (formerly Southern Highlands Province), confessions to the practice of witchcraft were considered an adequate method of handling the threat, as illustrated in the passage below.

> Formerly, accused witches were not ordinarily tortured, punished or killed. Instead, they were publicly interrogated and urged to confess their misdeeds. The act of confession was thought to be disempowering, and they were then ordered to pay compensation. Only in the case of repeat offences were witches killed, and then by their own kin. (Haley, 2010, p. 229)

Some confessions needed no prompting, as Reay (1987) describes for the Kuma. While some individuals accused of witchcraft denied their involvement, even after "strenuous cross-examination" and duress, (Reay, 1987, p. 93), it was more frequent for accused Kuma witches to openly confess: "they appeared to welcome being recognized as witches and they boasted of their unnatural deeds … The confession was the witch's finest hour" (Reay, 1987, p. 93-94). These confessions would contain details of transforming into monstrous creatures, exhuming bodies and stealing pigs to feed their "cannibalistic appetites" (Reay, 1987, p. 94). Such open avowals were intended to produce fear among the community and demonstrate that the witch had infiltrated society.

A key means for traditionally identifying witches and sorcerers among different cultural groups was divination. Among the Oksapmin, a male elder would shake the fingernails of the deceased person in a special bamboo container called a *tonggateri* while inspecting a line of suspects. If the rattling stopped while he continued to shake the container, the person he was in front of was considered guilty of witchcraft (Lawrence, 1981). Other divination procedures used the body of the deceased who was suspected of dying from witchcraft or sorcery. Local diviners of the Tauna Awa of the Eastern Highlands would "ask the corpse to speak up and identify the particular individual or village that killed him", a

process that entailed attaching the deceased's wrist to pig bones which would rattle when the guilty suspect or village was called (Hayano, 1973, p. 185). The Gebusi used a method known as corpse divination, which involved the suspected sorcerer being made to shake the body of the deceased as if to wake it. If "cadaveric juices drain or gush dramatically from the bloated torso … [or] its eyes bulge or even burst from their swollen sockets", as a result of the shaking, the suspected sorcerer's guilt was confirmed (Knauft, 2002, p. 54). Similar bodily indications were also used to determine guilt among Dobu Islanders as well (Sillitoe, 1998).

Traditional divination tests used to identify a witch or sorcerer also frequently involved the cooking of food such as the Tauna Awa people cooking root crops and tree grubs in a ground oven, calling out the names of surrounding villages and asking questions to the ghost of the deceased to discover the guilty sorcerer (Hayano, 1973). The Fore people would combine clippings of the victim's hair with possum meat on a bamboo stick which was believed to remain uncooked over a fire if the guilty sorcerer's name was said (Lindenbaum, 1971). As well as corpse divination, the Gebusi would sometimes require the suspected sorcerer to "cook a leaf-wrapped mound of sago starch with a fish or pig heart placed inside" until dusk, where if it was undercooked, the accused sorcerer was guilty (Knauft, 2002, p. 54; see Figure 6.). An interesting example of divination combining both the cooking food as well as using the deceased's body was reported among the Wola of the Southern Highlands. *Komay*, or "retributory divination" involved a pig which was beaten to death with clubs fashioned from the posts of the deceased's funeral platform to imbue the "essence" of the deceased. The pig was then cooked and further instilled with the "essence" of the deceased by rubbing its jawbone to "heighten its toxic effect on the liars and their relatives" when eaten (Sillitoe, 1987, p. 138).

Figure 6 Sago divination test practiced among the Gebusi people of Western Province

Note. From *Gebusi Photo Gallery: Chapter 4: Tosipi's divination sago*, by Eileen Knauft, n.d. (https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/bknauft/gebusi/gebusi-photo-gallery/gebusi-photo-gallery-chapter-4/).

In addition to these common types of identifying witches and sorcerers were other, culturally unique techniques. To find the name of a sorcerer responsible for a death, the Tolai would supply a rival sorcerer with *puta*, parts or substances of the deceased body, to forge a connection with the victim's ghost to retrieve the identity (Sack, 1974), a procedure also found among the Kilenge (Zelenietz, 1981). The Mendi of Southern Highlands Province would connect a bamboo tube to the buried victim's skull by pushing it through the ground. Questions would then be whispered down the tube to help identify the culprit (Trompf, 1994). Finally, close male relatives of a sorcery victim among the Toaripi of Gulf Province would patiently wait in the jungle at night to look for a sign such as the movement of a firefly or flying fox, which was said to indicate the sorcerer's location (Trompf, 1994).

We can see that in traditional times the process of identifying witches and sorcerers followed carefully prescribed cultural and ritual procedures such as accusation, confession, divination and other unique processes. More precisely, accusation processes were a non-

violent means for local people to express their concerns about potential witches and sorcerers within their communities; confessions, sometimes evoked by applying limited duress to the accused, were opportunities for the accused to admit their wrongdoings; and finally, divination tests and various other techniques were culturally sanctioned methods of identification for agents of witchcraft and sorcery.

2.3 Resolution, Retribution and Redress

Within traditional Melanesian societies, the nature of resolving witchcraft and sorcery accusations was greatly influenced by the severity of the circumstance, usually whether someone had died or not. A witch or sorcerer who was believed to have caused illness or minor misfortune would likely not be dealt with violently but rather have to pay compensation (Patterson, 1974), whereas if a witch or sorcerer was held responsible for a person's death, this was more likely to result in violence, reciprocal killing and counter-sorcery (which I consider to be a form of magical violence) (Douglas, 1970/2010; Trompf, 1994).

I begin by discussing the non-violent methods of dealing with accused witches or sorcerers in traditional Melanesian societies. In some cultural groups, no action was taken against individuals confirmed to be performing witchcraft and sorcery. Among the Kilenge, and the Arapesh of East Sepik Province, for example, no retributive action was taken (Tuzin, 1980; Zelenietz, 1981). Occasionally the Kilenge would not act upon the knowledge that their relative's death was caused by sorcery to avoid an outbreak of violence among the families involved. Zelenietz (1981) describes this as "either just one person dies or many, many people die" (p. 108). For similar reasons, the Ilahita Arapesh were also known to not take any action towards deaths caused by sorcery, as explained by Tuzin (1980):

> The victim's history is searched until some reason is found for the mystical attack, and there the matter ends. The alternative diagnosis, which lays blame on a sorcerer acting for his personal interests, throws the community into a potentially unmanageable crisis situation. (p. 287)

Another reason that Tuzin (1980) describes as to why Arapesh sorcerers are not confronted is that "the sorcery killing is deemed legitimate by virtue of its association with *Tambaran* images, relationships or practices" (p. 295).

Exile, whether voluntary or enforced by the community, was another non-violent method of how sorcerers were traditionally handled in Melanesia. On Nissan Island, Papua New Guinea, Nachman (1981) describes how "some men, thought to be habitual and malicious practitioners of sorcery (*tangbilih*) … leave Nissan; and islanders regard their continued absence as proof of guilt" (p. 45). Accused Mendi sorcerers similarly left their villages to seek refuge in the community of their mother's or wife's clan (Lederman, 1981). In circumstances when there was no consensus on the appropriate punishment for a confirmed sorcerer, the suspect would choose to relocate on the basis that previously accused individuals who remained in the same community were more likely to be identified as sorcerers again (Knauft, 2002). As I show later in Chapter 3, this cultural pattern also manifested within the well-known case of Kepari Leniata, a 27-year-old (despite media reports consistently describing her as younger) mother accused in 2013 of witchcraft in her home area of Paiela Valley as well as in Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province, where she subsequently fled to (P. Gibbs, personal communication, August 20, 2020).

In some Melanesian societies, victims of witchcraft or sorcery, or their close kin, would pay compensation directly to the witch and sorcerer responsible for their misfortune or sickness. Among the Kilenge, the family of a sick victim might approach the sorcerer to resolve their grievances. Zelenietz (1981) states that "if the sorcerer cooperated, the victim's relatives would present him with gifts of traditional valuables (pigs, carved bowls, shell money), and he would remove the sorcery" (p. 104). The Kwoma of East Sepik Province would also pay compensation to a sorcerer that had caused illness to another person, though, the sorcerer would not be formally approached out of fear that this would exacerbate the illness (Bowden, 1987). Instead, close kinsmen, or the victim themselves if they were well enough, would try to remedy the conflict through a proxy payment for "an outstanding debt, or compensation for an injury" (Bowden, 1987, p. 198). As a final example of compensation, sorcery-related deaths among the Mendi were preferably resolved by wealth exchanges in lieu of retaliatory killing, as explained by Lederman (1981), "deaths, finally, must be compensated or balanced either by other deaths or, preferably, by wealth exchanges … there are mechanisms for turning socially destructive and polarizing deaths into socially constructive exchange networks again" (p. 19-20).

Another means of non-violent resolution in traditional Melanesian society was to take pre-emptive action in order to prevent a suspected witch or sorcerer from harming others. For example, Fore men would "guard [local] water holes at night to prevent enemy sorcerers

from contaminating them" (Lindenbaum, 1971, p. 281). Mekeo sorcerers would prevent attacks from rival sorcerers using a method known as *ngope* tightening, a "wearing and gradual cinching-up of a wide bark belt" around their torso to close off the body and soul from attack (Mosko, 2005, p. 61; Stephen, 1995; see Figure 7.). As a final example, among the Duna, "in precolonial times, female witches were said to have been sent as agents by male leaders to kill and consume males in enemy areas", which was likely to rid their communities of unwanted witches as well (Stewart & Strathern, 1999, p. 659).

Figure 7 Traditional *ngope* tightening ritual

Note. From "Literal Meanings: The Case of Mekeo Sorcery" by M. Mosko, 2005, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, *6*(1), p. 62 (10.1080/14442210500074903). Copyright 2005 by The Australian National University.

I now move onto the examination of violent methods traditionally used towards accused witches and sorcerers. Here I understand violence in a broad sense to refer not only to acts of observable physical violence but also magical violence. Before detailing examples of witches and sorcerers being treated violently in traditional Melanesian societies, I think it is important to keep in mind Trompf's (1994) argument that no matter how seemingly bizarre or abhorrent violence may be from an outsider's perspective, it is "almost always consistent with socially sanctioned ways of accounting for significant events" (p. 9).

Melanesian societies used counter-sorcery as a violent, though magical, way of handling accused witches and sorcerers in pre-colonial times. The Tolai would employ the help of a sorcerer in situations where a rival sorcerer was deemed responsible for someone's death. The employed sorcerer would poison the personal leavings (*puta*) of the accused sorcerer to kill them (Sack, 1974). Confirmed Agarabi sorcerers of the Eastern Highlands were also subjected to retaliatory sorcery by other sorcerers (Westermark, 1981). Among the Kilenge, if peaceful means of redress broke down, the deceased victim's family would either use counter-sorcery or physically beat the sorcerer to death with clubs or spears (Zelenietz, 1981). Counter-sorcery was also a common way of dealing with the threat of sorcery among many Sepik societies (Trompf, 1994; Tuzin, 1980; Tuzin, 1997).

Physical violence was also enacted upon accused witches and sorcerers intentionally to kill. Among the Hewa, if the victim of a witchcraft attack died, eight to ten male members of the deceased's neighbourhood group would attack the confirmed witch with arrows while she slept, whereby "if she [tried] to escape, her attackers will shoot arrows into her fleeing body until she falls" (Steadman, 1975, p. 116). Confirmed Oksapmin witches (*tamam*) were also killed with arrows by the men of the village (Lawrence, 1981). In an interesting modification to this practice, the Huli would traditionally wait for a witch spirit to approach a graveside where they would shoot it with an arrow, an act that would simultaneously wound the witch's physical body as they slept. It was thought that if the bowman "took the bowstring off, the witch would die, if he left it on, she would live" (Himugu, 2015, p. 98). Kuma witches were chased to high riverbanks where attackers would force them with spears and arrows into the water below to be swept away and die (Reay, 1987). Similarly, confirmed witches among the Mintima of Chimbu Province (also referred to as Simbu) were killed by an "executionary group [who] speared the witch, destroyed the body, [threw it] into chasms and large rivers, so that the *kumo* (witchcraft essence) would be carried away" (Brown, 1977, p. 27).

Gebusi sorcerers, confirmed through corpse divination, were killed instantly by axe blows to the head; or those confirmed through sago divination, were likely to be "killed, cooked, and eaten in place of the uncooked [sago]" (Knauft, 2002, p. 52). Another Gebusi method of dealing with an alleged sorcerer was to quietly obtain community support to abduct and kill them. Once dead, Knauft (1985) states that "virtually all executed sorcerers were cooked and eaten" even those who needed to be exhumed (p. 102; Knauft, 2002). The Samo of Western Province, and the Onabasulu and Etoro of the Southern Highlands also

killed and ate witches and sorcerers (Goldman, 1999). When a witch or sorcerer was eaten, the insides were discarded so they did not consume the "soul" of the evil agent (Goldman, 1999, p. 149; Knauft, 1985). This process required no ritual to prepare the body; instead, it was prepared similarly to pigs, cassowary and other large animals that they cooked.

Comparable to the Gebusi, the Kaluli also performed raids which were to kill confirmed *sei* in their longhouses and ate them afterwards as well (Schieffelin, 2005; see Figure 8.). Close kin of a deceased person organized attacks while also employing the help of other longhouses (*aa)* within their immediate communities to overpower the suspect's *aa* in battle. Clubs were used for close combat fighting along with bow and arrows to prevent anyone who tried to flee from the *aa* during battle. The accused's heart was cut out during the raid to see if it was a "yellow color and soft to the touch" which would confirm them as a witch (Schieffelin, 2005, p. 78). Leaders of the successful raid cut up parts of the *sei* to distribute among the involved longhouses on the journey home to be later eaten. Another method of killing a confirmed *sei* was to murder them upon entry into the funeral ceremony of the victim to avoid the witch from finding out, through rumour, and fleeing the village (Schieffelin, 2005).

Figure 8 Kaluli longhouse

Note. From "The Kaluli Longhouses" by G. Loupis, 1983, *Oceania, 53*(4), p. 370.

Interestingly, as part of this overall scheme of violence directed towards accused witches and sorcerers, torture figures only very rarely. For example, Duna witches, had "small slithers of bamboo inserted under their finger nails" in order to extract a confession (Haley, 2010, p. 229). Gebusi sorcerers were occasionally subjected to public physical beatings and burned with firebrands before being killed (Knauft, 1985). Similarly, Kilenge villagers tortured captured sorcerers at night by tying them to a post and physically beating them, sometimes to death (Zelenietz, 1981).

Throughout this section, I have examined the various ways in which alleged witches and sorcerers were dealt with, both violently and non-violently, in traditional Melanesian societies. As with the modes of identifying the witch or sorcerer, here too we see the importance of following established, culturally instituted procedures to handle the witch or sorcerer. While it is important to acknowledge the prominence of violent methods used in the pre-colonial era, such as counter-sorcery and physical violence, there were also many non-violent ways of redressing these situations and, when violence was used, torture was seldom a part of this process.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the position of witchcraft and sorcery within Melanesian societies prior to their systematic incorporation into various spheres of European influence. As well as exploring the social evaluation of witches and sorcerers, the cultural beliefs surrounding these shadowy figures, and how they were identified, I have paid special attention to the methods employed by various Melanesian cultural groups to manage individuals who were accused or confirmed witches and sorcerers. This historical account is thus an essential backdrop against which to trace a rise in new forms of torture and aggression towards witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia. While it may seem that traditional expressions of torture, killings and counter-sorcery towards accused witches and sorcerers demonstrate intense levels of violence, the following chapters show an extreme shift in this violence within contemporary Melanesia. I will also seek to unpack the factors lying behind this dramatic transformation, in the process highlighting the role of P/e Christianity, which I see as a vital influence.

3. Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence in Contemporary Melanesia

> There are areas of PNG where witches were killed in the pre-colonial past, most notably in parts of the Highlands and on the Great Papuan Plateau. But when we look at ethnographic accounts from these areas more closely, we find little support for the idea that contemporary witch-killing is simply a continuation of traditional practices. (Jorgensen, 2014, p. 268)

As stated by Jorgensen, the sorcery and witchcraft related violence that is occurring in contemporary Melanesia is not a continuation of traditional practices. Rather, as I show in this chapter, there has emerged within contemporary Melanesia a range of new violent practices that are more intense, brutal, and dehumanizing than previously seen. This chapter describes and analyses these new forms of violence and aggression towards accused witches and sorcerers within contemporary Melanesia. As I show, some areas within Melanesia are more representative of this brutal violence than others. The Papua New Guinea Highlands, for instance, exhibit a high concentration of accusations, trials, torture and killings (Urame, 2015). While the Papua New Guinea Highlands is thus a 'hot spot' for this new violence, societies within Vanuatu and Solomon Islands that were not traditionally known to be violent towards accused witches or sorcerers, have increasing incidents of these kinds as well (Foana'ota, 2015; Taylor & Araújo, 2016).

The chapter begins by presenting three graphic examples of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence from 2003, 2013 and 2019 in order to draw attention to the extreme nature of contemporary violence compared to traditional practices. I then discuss the particular ways in which contemporary violence towards accused witches and sorcerers differs from the past, including: the geographic and social expansion of violence against accused witches and sorcerers; the use of a new technology for practising this torture; the widespread use of prolonged torture; the tendency of new violence to be perpetrated by large mobs of disenfranchised young men; the increasingly public performance of this violence; and the gendered bias towards women as victims of this violence.

3.1 New Forms of Violence and Aggression towards accused Witches and Sorcerers in Contemporary Melanesia

The following example is a first person account of violence from a Duna woman accused of witchcraft in Lake Kopiago, Hela Province, during December 2003 when she was accused and attacked:

> After questioning us further, they dragged me over to the Casuarina trees. They tied ropes around my hands and legs and tied me to one of the trees. I protested, 'I am not a witch, I have done nothing'. They then dragged my mother to the other side and tied her between two Casuarina trees as well. My mother said, 'I don't know what you have planned for me but let me pray first'. While she was praying they were heating an iron bar. It was not just any piece of iron, they had fashioned it such that it was like a fishing spear with two hooks on the end. She prayed and just as soon as she said 'Amen' they got that iron bar and thrust it into her vagina. They cooked her vagina and ripped out her uterus. The smell was unbelievable … I couldn't do anything to help my mother as they had tied me up good and proper … That night it rained constantly. They left us there, just the two of us in the rain. While it was raining MP [a local pastor] came. He touched my body all over and said 'I was feeling sorry for you, so I've come to loosen the ropes' … He continued touching me all over then said, 'Seeing you tied like this has aroused me. I want to fuck you'. He touched me and did terrible things to me. He then threatened me and told me not to tell anyone. That happened in the middle of the night. In the morning when the sun came up I saw clearly what they had done to my mother. Her legs were burnt and swollen, her vagina was cooked and buggered up completely, and she had lost plenty of blood. I knew then she was as good as dead. (p. 219)

The next example describes the killing of Kepari Leniata, an incident that was widely reported by the national and international media. I have synthesized several accounts to better describe and contextualise the event ("*Accused witch burned*", 2013; Alpert, 2013; Forsyth & Eves, 2015a; Fox, 2013).

> Kepari Leniata, a 27-year-old mother was accused of causing the death of a six-year-old boy through sorcery in 2013. The accusation was made by the boy's relatives, who then subjected Leniata to extensive torture. She was stripped, restrained, burned with hot iron rods, doused in gasoline and set on fire atop a pile of rubbish and car tyres in Mount Hagen, Western Highlands (see Figure 9.). Her killing was conducted in public and witnessed by hundreds of spectators, including children. Some bystanders took photographs which were published in national newspapers and received international attention. A large mob of up to 50 people were said to have participated in the attack. Police were present at the time of the killing but made

> no arrests, which they maintained was due to being outnumbered by the unruly crowd. However, the mother and uncle of the six year old boy were later charged with Leniata's murder, with the police also promising that more arrests of this kind would follow.

The last example comes from Jiwaka Province, also in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, where in August 2019 villagers accused a man of sorcery after a death (Kolma, 2019).

> A man literally on fire burst from a house and ran down a precipitous cliff side before plunging into one of the tributaries in the headwaters of the Jimi River … already dead when he jumped from the cliff but [sizzling] and greasy bubbling that marked his entry into the icy cold depths of the river … Here was one who had consorted with the [D]evil, a sorcerer of ill repute … a shocking murder that disturbed a rather peaceful, Christian community. The man was tied up, tortured through the night along with his family, and as morning dawned, was doused in kerosene and set on fire by members of his own tribe … only when the cords restraining him were burnt through could he struggle out of them and flee but then it was his own flesh, not kerosene, feeding the flames. Since it was his tribe that conspired to this murder, the verdict was final and not open to challenge. The immediate family members of the dead man in our story, now shamed and ostracised, could only live out their lives in utter humiliation, forever alarmed whenever a death occurred in the community … they too were marked people.

Figure 9 The killing of Kepari Leniata, Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

Note. From *2 charged in Papua New Guinea 'witch' killing*, by Associated Press, 2013 (https://apnews.com/c4375969422e4d28a20cb16683693593). Copyright 2020 by Associated Press.

From the above examples, it is possible to identify several crucial ways in which the violence committed towards accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia departs, often radically, from the traditional practices described in Chapter 2. The rest of this chapter is concentrated on detailing these changes, before moving on in subsequent chapters to consider why it is that such a profoundly negative shift has occurred.

3.2 Geographic and Social Expansion of Violence

A sharp increase in the number and frequency of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence has been widely reported in the academic literature (Biersack, 2016; Cox & Phillips, 2015; Eves & Forsyth, 2015; Haley, 2010; Urame, 2015; Zocca & Urame, 2008). This includes a geographical spread of these new forms of aggression to areas that they did not previously exist in as well the social expansion of people involved in witchcraft and sorcery-related

violence. Firstly, Manjoo (2013) released statements on behalf of the United Nations Human Rights Council confirming that these kinds of violence were on the rise, saying that,

> According to the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission (CLRC), Papua New Guinea has the highest number of reported cases relating to sorcery-related killings, and these cases have been on the rise since the 1980s. The exact extent of sorcery-related violence is difficult to estimate, however, as many cases are unreported. (p. 8)

Schwoerer (2017), whose research is based in the Eastern Highlands, agrees that the province has experienced an "outbreak of renewed violence from the middle of the 1970s onwards" related to sorcery accusations (p. 330). Robinson (2013) provides more definitive statistics from the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission, stating that,

> Gruesome killings of women and men accused of using witchcraft have increasingly occurred in PNG during the past years. The PNG Constitution and Law Reform Commission estimated that as many as 150 people accused of sorcery are killed per year in just one of the PNG's 20 provinces. (p. 3)

Gibbs (2009) substantiates this claim, in regards to Simbu Province, where he states, "Bishop Henk te Maarsen, the Catholic Bishop of Kundiawa Diocese estimates that some 150 cases of violence and killing occur each year in Simbu Province alone, as a result of witchcraft accusations" (p. 2).

However, reported cases represent only a small percentage of the real number of violent incidents of this type that are occurring (Urame, 2015). To take a couple of specific examples, Haley (2010) states that:

> Dr Joe Aina of Kundiawa General Hospital has stated that only a fraction of those tortured and killed as witches come to the attention of medical services. Perhaps even fewer come to the attention of police. For the most part these injuries and deaths go unreported. (p. 221)

As well as increasing in frequency, witchcraft and sorcery-related violence is now also occurring in areas where it was traditionally absent. Forsyth and Eves (2015b) state that "witchcraft and sorcery-related beliefs are being transported around Papua New Guinea, and Melanesia in general, to places where they never previously existed" (p. 5), while Urame (2015) more specifically contends that,

> Today sorcery-related violence, in particular witch-hunts, are spreading from one place to another. In societies where sorcery killing seldom happened, it occurs quite frequently today, and in places where it was never experienced before, it is beginning to happen … I

> interviewed people from different places in Morobe, Madang, Eastern Highlands, Simbu, Jiwaka, Western Highlands and Enga provinces … Except in Simbu, respondents from other provinces gave similar responses. They claimed that witch-hunts are a new social phenomenon and they are not sure how it was brought into their area. (p. 28-30)

Alongside the geographic expansion of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence is an expansion of the scope of people within a given community now being subjected to these acts. People and groups have been known to accuse and kill their family members if they were suspected to be witches and sorcerers both traditionally and in the present day (see Feachem, 1973; Reay, 1976; Schieffelin, 2005 for traditional examples; see Foana'ota, 2015; Gibbs, 2012; Wilson, 2012 for contemporary examples). However, a difference that is occurring only nowadays is that multiple people, sometimes whole families, are being accused of witchcraft or sorcery and subjected to extreme violence. In my research, I discovered only one traditional circumstance where multiple people were accused and killed and these processes were reserved for when someone with esteemed social status died (see Reay, 1987). Whereas there are many modern cases that show multiple people experiencing witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. In 2018, a woman and her three children were attacked and brutally tortured in Wau, Morobe Province, after being suspected of killing a man through sorcery ("*Mother, Children tortured*", 2018). Urame (2015) reports how a family accused of sorcery was "held at gunpoint, slowly tortured for hours and eventually murdered; in a different case a husband was chased out of the community while his wife was chopped to death and their children were left in complete desolation" (p. 26). To extend an example given in the opening section of this chapter from Lake Kopiago, six women accused of witchcraft were all subjected to extreme torture over a period of 13 days (Haley, 2010). As a final example, a Telefolmin man died from a heart attack, suspected to be caused by witchcraft (Jorgensen, 2014). This man's death involved five separate accusations which led to five different horrific attacks whereby three of the suspected witches were brutally killed, two of the suspected witches' families were physically beaten and in one case, a female relative of a suspected witch was raped. These examples suggest a social expansion of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as accusations were not limited to a single individual but irradiated widely to multiple people and family groups.

3.3 Methodology of Torture

One of the most disturbing characteristics of the violence taking place in contemporary Melanesia against accused witches and sorcerers is that it increasingly takes the form of brutal, dehumanizing torture. I follow Wisnewski's (2010) definition of torture which states that it is "intentional infliction of severe suffering or pain … to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason" (p. 4-5). The utilization of torture is another deeply significant departure from traditional practices, which seldom employed this technique. Below I provide descriptions of five case studies clearly showing the prominence of this style of violence.

Case 1. In 2019, six men from various provinces, including the Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, and New Ireland were convicted of torturing three women, two of whom were pregnant, who were accused of practising sorcery, in Lihir, New Ireland Province (Ellison, 2019). To extract a confession, the perpetrators lit a fire close to the women, tortured them with heated rods and poured boiling water over them. The torture continued for four hours before police arrived to free the women, who by that stage had already suffered severe burns (Ellison, 2019).

Case 2. In 2013, a woman named Rasta from Kudjip, Western Highlands, was accused by her neighbours of causing the death of a local man with the use of sorcery. She was attacked by a group of people at the man's funeral, where she was beaten, strangled, and had her middle fingertip and right hand chopped off (Sokhin, 2012b; see Figure 10.).

Figure 10 Kudjip woman attacked after being accused of Sorcery

Note. From *Jiwaka Province, Papua New Guinea* by Vlad Sokhin, 2012 (https://library.panos.co.uk/stock-photo/rasta-holds-up-the-stump-where-her-right-hand-was-chopped-off-during-a-brutal/search/detail-0_00195514.html). Copyright 2020 by Panos Pictures.

Case 3. Two women from Wapenamanda, Enga Province, were accused by members of Itokon village, for causing a young girl's death with witchcraft ("*18 charged*", 2019). This led to 18 members of the girl's family taking the women captive and torturing them with bush knives and hot iron rods. The women were eventually admitted to Wabag General Hospital in critical condition after police had managed to rescue the women after initially being violently blocked by the perpetrators ("*18 charged*", 2019).

Case 4. A 45-year-old woman from Chimbu was accused by her nephew and a group of local men of using *sanguma* to kill her other nephew: the accuser's brother. She was dragged out of her house, burned across her abdomen with hot iron rods and then had them thrust into her vagina. She did not admit to being a witch despite the accusations and torture, which Gibbs (2012) suggests was because she was a church leader and would not associate herself with

witchcraft practices even under extreme duress. Her body was later buried "in a shallow grave in a place used as a toilet" (Gibbs, 2012, p. 122).

Case 5. A woman from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, was accused by her neighbour of using sorcery to poison her (Sirias, 2018). Shortly after this accusation, the neighbour's husband and relatives attacked the woman. She was tied up, stripped, stoned, skinned using knives, as well as kicked and punched in the head. The accused woman's husband took her and fled, but they were found the following morning, dragged out of the house, bound by ropes and dragged back to the original site of torture. They prepared a large fire and were about to tie her to an iron rod for her to be burned alive but police arrived, and the suspects fled. The couple's house was also destroyed, and their belongings and pigs were stolen (Sirias, 2018).

As illustrated by the examples above, one of the main characteristics of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in modern-day Melanesia is that it is centered on barbaric torture, an aspect that was very rarely performed in pre-colonial societies. This brutal, dehumanizing and horrific violence cannot be considered as simply the persistence of pre-colonial violent methods, which were performed according to established cultural procedures and which also sought mainly to dispose of the accused witch or sorcerer by means of quickly killing them. From a carefully and often discretely managed process, violence against accused witches and sorcerers has now become a scene of prolonged, graphic horror. Before unpacking the different dimensions of contemporary witchcraft and sorcery-related torture, I first touch on a point made briefly in Chapter 1 about the concentration of violence in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. Haley (2010) and Gibbs (2012) argue that torturing and killing accused witches and sorcerers is concentrated particularly in the Highlands provinces of Papua New Guinea. This is exemplified by examples (1-4) that occurred within this region, as well as several others that I do not have the space to discuss (see Eves & Kelly-Hanku, 2014; Gibbs, 2012; Himugu, 2015; "*Women tortured*", 2015).

Torture against accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia is distinguished by two main components: technology and temporality. Firstly, a major aspect of the torture is the new technologies that perpetrators are using for their attacks. These are apparent in the case studies, as well as many other examples discussed throughout the chapter. Unlike the past where spears, axes, clubs, and bows and arrows were used, today there is a wide repertoire of modern tools used to perform torture on accused witches and

sorcerers. In the five cases, individuals accused of using witchcraft and sorcery to harm others were mutilated; slashed with bush knives; stabbed and impaled with hot iron rods; burned with boiling water; lit on fire; as well as stoned and skinned with knives (see Figure 11. for examples). These cases also show that multiple forms of torture are being used together, such as heated rods and boiling water (Case 1), bush knives and hot iron rods (Case 3), and, stripped, physically beaten, stoned and skinned (Case 5). The significance of this is that perpetrators of this violence are inflicting a wide range of torturous techniques on the accused in order to intensify and complexify their agony. This is shown by Eves and Kelly-Hanku (2014) in their work on witch-hunts between 1997–2013 in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. Their research shows that eight perpetrators, who killed 27 witches through extreme physical and sexual violence, justified their actions by saying that witches can endure tremendous pain as "their skin is like 'rubber' and knives simply 'bounce' off them, or that wounds inflicted by heated iron rods heal instantly" (Eves & Kelly-Hanku, 2014, para. 4). These examples demonstrate that traditional instruments of harm have since been displaced by a repertoire of modern tools and that the reasoning behind inflicting this agony is based on attitudes of the inhuman characteristics attributed to accused witches and sorcerers.

Figure 11 Weapons confiscated from *Raskol* gang members during attacks on women, in Lae, Morobe Province

Note. From *Crying Meri: Violence Against Women in Papua New Guinea* by Vlad Sokhin, 2012 (http://www.vladsokhin.com/work/crying-meri/). Copyright 2020 by Vlad Sokhin.

The temporality of torture is another noteworthy aspect of how the methodology of violence towards accused witches and sorcerers has significantly transformed in recent decades. As shown in the previous examples, torture is not being used to mete out a quick punishment but instead to prolong pain and suffering. In traditional Melanesian societies, witches and sorcerers were often killed quickly once identified (Brown, 1977; Himugu, 2015; Knauft, 2002; Lawrence, 1981; Reay, 1976). Today, however, violence, which often takes the form of torture, is drawn out extensively. For instance, the torture in Case 1 was approximately four hours long, and in Case 5 it was extended over two days. More examples of prolonged violence include a married couple from an unstated location in Papua New Guinea who, in the 1990s, were held responsible for the death of the husband's brother and also the village chief's and were consequently subjected to intense violence over the course of several weeks (Minga, 2019). There is also the well-known case of Helen Rumbali, a women's rights advocate and school teacher from Lopele, Southern Bougainville, who was publicly beheaded by a mob after being tortured with knives and axes for three days

(O'Kelly, 2013; "*Papua New Guinea*", 2017). These various examples demonstrate that torture is being inflicted on accused witches and sorcerers for a long period with the specific aim of causing extreme suffering. MacLean (2014) provides a form of explanation as to why perpetrators of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in contemporary Melanesia may conduct prolonged torture, saying that they "do not believe [torture] hurts witches" (Torture section, para. 8). This suggests that perpetrators view witches and sorcerers as agents that can endure extreme pain or simply do not feel it, which indicates that perpetrators believe they are deserving of inhumane treatment.

The examples provided above all speak to the dehumanizing, brutalized, and humiliating nature of the violence being enacted upon accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia. Despite there being some rare examples of torture in the literature on traditional Melanesian societies (see Haley, 2010; Knauft, 1985; Zelenietz, 1981), this new violence is totally unprecedented in intensity, brutality and scope. As has been seen, this new style of violence is not only done with the explicit intention of dehumanizing the victim through horrific violence but is mediated by new material forms and is also temporally elongated, all of which is done to heighten the agony of the accused witch or sorcerer, whose assumed evil allows them to endure such an ordeal.

3.4 Sociality of Violence

Contemporary expressions of violence towards accused witches and sorcerers are also different from traditional practices in terms of the people performing these acts and the social contexts within which violence takes place. Firstly, while violence was traditionally performed primarily by village leaders and close family members who were motivated by cultural obligations to ensure the safety of their respective communities, today there is an increasing trend for perpetrators to be groups of disenfranchised young men who are "associated with drugs, alcohol, small arms and frustration, and are positioned as unable to find a meaningful role for themselves in their communities" (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b, p. 6; Jorgensen, 2014; Kauli & Thomas, 2020). There are various titles that these gangs of young men go by within Melanesia, such as *raskol* and *drugbodis* (see Figure 12.), which are general terms for "criminal gangs" or "drug addicts" respectively (Cox & Phillips, 2015, p. 46, Eves & Kelly-Hanku, 2014). Such groups may also go by more specific self-designations, such as "The Boys" (specific to Telefomin, Sandaun Province) (Jorgensen, 2014, p. 269), or

haus man of Madang Province (Mark, 2017). A pattern among these perpetrators is that they operate in large numbers, with cases of such vigilante mobs enacting graphic violence upon accused witches and sorcerers reported in Port Moresby (Levari 2017), Madang Province, in April 2014 (Gesch & Julius, 2015; Mark, 2014, 2017) and also March 2017 ("*99 suspects*", 2017).

Such a modality of violence is effective, firstly, because large groups of young men usually outnumber village leaders, police, or legal authorities who may dare to try and stop them. Moreover, due to their large number, these mobs more easily mobilise whole communities to act against an accused witch or sorcerer (Case 2) (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b). At the most general level, this new sociality of violence typifies a corrosion of cultural rules that once structured the expression of violence. This is now regulated by these groups of disenfranchised men who local and governmental authority struggle to contain.

Figure 12 A member of the *Kips Kaboni Raskol* gang, Papua New Guinea, in 2006

Note. From *Member of the Kips Kaboni Raskol gang, the biggest in Port Moresby, PNG 2006*, by Invisible Photographer Asia (IPA), 2013. (https://invisiblephotographer.asia/2013/09/05/spotlightaustralia-benbohane/member-of-the-kips-kaboni-raskol-gang-the-biggest-in-port-moresby-png-2006/). Copyright 2013 by Invisible Photographer Asia.

As well as a marked change to the groups of people performing violence towards accused witches and sorcerers, there has also occurred a dramatic shift in the contexts within which it takes place. In particular, while traditionally suspects were discretely managed by village leaders or kin members, or through stealthy ambushes done in the middle of the night (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b; Gibbs, 2012; Jorgensen, 2014), within contemporary Melanesia this violence has now become a matter of public spectacle involving large audiences. Within traditional Melanesian society, public spectacles of torture were incredibly rare and in the course of my research I found only a single example within traditional Melanesian society which involved this kind of forum for violence (Knauft, 1985). Today, however, public spectacles of violence have become commonplace (Kauli & Thomas, 2020). Jorgensen's work among the Telefolmin (2014) provides three examples of this shift: An esteemed elder, accused of witchcraft because his hunting "had been too good", was publicly beaten; another

village elder was also publicly beaten and doused in petrol for supposedly using witchcraft; and another man accused of witchcraft was "publicly beaten, tortured [and] said to have been garotted" (p. 272). Forsyth and Eves (2015b) also provide an account where "in November 2014, two men in [Malampa Province] Vanuatu were publicly hanged in a community hall following accusations that they had been practising witchcraft" (p. 1). The opening image of the thesis also powerfully demonstrates the public nature of contemporary witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as a large audience stare at the accused women while she is blindfolded and stripped naked (Sokhin, 2012a). Lastly, as previously revealed in the Kepari Leniata case, hundreds of spectators stood witness to her public execution during daylight in Mount Hagen. These are just some of many examples that indicate the increasingly public aspect of these new forms of violence. This public aspect also adds to the victim's humiliation compared to the traditional context, allowing their degradation, and suffering become fully open to view.

As a final dimension of the changing sociality of violence directed towards accused witches and sorcerers, I examine how the gendered focus on women as victims of recent violence has intensified. In pre-colonial times, women were especially vulnerable to witchcraft accusations given prevailing patrilocal forms of residence and the resultant limited familial support to defend them (Patterson, 1974; Reay, 1987; Trompf, 1991). Gibbs (2012) states that this pattern continues in the present, with women having limited support against witchcraft and sorcery accusations when marrying into their husband's clan as they are more likely to be suspected than members born within that clan. The overwhelming bias of violence now exhibited towards women in Papua New Guinea is described by Auka, Gore and Koralyo (2015) who state that,

> there are almost daily reports of women being tortured and killed because they are suspected of practising sorcery or witchcraft. These cases often do not come to the courts, OPP [Office of the Public Prosecutor] or the police, which is why no action in the formal legal system is taken against the persons who commit these acts of violence … the death of a woman may be less significant or may go unnoticed in the community or may not be seen to warrant an action taken against the offenders. (p. 248)

Forsyth and Eves (2015b) add to this by stating that "women are far more likely than men to be victims [of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence]" despite women in court statistics on this violence only accounting for 25% of cases (p. 13). An example showing a strong gender bias towards violent attacks comes from Goroka, Eastern Highlands, previously discussed in

relation to the methodology of torture (see page 41). Of the 32 people accused of practising witchcraft, 27 were women and 25 of those women were killed (Eves & Kelly-Hanku, 2014). Eves and Kelly-Hanku (2014) describe local cultural reasoning that "although witches can be male or female, women are more often believed to be witches, the reason said to be that the female body is more anatomically suited for the witch-spirit, which can make its home in the womb" (p. 1). Women also feature prominently within other vulnerable demographics of sorcery-related violence such as orphans, widows, the elderly, as well as other forms of gender-based violence such as domestic violence and rape (Agrawal & Mehra, 2014; Forsyth & Eves, 2015b; Haley, 2010; Jolly, 2012).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the new forms of violence and aggression directed towards accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia and shows the often radical changes this violence embodies when compared to traditional Melanesian societies. While accused witches and sorcerers were often treated violently in Melanesia prior to the incursion of Western modernity, the nature of this violence has undergone extreme change and intensification. A key difference between traditional and contemporary times, is that traditional methods of dealing with these agents were largely motivated by culturally and ritually sanctioned procedures that people abided by. These methods also included many non-violent ways of handling suspected and confirmed witches and sorcerers. In contrast, this chapter has shown that alleged witches and sorcerers are very frequently, if not always, dealt with violently and without cultural procedures to guide these processes. Furthermore, these current situations have become increasingly brutal, dehumanizing and cruel acts of torture and violence. In the following chapter, I will consider the responses of various groups to this rise in violence and the factors advanced by academics to explain it. While there are many researchers who have given reasons for the upsurge of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, there remains a need to explain why it has become so brutalized and barbaric.

4. The Responses to, and Explanations of, Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence in Contemporary Melanesia

My description of a range of new, brutal, dehumanizing violence begs the questions: how have people responded to this violence and what has caused this violence? I use this chapter to examine the existing responses and academic explanations to this recent upsurge in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. In the first section, I examine the perspectives of the Melanesian and Australian national governments, international NGOs, churches, academics and 'grassroots' responses of everyday Melanesians. In the succeeding section, I outline the social, economic, cultural, health and legal explanations of academics researching these matters. It is from this platform that I then advance in the final substantive chapter what I, following nascent trends in the literature, consider to be an absolutely crucial factor in this violence that has not yet been given systematic focus, namely, the rapid growth of P/e Christian modalities that provide key ideological and ritual support for treating accused witches and sorcerers in ways that utterly deprive them of humanity.

4.1 Responses to New Forms of Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence

The recent rise in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence has been treated by a range of organisations as a serious societal problem in need of resolution. The concerned parties I discuss include: the national governments of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Australia (operating through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and formerly the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)) (Elsberg et al., 2008); international humanitarian organisations such as United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW); NGOs, namely, Amnesty International, Oxfam International, Highlands Women Human Rights Defenders Movement (HWHRDM) and Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC); academics; and the 'grassroots' responses of local Melanesian people.

The response of Melanesian national governments to the increase in violence has been considered insufficient in protecting the basic human rights of their citizens (Auka, Gore & Koralyo, 2015; Foana'ota, 2015; Forsyth, 2015; McDonnell, 2015). In 2013, the Papua New

Guinean government, formerly led by Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, was pressured by international human rights groups and increasingly adverse media portrayals, to repeal the Sorcery Act of 1971 (Auka, Gore & Koralyo, 2015; Sorcery Act 1971), a political process ultimately sparked by the gruesome public deaths of Kepari Leniata and Helen Rumbali in 2013 ("*PNG PM*", 2013). Backed by the Australian government, the Papua New Guinean government began to take measures towards minimizing witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, by focusing on the Sorcery Act as "fairly defunct legislation" that promoted the very practices it was designed to combat (Forsyth, 2015, p. 219). However, upon repealing the Sorcery Act, a new provision was created in the Criminal Code Act 1974 (Criminal Act 1974). As stated, this was that "any person who intentionally kills another person on account of an accusation of sorcery is guilty of wilful murder, for which the penalty is death. In other words, a mandatory death penalty" (Forsyth, 2015, p. 219). While a draconian, heavy handed approach to the issue of witchcraft and sorcery related violence, this belies the fact that the Papua New Guinea national government has actually done very little to curb this violence occurring in the vast majority of rural areas, a key point that I describe in greater detail below.

Foana'ota (2015) gives evidence that the Solomon Islands government has also not taken these issues seriously, saying that

> the government and church authorities have not paid much serious attention to incidents that are related to sorcery and witchcraft … Since current information indicates the number of people practising sorcery and witchcraft and the cases of suspicious incidents are rapidly increasing across Solomon Islands, it is very important for the government to take serious note now and put in place legal mechanisms to address these practices. (p. 83)

The Australian Government have also responded to these situations by financially supporting programs designed to eradicate witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, as well as promote social stability and good governance within Papua New Guinea. A well-known program was the Sorcery National Action Plan (SNAP) which included workshops in Goroka (2013) and Port Moresby (2014) that advocated for perpetrators of violence to be dealt with appropriately by the law and also opposed inflammatory accusations targeting vulnerable people (Staley, 2019; see Figure 13.). Other programs included "Responding to Gender-Based and Sorcery Related Violence in the Highlands", partnered with Oxfam International Papua New Guinea, with $3,294,500 AUD in funding (May 2014 – June 2019); "Developing Communication Strategies for Social Change against Sorcery Accusation- Related Violence",

partnered with Queensland University of Technology and the Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka, with $727,200 AUD in funding (August 2016 – June 2019); and "Improving the Impact of State and Non-State Interventions in Overcoming Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea", partnered with the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University, with $1,059,200 AUD in funding (September 2016 – June 2020) ("*Supporting the PNG government*", 2018).

Figure 13 The Australian Government promotion of the National Action Plan to Address Sorcery and Witchcraft-Related Violence (SNAP)

Note. Adapted from *Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council* (*CIMC) Information on Sorcery-Related Violence,* by Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee and Department of Justice and Attorney General, 2016. (http://www.stopsorceryviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Finalised-Sorcery-Pamphlet-2.pdf)

As well as national governments and government agencies, various NGOs have also responded to witchcraft and sorcery-related violence occurring in contemporary Melanesia. For instance,

> Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch sent joint letters to Minister for Justice Hon Dr Alan Marat and Police Commissioner Gari Baki on 26 January [2009], expressing concern at ongoing reports of sorcery related killings, particularly of women, and called for greater action from the authorities to curb the violence and murders. To date, there has been no response. The organization has called on the RPNGC [Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary] to vigorously pursue investigations of all cases and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. (Amnesty International, 2009, para. 1; Human Rights Watch, 2018)

Other NGOs such as Oxfam International, HWHRDM and FSVAC have been key stakeholders in SNAP, alongside government ministries and international development networks. This work focuses on five key areas including “legal and protection, health, advocacy and communication, care and counselling, and research” (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b, p. 16).

International humanitarian organizations UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2011) and UNDAW have also recognized the troubling situation of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence within Melanesia, with Jalal (2009) stating that Papua New Guinea should,

> introduce legislation similar in form to the Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Bill of 2007, introduced (but not yet passed) in South Africa. The Act will outlaw the making of accusations of witchcraft, and the harming of individuals suspected of practicing sorcery. (p. 20-21)

Churches have also been at the forefront of efforts to curb witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. Indeed, while most Melanesian Christians are opposed to witchcraft and sorcery as a spiritual force of evil, not all endorse the killing of accused witches and sorcerers. For instance, the Catholic Church in Chimbu has formulated a *Five-Point Strategy* which involves (1) broadening understandings of the causes of illness and death where the deceased’s family will avert from “talk of sorcery or *sanguma*” if naturalistic causes are identified; (2) intervening early in situations of serious illnesses and deaths to prevent accusations from arising; (3) promoting the idea of making peace with family members as “divisions in the family can come to the fore at such a stressful time” and manifest as accusations; (4) promoting peace and respect for the law; and (5) fostering an overall

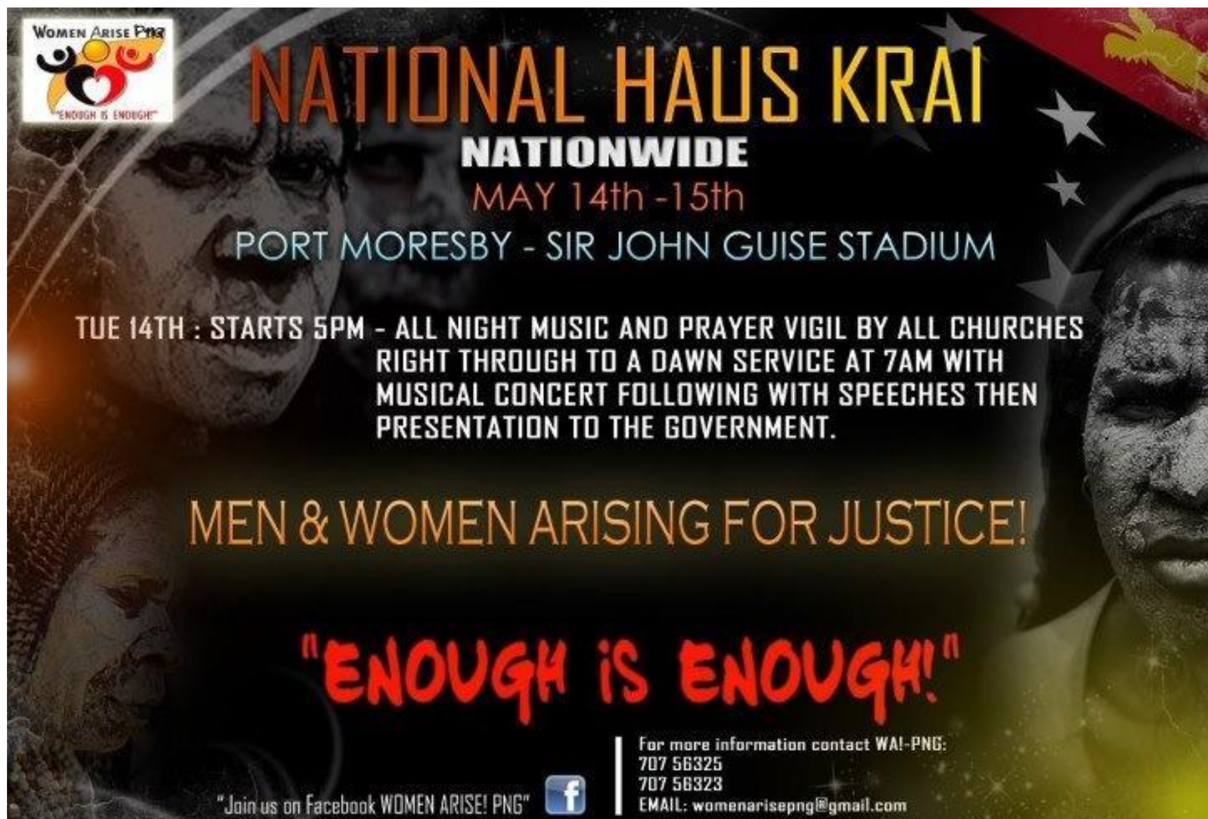
Christian faith and subjectivity which "can provide an alternative to the traditional worldview when it comes to misfortune and death" (Gibbs, 2015, p. 312). As another example, church leaders, alongside human rights activists, were also importantly involved in the Australian government-funded program SNAP mentioned above (Staley, 2019).

The academic community have also promoted constructive practical measures towards combatting the rise in violence. The Papua New Guinean Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG), alongside the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee (CIMC), State Society and Governance in Melanesia Program (SSGM), the Melanesian Institute, Australian DFAT, and the University of Goroka, held two conferences and a workshop aimed at finding ways to overcome witchcraft and sorcery-related violence (Forsyth, 2014). These were held in Canberra, Australia (2013), Goroka, Papua New Guinea (2013) and a workshop in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (2014). Another conference addressing witchcraft and sorcery-related violence is scheduled to be held at Divine Word University, Madang, in November 2020. The completed conferences focused on severing the link between beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery and violent responses to accusations ("*PNG PM*", 2013). The three events were attended by at least 80 participants each and attracted large crowds of interested local onlookers (Forsyth, 2014). Among the participants were government officials, academics, church members and members of civil society, all of who encouraged open dialogue toward understanding and resolving issues related to violence (Forsyth, 2015).

As a final group to have responded to the recent upsurge of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, I examine how local Melanesian people have acted through a variety of 'grassroots' movements. Stewart (2015) and Urame (2015) discuss the common ideology held by local people that identifies the perpetrators of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, as well as those who withhold their identities from police, house them and defend them in court, as protectors of their communities. However, there is a growing number of Melanesian people who oppose the brutal torture and killings of accused witches and sorcerers, despite the risk that they will be accused of witchcraft and sorcery as a result (Urame, 2015). People who oppose these attacks have housed victims of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence and helped them and their families relocate and start new lives. For instance, well-known 'grassroots' figure and women's human rights defender, Monica Paulus, who is now seeking asylum in Australia, has dedicated more than a decade towards helping victims of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, particularly in Chimbu Province (P. Gibbs, personal

communication, August 20, 2020; Wilson, 2012). As another ‘grassroots’ response to witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, Bal (2015) illustrates a community-led initiative from a village in Chimbu Province whereby the likes of village chiefs, ordinary men and women, and also children, collectively agreed to abide by “Community Base Laws” in order to minimize fears of witchcraft and sorcery (p. 299). The community openly debated the kinds of consequences that would come to someone who accused or harmed a suspected witch or sorcerer, developed educational workshops and provided law enforcement training to inform locals of their legal rights. Thus far, this ‘grassroots’ approach of incorporating multiple generations in establishing a community-level code of conduct has had positive effects on lowering the related violence occurring within their community. A final example of local Melanesians responding to the rampant violence occurring within the region was the National *Haus Krai* (House of Mourning) protest movement held from the 14th-15th May 2013 (Setepano, 2013; see Figure 14.). Thousands of local people signed petitions, organized *Haus Krai* events, and protested against violence towards women in 19 provinces across Papua New Guinea. These events were organized by a range of NGOs, churches, businesses and local community groups. This movement commemorated the countless women who have been victims of gender based violence, especially those who have endured witchcraft and sorcery-related violence (Setepano, 2013).

Figure 14 Advertisement of the National *Haus Krai* movement



Note. From *National Haus Krai*, by PNGINUSA, 2013. (http://pnginusa.org/HausKrai.aspx). Copyright 2013 by PNGINUSA.

4.2 Explanations of New Forms of Violence

Although a relatively recent topic of inquiry, there have been several arguments put forward as to why there is a rise in extreme violence towards witches and sorcerers occurring within Melanesia. These include social, economic, cultural, health and legal factors, a range of explanations that cast light upon the complex nature of the situation and that it is not the result of any single social process alone. Here I unpack these factors in detail, so as to properly establish the analytical background against which I advance my own argument.

A first, common explanation advanced is that modernization has brought about the socio-economic dislocation of young men, who occupy the role of new perpetrators in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. As previously described in Chapter 3, they are a new dimension of violence and their increasing involvement in these situations is due to a quest for status and prestige in a modern world within which they struggle to acquire value. For

instance, many are unable to gain education and are forced to drop out of school due to an inability to pay fees, meaning they are highly unlikely to find any lawful, gainful employment. Through this dislocation, they have been compelled to establish their social value by alternative means, including acting as 'defenders' of their communities through attacks upon accused witches and sorcerers. On a general level, as argued by Jorgensen (2014), the violence enacted by groups of disenfranchised young men is ultimately "about creating a world in which the torturer holds absolute power. It's likely that public torture amplifies the effect" (p. 284). Building upon this idea, Eves and Kelly-Hanku (2014) explain how in the Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands Province, "it has been reported in the literature that the communities are often hostage to groups of 'boys', who terrorise the community during witch-hunts as an assertion of power" (p. 2). The disparity between the strained social status of attackers and their victims is highlighted by Jorgensen (2014) in the Telefomin context, where several victims were "people with formal employment and connections outside the area, especially in the regional mining economy. The victims were in an important sense everything the Boys were not—the very opposite of 'useless'" (p. 278). As a result of limited economic opportunities, combined with resentments towards society and those who hold respectable positions, these groups of disenfranchised men have become the new perpetrators of violence against accused witches and sorcerers within Melanesia.

More generally, the collapse of traditional governance systems has also increased uncertainties and fears about witchcraft and sorcery practices in recent times. Taylor and Araújo (2016) argue that modern sorcery in Vanuatu functions "in a dangerously liminal space that lies beyond the reach of both state and *kastom* law … unbound from previously integrated chiefly structures" (p. 208). Moreover, Forsyth and Eves (2015b) propose that these large groups of men inflicting brutal violence on alleged witches and sorcerers can maintain these positions within society only because of "the disintegration of traditional authority structures, in particular, control over young men by community leaders" as well as the lack of local social power to control or oppose them (p. 8).

Another explanation advanced seeks to underscore the Melanesian "culture of silence", where people either quietly accept witchcraft and sorcery-related violence as 'the way things are done' or out of a fear of being implicated in accusations and violence themselves (Urame, 2015, p. 25). While not necessarily a cause of new cases of violence, this deeply rooted culture of silence is still an active force preventing people from reporting cases

or intervening in violent situations and, therefore, indirectly contributes towards the spread of sorcery and witchcraft related violence in contemporary Melanesia.

A further major change brought about by the intrusion of the capitalist economy, closely related to my discussion above about the social dislocation of young men, has been growing socio-economic inequality, the disruption of traditional modes of reciprocity and equality, and an associated rise in jealousies. For example, Urame (2015) states that:

> Economic disparity also contributes to the increase in sorcery violence. The rising cost of living in the country creates inequality … This often leads to jealousy within communities between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups. As a result, when sorcery issues arise, people take advantage of the situation to release their frustration. The discontent of economic imbalances in society is often expressed through the existing belief in sorcery. (p. 29)

Forsyth and Eves (2015b) and McDonnell (2015) echo Urame's point and suggest that new forms of wealth within contemporary Melanesia have exacerbated interpersonal jealousies which have manifested as witchcraft and sorcery accusations. More specifically, Taylor and Araújo (2016) state that in Vanuatu, sorcery accusations and consequent violence is most likely to emerge in urban areas, as it is in these environments that wealth inequalities are more evident.

Related to this final point is a similar argument that urbanization promotes accusations not only through increased inequality but through greater degrees of ethnic diversity. Taylor and Araújo (2016) suggest that people's anxieties and fears of sorcery may be heightened in areas where many ethnic groups live, such as urban areas, because of pre-existing "stereotypes … across class and ethnicity" that make it difficult to trust people that they do not know (Taylor & Araújo, 2016, p. 202). They also state that "by contrast, sorcery accusations in rural contexts are more often tied to land disputes" (p. 201-202). Auka, Gore and Koralyo (2015) similarly suggest that the urban area of Waigani in Port Moresby, National Capital District, is more prone to sorcery-related violence because of its mixed composition:

> persons from the National Capital District, but also all other PNG ethnic groups … live in the city. For this reason, [Waigani] would be likely to cover more cases of sorcery and sorcery-related violence being an urban centre comprising many ethnic groups. (p. 249)

McDonnell (2015) also states that, in urban Vanuatu, a combination of growing economic inequalities, as previously described, and the "mixed nature of life in town" is creating jealousies among the various groups of people in urban areas (p. 143).

The literature on witchcraft and sorcery-related violence also points to the continuing belief in witchcraft and sorcery as causes of sickness and death, as an important factor contributing to a rise in violence. Firstly, despite the presence of Western explanations of death in Melanesia that variously posit poverty, pollution, or disease as the cause, most Melanesians still ascribe misfortune to supernatural forces such as witchcraft and sorcery (Burton et al., 2013; Cox & Phillips, 2015; Kauli & Thomas, 2020; Urame, 2015). Stewart and Strathern (1999), for instance, provide an example of where witchcraft was deemed responsible for a series of deaths among the Duna that were later revealed to be caused by pollution:

> In 1994 and 1998, deaths that in 1991 had been attributed to witchcraft were traced to pollution from the Strickland River, which had been running red from the discharge of oxides used in the gold-mining process at the Porgera mine in the Enga Province. (p. 666)

A similar situation occurred in Hagu, Southern Highlands, where multiple deaths in 1998 generated witchcraft accusations but were evidently caused by food and water shortage, pneumonia, malaria and typhoid (Stewart & Strathern, 1999). A more recent example shows that four women were accused of witchcraft in Enga Province when an outbreak of measles killed many people within their community ("*Accused women*", 2014).

Cox and Phillips (2015) situate this embedded cultural tendency in relation to modern medicine, stating that:

> As access to quality health services retracts across Melanesia, communities lose their collective memory of the efficacy of biomedicine, reducing it to simply another option alongside magical means, or even an inferior option when compared with the healing power of God. (p. 49)

They further assert that attributing witchcraft and sorcery to sicknesses and deaths that are related to living in unhygienic conditions or in times of disease outbreak, "lowers expectations of health services and makes it unlikely that villagers will demand better services from government or their elected representatives" (p. 49). In sum, then, the deep-seated Melanesian tendency to explain sickness and death with reference to mystical forces, exacerbated by impoverished modern living conditions and poor access to medical services,

serves to further fuel witchcraft and sorcery accusations and, thereby, to actively contribute towards an increase in violence.

Another health-related explanation discussed by Haley (2010) is the role of the rising HIV/AIDS epidemic within Papua New Guinea. Since AIDS causes the "sudden" death of people that would otherwise be healthy, witchcraft accusations are often employed to explain why people die from this condition:

> the HIV epidemic has contributed to the rise of witch-hunts and trials by torture. This has come about because of the culturally specific cosmological understandings Duna have of illness and disease; because AIDS produces the very kinds of deaths that attract witchcraft accusations; and because the illness and death associated with HIV add to a generalised anxiety about witchcraft. (Haley, 2010, p. 231)

Urame (2015) also shows how the attribution of HIV/AIDS to witchcraft and sorcery may be contributed to by medical workers.

As well as explaining the rise of new forms of violence in regards to a breakdown in traditional social structures and a variety of health-related factors, academics have also highlighted law and order issues. Academics believe that the lack of, and limitations of, police enforcement, is contributing to the recent violence against witches and sorcerers in Melanesia. Jorgensen (2014) states that police in Telefomin are "contacted and aware of [witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, but] failed to apprehend and bring perpetrators to trial" (p. 277). Urame (2015) adds to this, by saying,

> Due to geographic hardship and absence of government stations, many cases of sorcery-related violence are not made known to the public or attended to by state authorities. Sometimes cases are not attended to because the roads have deteriorated or bridges collapsed, preventing access to the area so sorcery cases remain isolated from the police or other state authorities … When this happens people simply give up, seek other alternatives or resort to further violence. (p. 25)

Forsyth and Eves (2015b) similarly discuss the limited capabilities of police to intervene and stop such violence when they are faced with large, violent groups; claims that can be supported by examples found in Chapter 3: *Sociality of Violence*. In the absence of robust policing, Keenan (2015) adds that "many indigenous Papua New Guineans felt that where sorcery allegations arose they had to take the law into their own hands, and then accept the

Western legal consequences” such as going to trial or court, and then potentially to prison (p. 208).

Inadequate legislation has also contributed to the lack of law and order in the region, which has subsequently enabled violence towards accused witches and sorcerers to occur. These perspectives may either emphasize a need for rigorous legislation to stop witches and sorcerers or, alternatively, to stop the violence done against those accused of these mystical acts. In support of the first argument, Himugu (2015) argues that

> there is no proper law in place for prosecuting and punishing witches. So, the solution is to provide a legal avenue for the accusers to prosecute and punish alleged witches instead of citizens taking the law into their own hands. (p. 107)

However, this statement is problematic in that it does not at all raise the need to question the punishment of alleged witches, but rather accepts it and instead encourages ways of minimizing local people “taking the law into their own hands”. From a Vanuatuan perspective, McDonnell (2015) provides a contrary perspective, asserting the difficulties in prosecuting perpetrators of sorcery-related violence with the current Penal Code:

> The prosecution in the Penal Code is not sufficient for the police to work with. There are no elements for sorcery so it is hard to prove it. If sorcery is defined it will help guide us as to what we want to prove in court. Most cases in sorcery are thrown out by the courts because there is not enough evidence. (p. 153)

In regards to the Papua New Guinean Sorcery Act of 1971, Keenan (2015) states that “despite this official response — or perhaps partly because of it — sorcery-related crime remains a seemingly intractable problem in contemporary PNG” (p. 200). Forsyth (2015) addresses this more thoroughly by maintaining that colonial efforts to cease witchcraft and sorcery practices with legislation, such as the Sorcery Act of 1971, failed firstly because of “sanctioning the belief in sorcery and in facilitating the lenient treatment of those who kill accused witches” (p. 214) as well as through “[legitimizing] such murders by making sorcery a legally recognized phenomenon” (p. 219). Furthermore, the previously mentioned addition to the Criminal Code of 1974, upon the repeal of the Sorcery Act 1971, meant “any person who intentionally kills another person on account of an accusation of sorcery is guilty of wilful murder, for which the penalty is death” (p. 219). One reason why legislative change has been largely ineffectual is that it did not challenge the ontological assumptions of average Melanesian people, who continue to deeply fear practices of witchcraft and sorcery within

their communities. Stewart (2015) confirms this by saying that blanket government legislation will not work with people who live in highly remote areas of Papua New Guinea who "[operate] under a different belief system" whereby witches and sorcerers are dangerous threats that need to be killed for the safety of their communities (p. 187). Forsyth (2015) summarizes the processes that need to be applied to government legislation by proposing that (1) beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery need to be treated as legitimate fears among the local people by the government; (2) any changes to state policy and legislation must be adequately enforced by governmental institutions; and (3) all solutions must be negotiated with local people.

As a final explanation of why witchcraft and sorcery-related violence has expanded within contemporary Melanesia, Stewart and Strathern (1999) look to historical factors, suggesting that the pacification of warfare during the colonial period may have increased the use of witchcraft and sorcery practices. For example, in Pangia, Southern Highlands Province, pacification corresponded with a marked increase of speculations of assault sorcery. By prohibiting physical warfare, a culturally accepted means of resolving conflict, local people replaced this with magical violence such as witchcraft and sorcery, thereby leading to accusations and violence (Stewart & Strathern, 1999).

4.3 Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have illustrated the responses of Melanesian national governments, the Australian government, NGOs, churches, academics and local people to the rise of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence within Melanesia over recent decades. While responses from Melanesian governments have been lethargic, the Australian government has shown its support in eradicating witchcraft and sorcery-related violence by funding various programs and projects. NGOs such as Amnesty International (2006, 2013) and Human Rights Watch have strongly advocated for witchcraft and sorcery-related violence to be stopped, with the likes of Oxfam International, HWHRDM and FSVAC working closely on a national plan to end such violence. Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, have devised educational programmes and strategies to prevent accusations that lead to violence. Academics have promoted positive dialogue and informative platforms to overcome situations of violence. Local people have used a collective voice, such as the National *Haus Krai* movement, to

commemorate those killed in these situations but also to advocate for the end of all forms of gender-based violence.

I have also covered the range of explanations for this violence advanced within the academic literature, including groups of disenfranchised men spurred to violence by socio-economic dislocation and the collapse of traditional chiefly structures; the persistence of violence due to a Melanesian "culture of silence"; of the exacerbation of accusations through migration, urbanization, and increasing economic inequality; the continued belief in these practices as explanations of illness and death, a perspective reinforced by poverty and declining medical services; the rising HIV/AIDS epidemic; dysfunctional law and order across the region, including police limitations and inadequate legislation; and finally, the historical effects produced by colonial pacification.

The wide range of factors put forward to explain the rise in violence speaks to the significant complexity of the issue and that there is no single factor responsible for this regional societal problem. While these explanations cast light upon many dimensions of the rise in new forms of violence towards accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia, what is rarely discussed in the literature is why recent witchcraft and sorcery-related violence has taken such a brutal and dehumanizing form. Why are accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary times seen as agents capable of enduring, and even deserving of, prolonged and extreme torture? Why have they now become seen as not just dangerous forces in the community but as concentrated expressions of pure evil that need to be ruthlessly and perpetually exterminated? Why are they now treated as a constant threat in Melanesian life worlds, always lurking in wait to harm unwitting victims? These are absolutely crucial components of how the cultural understandings of accused witches and sorcerers have undergone profound change from the traditional context but are not explained in a detailed or systematic way. In the following chapter I argue that the deepening regional influence of P/e Christianity is a crucial factor in the rise of this violence and goes a long way towards explaining why it now takes such a horrific form.

5. P/e Christianity and the Rise of Witchcraft and Sorcery-Related Violence in Melanesia

It is no coincidence that the rise in witchcraft and sorcery related violence in Melanesia since the 1970s and 1980s corresponds exactly to the rapid growth of P/e Christianity across the region over the same time period. This chapter thus argues that a crucial role has been played by the rising influence of P/e Christianity in the disturbing rise of horrific witch killings. In making this argument, I follow the important lead provided by Rio (2014), who has argued that the "recent up-scaling of beating, burning or killing of witches in Melanesia can be related to the Pentecostal beliefs that align witchcraft with evil and individual morality, even though this connection has not yet been articulated in academic writing" (p. 331). My own work thus joins a growing body of literature beginning to examine this crucial nexus in order to provide a fuller, more nuanced picture of the variegated factors involved in the emergence of new forms of violence and aggression towards accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia. Where I think my own research stands to make an important contribution is by showing how the rise of these forms of Christianity throughout Melanesia are a particularly useful way of explaining not only the increase in violence but, more specifically, why this violence has taken on such a brutalized and dehumanizing aspect.

Before proceeding I would like to make clear that I do not intend to cast blanket condemnation on all P/e Christians as I know this family of Christianity accounts for millions of Melanesians, the overwhelming majority of whom have never participated in this kind of violence. I also understand that even within Pentecostal and evangelical churches there are people who are making efforts to reduce the violence enacted on accused witches and sorcerers.

In my discussion I examine how three key attributes of P/e Christianity appear to contribute to the increasing violence, namely, an intensification in the ontological reality of spirit beings, a specific moral condemnation of witchcraft and sorcery as the epitome of evil, and finally, a repertoire of ritual techniques known as spiritual warfare, explicitly designed to exterminate witchcraft and sorcery. Through a careful consideration of each of these elements I show that P/e Christianity provides a powerful religious underpinning to the rise of violence against accused witches and sorcerers. The final, most disturbing element of my discussion, then shows how P/e Christians have been directly involved in this violence.

5.1 P/e Christianity and the Ontology of Evil

A key attribute of P/e Christianity is that followers are very much concerned with spiritual forces and realities that exist in the world. Within this Christian framework, the utmost positive spiritual force is the Holy Spirit with the opposing evil spiritual force being represented by Satan or the Devil. Anderson (2013) gives insight into the central role of the Holy Spirit within Pentecostalism by saying that,

> The Holy Spirit is the one to whom credit is given for everything that takes place in many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. The Spirit causes people to 'receive' the Spirit, to prophesy, speak in tongues, heal, exorcize demons, have visions and dreams, live 'holy' lives - and generally the Spirit directs the life and worship of these churches, the 'leader' of all its activities. (p. 189)

He continues that:

> most Pentecostals worldwide rely on an experiential rather than a literal understanding of the Bible and it is therefore not very meaningful to discuss the interpretation of the text alone. Pentecostals believe in spiritual illumination, the experiential immediacy of the Holy Spirit who makes the Bible 'alive' and therefore different from any other book. (p. 223)

Within this experientialist theology, P/e Christians view these good and evil spiritual forces as being in constant war with one another (see Hubbard-Heitz, 2014; Lindhardt, 2012; Skeba, 2011). Torr (2013) describe this “cosmic war” (Hubbard-Heitz, 2014, p. 32) in more detail, by stating that,

> The view of evil that seems to emerge then is one that understands evil to have agency as well as being embedded in societal structures. And behind it all is Satan, whose weaker kingdom is at war with the stronger victorious Kingdom of God. (p. 88)

In line with this argument, Aasmundsen (2016) maintains that for P/e Christians “there is a war going on in the world, a war between God and Satan, angels and demons - a war between good and evil” (p. 102). From the P/e perspective, spiritual evil is then considered to be a hyper-real entity. For Melanesians influenced by P/e Christianity, evil is not simply just an idea or symbol but an imminent, existential threat always present as what Eriksen and Rio (2017) describe as a “roaming danger, a constant presence and threat of malignant spirit always lurking in the vicinity” (p. 199).

This begs the question: what are the cosmological implications of positioning this experientialist, dualistic worldview into any given cultural context? The answer is that diabolisation occurs, which, as described earlier, is the process whereby traditional indigenous religions become associated with Satan or the Devil as a consequence of Christian teachings (Meyer, 1992, 1994, 1999). Meyer (1994) explains that "through the Devil, the spiritual beings of the old religion became part of Ewe Protestantism … Through him the old could be integrated into the new" (p. 64). This definition implies that the indigenous religion would continue within the newer Christian religion but could exclusively exemplify evil spiritual forces, while the Holy Spirit, God and Jesus remain as representations of good. This process of retaining indigenous spiritual forces as figures of evil stripped of any positive attributes has been called "ontological preservation" (Robbins, 2004, p. 127; Macdonald 2015, 2018). Building upon Robbins' idea, Macdonald (2018) explains how "The more [Pentecostal-evangelical] Christians emphasise what they have broken away from, the more they paradoxically reinforce its abiding reality and power, albeit defined in negative moral terms" (p. 150). For P/e Christians, the indigenous spiritual repertoire is not abolished but rather ontologically intensified and morally revalued.

The P/e ideology of viewing and treating traditional religion as demonic or harbouring evil forces is widely reported within Melanesia. Various examples demonstrate this, including the diabolisation of customary adornment, dancing and feasting among the Keveri people of South-East Papua by missionaries in the early 1940s (Williams, 1944); the diabolisation of local nature spirits among the Urapmin of Saudaun Province which were "blocked by a public discourse uninterested in allowing the spirits to encroach on God's turf" (Robbins, 2011, p. 419); the desecration of customary carvings at the Parliament House in Port Moresby, in 2013, that signified "the presence of the demonic in the very seat of national power" (Strong, 2017, p. 74; Eves et al., 2014); and the progressive diabolisation of Telefomin men's cult houses, bush spirit *Magalim*, and traditional religious objects such as bilums and pig tusks, from the 1970s to the early 2000s by P/e Christians (Jorgensen, 1981, 2005, 2014).

From this section, it is clear to see that P/e Christianity amplifies ideas about the reality of evil spiritual forces (Anderson, 2013) and furthermore, inextricably associates indigenous spiritual entities with Satan and sin. For Melanesians who have either converted to these forms of Christianity or who have been otherwise influenced by them, then, the world in which they live has now become seen as the backdrop for the ongoing battle

between intensely real spiritual forces of good and evil. As I now show, within this cosmological configuration it is witchcraft and sorcery that becomes the quintessential expression of this evil, thereby radically amplifying the threat of individuals believed to practice these dark arts.

5.2 Contemporary Melanesian Witchcraft and Sorcery: The Epitome of Sin

Within Melanesian P/e Christianity, witchcraft and sorcery have become the epitome of sin, the purist, most concentrated form, of satanic evil. While these cultural realms were traditionally considered to be dangerous, harmful, and threatening, through the sustained influence of P/e Christianity, the individuals believed to practice these behaviours are now considered to be evil, sinful agents and hyper-real, constant threats to their communities, an ideological shift that I argue makes local people both more terrified of these forces and more ruthless in their response to them.

The most evident way that witchcraft and sorcery have been diabolised is through their direct alignment with and fulfilling the part of "agents of the Devil" in P/e theology (Zocca & Urame, 2008, p. 28). These aspects of traditional religion did not disappear but were instead necessarily absorbed into the Christian framework as powerful representations of the Devil or Satan. Kolma (2019) states that "sorcery is Satan and it requires faith in Jesus Christ to extinguish or diminish its influence … sorcery today exists as the [D]evil's work and therefore only God can extinguish the evil" (para. 15-16). To demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God, P/e Christians require an evil foil, and witchcraft and sorcery fill this cosmological need very effectively. For example, Macdonald's (2015) work on Oksapmin 'witchcraft' or *tamam* shows how this shadowy realm "satisfied the Christian need to locally anchor Satan as the bearer of ill-will and misfortune" (p. 470). The vaguely defined role of the Devil in the Bible allows him to be readily incorporated into various cultural contexts through the representation of indigenous spiritual figures, especially witchcraft and sorcery. Moreover, any manifestation of these practices, even those that did not customarily carry negative connotations (for example, see Bratrud, 2017, p. 219) were also reimagined in the Christian framework as sinful, since they contradicted the notion of God as the singular, omnipotent source of positive spiritual power (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b).

As a direct result of P/e Christianity positioning witchcraft and sorcery as the epitome of sin, these groups have intensified the reality of these agents as well as increased people's

fears of them. Forsyth and Eves (2015b) claim that these variants of Christianity have reinforced beliefs in Melanesian witchcraft and sorcery, stating that "Pentecostal churches with their emphasis on Satan and their campaigns of 'spiritual warfare' and need for exorcisms were fomenting beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery" (p. 8, also see Eves & Forsyth, 2015). Members of the Christian community in Port Moresby have shared similar thoughts on Christianity influencing the ontological preservation of witchcraft and sorcery beliefs. Archbishop Douglas Young, the head of the Catholic Church in Mount Hagen, discusses the severity of persistent discourse on the existence of witchcraft and sorcery by saying, "beliefs of witchcraft [in Europe] were successfully wiped out after a law was passed that banned talks and gossips on sorcery. And PNG needs to do a similar thing" ("*Catholic Church*", 2009, para. 4). In this light he states that "history had taught people that the more gossip there was on sorcery, the stronger and wider the belief spread" ("*Catholic Church*", 2009, para. 5). This emphasizes that anyone talking about witchcraft and sorcery is maintaining as well as reproducing beliefs in these practices, even those who may only see it as local gossip. This is largely significant in terms of P/e Christianity as members obsess over witchcraft and sorcery, thus intensifying the presence of witches and sorcerers.

P/e Christianity has not only intensified the reality of witches and sorcerers but has also increased people's fears of them. Bratrud (2019) discusses this in relation to increased fears of witches and sorcerers in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

> Pentecostal Christianity has taken on the very logic of witchcraft it is supposed to oppose and thus made the church a part of the witchcraft problem as much as a solution to it. This is because the church not only recognizes witchcraft as a real and powerful force, but also because it attracts supporters by building on witchcraft discourses. The Pentecostal gaze that discerns evil spirits and sorcery was thus not only a relief from current existential fears, it also brought the threat of evil powers into the church in new and more explicit ways and intensified people's fear of them. (p. 124)

Bratrud (2019) also gives specific examples of this intensified fear, saying that:

> Many came crying to church, saying they could not sleep at night because they were so afraid of the sorcerers. Several people I knew stopped going to the gardens for fear of being attacked by sorcerers hiding in the bush, and a number of others, including some sturdy men I knew who would not normally admit to being afraid of anything, expressed a fear of sleeping alone or going to the bathroom at night for the same reason. (p. 123)

These examples explicitly demonstrate that P/e Christianity has increased people's fears of witches and sorcerers. This is a crucial point to remember for the following sections that illustrate how P/e Christianity uses ideologies of these agents as an ever-present evil to encourage their followers to destroy and annihilate them.

P/e Christianity also constructs witches and sorcerers as threats that are capable of committing ghastly, inhuman acts. Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes (2017a) argue that Pentecostals "fully embrace the invisible world and take control of it. They describe the different forms of life and creatures that exist in it; they offer techniques for taming them and making the invisible visible" (p. 10). It is in this sense that witches and sorcerers are considered as "creatures" that need to be "tamed" that constructs them not simply as evil agents of Satan but nefarious threats to human wellbeing which Christian devotion will offer protection from. The ghastly, graphic imagery now surrounding the description of witchcraft and sorcery within P/e Christianity is revealed by Strong's work among Pentecostals in upper Asaro, Eastern Highlands Province, as described by one Pentecostal church member.

> When witches confess, they say things like: "When we encounter people who follow Jesus, when we would like to get close to them, there is a light! A strong light! It reflects against our vision, and we can't get close to them" … we want to harm you, to consume your meat, to take out your heart, your brain, your body … but there is a white cloth (*laplap*) that covers you, either a white shroud (*laplap*), or blood, red blood, it covers you. And it makes it hard for us to see you … Those who don't go to church — that's our highway! It's easy to go inside and eat. (Strong, 2017, p. 85)

This passage shows then that P/e Christianity not only portrays witches and sorcerers as intensely real entities to be fought against but also as satanic forces capable of committing the most horrific acts upon people and in a clandestine, furtive manner.

Within Melanesia, P/e Christianity has established, through its experientialist, Manichean worldview, that witches and sorcerers are macabre, sinful agents that are constant, hyper-real threats to be feared. The importance of illustrating this is that it clearly and vehemently positions witches and sorcerers as targets of destruction; threats that desperately need to be annihilated, an ideological construction which I argue suggests a link between P/e Christianity and the recent upsurge in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. It is because of their incessant focus on the reality, presence and influence of these entities that I argue that P/e Christianity is contributing to recent violence towards witches and sorcerers in Melanesia.

This has unsurprisingly been accompanied by the development of elaborate attack-based mentalities that I now discuss.

5.3 Spiritual Warfare

Through witches and sorcerers being positioned by P/e Christianity as intensely real satanic spiritual entities that are capable of committing atrocious acts upon ordinary members of society, these agents are thus the target of comprehensive ritual efforts to exterminate their presence. This is known as spiritual warfare, defined by Jorgensen as "[engaging] the enemy by aggressive confrontation through prayer" and it is central in P/e Christianity in their fight against evil spiritual forces in the world (2005, p. 446). I argue that spiritual warfare develops moralized, combative, and violent perspectives towards witchcraft and sorcery that produces a supportive environment for real-life violent attacks. These practices are performed by P/e followers who actively go after witches and sorcerers with the complete intention of wiping them out. Rio (2014) describes how ni-Vanuatu Pentecostals perform spiritual warfare with the explicit aim to "clean out and exorcise whole neighbourhoods for signs of witchcraft" (p. 332). Zocca and Urame (2008) similarly argue that "Spiritual warfare meant first of all to consider sorcerers and witches as people struck by evil powers, powers which have to be fought with Christ's supreme power in order to set the people free from the created [D]evil" (p. 30).

Spiritual warfare is predicated upon the method of "spiritual mapping" (Otis, 1991, p. 84; Jorgensen, 2005). This is a term that was first coined by George Otis Jr. which he defines as "superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world … the aim is to pinpoint and neutralize satanic command and control centers" (Otis, 1991, p. 85). For instance, spiritual mapping could be used in situations where practices such as witchcraft and sorcery are believed to be operating and their specific geographic locus needs to be found. Before ritually exterminating these forces, their location needs to be pinpointed, creating a spatiality of evil (Eriksen & Rio, 2017). A recent case where spiritual mapping occurred in Melanesia was during the investigation surrounding an Anglican church member in Port Vila, Vanuatu, who was suspected to have been murdered through sorcery (Eriksen & Rio, 2017). Following what they referred to as "spiritual leads" (p. 194), fellow church members conducted a targeted search around known "hotspots for evil forces in certain locations of the city", eventually

concluding that he was attacked by sorcerers wishing to gain control of Port Vila (p. 294). A separate and rather unique example of spiritual mapping occurred in Asaro Valley, Eastern Highlands Province, whereby Strong (2017) says that Pentecostals' emphasis on witchcraft as the work of "evil spirits" precipitated a reimagination of the Asaro Valley as "cursed" (p. 70).

Having been identified through spiritual mapping or any other means of discernment, proper spiritual warfare is then waged by means of exorcisms and deliverance prayers. Empowered by the conquering force of the Holy Spirit, these practices seek to expel, cast out or cleanse a person or location of evil spiritual forces in order to restore cosmological and moral equanimity (Brown, 2011, p. 237; Rio, 2019, p. 341; Macdonald, 2015). As defined by Macdonald (2015),

> [Deliverance prayers] are vitriolic, ritualised, yet fluid utterances performed to extirpate, undermine and even ridicule ostensibly satanic cultural forms … They may be directed at a particular person believed to be afflicted by evil spiritual forces and may be accompanied by the Pentecostal technique of laying of hands to heal, or they may be directed to the community at large. (p. 467- 468)

From the P/e perspective, the evil residing within an individual must be attacked and destroyed to rescue the cursed individual as well as imperiled community that harbours them. Zocca and Urame (2008) support this by saying "sorcerers and witches were taught to be people possessed by devils and therefore in need of being liberated. The evil spirits must be expelled from them using the practice of exorcism as Jesus did" (p. 30). Similarly, Rio (2014) describes deliverance prayer and exorcism as a kind of violence,

> that tries to *retrieve* that person you knew so well from the corrupted figure of evil … If the person dies in the process, you will at least retrieve the authentic body of the person. This is better than living with that other corrupted body, which also represents a threat to other persons. (p. 332)

The violent imagery of Pentecostal spiritual warfare is captured by one of Macdonald's Oksapmin participants, who responded to the presence of a suspected witch inside the church in the following, aggressive way:

> Pray and we will stop all of the disturbances to your work! Stop all satanic things in the name of Jesus Christ! On this morning, Satan cannot stop us! Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we command, wreck, destroy, smash the work of the bad people of the world! Father, Satan is

> disturbing us in here! Oh God, God knows that you want to trick us! God will not touch or visit the bad people who have come! (Macdonald 2015, p. 475)

Spiritual warfare, conducted either as deliverance prayer or exorcism then, exhibits a clear tendency to see witchcraft and sorcery, and the agents believed to be involved in them, as forces that are not only intrinsically and deeply evil and colluding with Satan, but whose defining evil essence requires systematic and violent attack to save both the person and the community which they endanger. The boundary separating this extensive religious scheme from the real life violence that takes place thus becomes increasingly thin; both are attacking, and seeking to destroy, the satanic evil harboured inside people. The rise of new forms of violence against accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia then, can quite strongly be suggested to have developed out of these ideological and ritual forms that grew up alongside it during the same time period.

As a final point of discussion, I examine an example that lies at the extreme end of spiritual warfare whereby Pentecostal Christians in Port Vila were instructed to kill anything that embodied satanic forces (Eriksen & Rio, 2017, p. 193). This case began with several spiritual warfare raids that aimed to rid communities of evil spirits in 2010- 2011. In one particular raid, a family approached the church claiming that their house had *nakaimas* (sorcery) inside. The pastor, young choir singers, and founders of the church agreed to help and subsequently gathered at the house. While most of the group remained outside, senior members of the group entered the home to pray.

> the Pastor started giving instruction for the ceremony. Most were to stand in the back singing, some were to pray out loudly. They were now watching for something to react to the singing or praying, a rat, a gecko or an insect, since that would be a '[D]evil'. Members of the group were to give notice or try to kill it immediately. (p. 193)

The congregation was soon chasing "evil spirits" throughout the neighbourhood led by a woman "possessed by the Holy Spirit" (p. 193). Still praying, others "[hit] the trees, chopping them down to the ground with their bare hands … [someone else] angrily shouting "Out, devil! Out" (Eriksen & Rio, 2017, p. 194). This case, in particular, the instruction to immediately kill anything that "reacted" to their singing and praying, shows just how easily spiritual warfare bleeds into real-life violence; as part of the process of spiritual warfare, the group was told by their Pentecostal pastor to physically harm and kill living beings thought to embody satanic power. From here the link between P/e Christianity and the rise in witchcraft

and sorcery related violence becomes less and less about suggestive parallels and more about direct implementation of P/e ideas within schemes of real life action.

I have shown how spiritual mapping is an approach P/e groups take in identifying areas where evil spiritual forces exist in order to weed out witchcraft and sorcery; exorcisms and deliverance prayers accentuate the need to fight against them with ritual violence; and how in extreme cases, spiritual warfare raids encourage P/e Christians to kill living manifestations of evil. These P/e practices promote actions to eradicate and destroy witches and sorcerers which I argue provides a powerful template for the real physical violence directed towards them in contemporary Melanesia.

5.4 Violent P/e Christians

So far I have illustrated that P/e Christianity has maintained and intensified beliefs in, and increased fears of, witchcraft and sorcery; diabolised witches and sorcerers as evil, sinful and hyper-real threats to society; as well as encouraged followers to fight against and annihilate evil forces through techniques of spiritual warfare. This in itself would be enough to suggest a powerful link between P/e Christianity and the upsurge of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence occurring today. However, within this section, I show how P/e Christians have directly contributed to contexts of physical violence, whether as witnesses to this violence, those who have confirmed a suspected witch or sorcerer's identity, thereby leading to their torture and death, those who have killed an accused witch or sorcerer as part of undertaking spiritual warfare; and those who have directly harmed or killed accused witches and sorcerers.

It will be recalled from Chapter 4 that one of the important new trends in violence is the involvement of young, disenfranchised men (see page 43). While Eves and Kelly-Hanku (2014), Haley (2010), Forsyth and Eves (2015b) and Jorgensen (2014) explain this in terms of socio-economic dislocation, others pinpoint P/e Christianity as a catalyst. Rio (2019), for example, suggests that their actions are guided by growing up during "intense Pentecostal activity … where 'evil' has been targeted through an individualised search for moral ruptures" (p. 340). His point overall is that by witnessing P/e Christians purge "sites of evil … through prayer, spreading holy water and even assaulting and torturing suspected witches who are made to speak", newer generations came to see accused witches and sorcerers as agents of evil to rightly be destroyed, a crucial point for my argument (Rio, 2019, p. 340).

Dupont (2012) provides further insights, arguing that *raskol* gang members in Port Moresby "spend their lives drifting between Christianity and *raskolism*", with a Kaboni gang member saying that "we don't worship Satan and in fact, many of the boys are Christians" (p. 5). Furthermore, their gang safe house doubles as a Christian community centre. These conjunctures suggest that such gangs likely consider themselves as Christian warriors eradicating evil from society, a process strongly informed by P/e ideology and ritual.

Moving forward, Rio (2019), and Zocca and Urame (2008) confirm that P/e Christians are sanctioning witchcraft and sorcery-related violence by saying that "in most of these cases the question of guilt has been established in village courts, in meetings, in chiefly councils, or in church gatherings, and the decision to torture or kill the accused is often unanimously collective" (Rio, 2019, p. 333); and,

> The ambiguous and multiform attitude of the missionaries in regard to sorcery and witchcraft is also to be found among the present local and expatriate church leaders (priests, pastors, elders, religious sisters, etc.). Many of them simply share the beliefs of their people and justify the witch-hunt as a means of self-defense for individuals and their communities. They simply consider belief in sorcery as part of "Melanesian Identity" and refuse even to cast it into question. (Zocca & Urame, 2008, p. 31)

I provide several examples where P/e Christians have been directly involved in the judicial processes by which accused witches and sorcerers are confirmed as guilty and then consequently attacked. These attacks are considered an accepted method of dealing with individuals seen as satanic agents whose deadly threat must be stopped. In this sense, Kolma (2004) and Stewart (2015) both describe a 2004 case involving an Eastern Highlands woman named Komano Paul who was accused of being a sorcerer. Paul was "dragged to a Four Square Church [a popular Pentecostal church in Papua New Guinea] Pastor's house, where she was tied to an avocado tree, tortured and beaten to death" (Kolma, 2004, para. 12). Importantly, Stewart (2015) adds that the murder occurred "in the presence of the pastor", clergy members, and village authorities which suggests that these Pentecostal church members were sanctioning this violence (p. 192). While both articles do not explicitly detail the torture that Paul endured, the overall severity of the murder is described in Kolma's (2004) account, saying that "Paul was also subjected to beatings before she was tied to a tree and beaten to death … It was a brutal murder. She was literally tortured and dehumanized before being put to death by a single blow to the head" (para. 16). Another case involves the torture and killing of a woman in Enga Province which was agreed upon by a group of nine

church pastors ("*Police looking for PNG pastors*", 2016). The pastors, from Kombiam district, Enga Province, had allegedly "signed an agreement with 50 other leaders on behalf of their Poroyalin tribe last month to torture and kill the elderly woman, who had been accused of killing a 20-year old man through sorcery" ("*Police looking for PNG pastors*", 2016, para. 4). Although the churches that these pastors belonged to is unknown, the methodical plan to torture and kill the accused sorcerer is consistent with the theological and ritual attitudes espoused within P/e teachings. As another example, a 40-year-old man named John Ogono was accused of practising sorcery in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province in 2009 ("*Sorcerer butchered*", 2009). Ogono and his family were forcibly taken from their home by a group of youths at 4 am where he was then presented to a "kangaroo court" comprised of a village court official, peace officer, and four pastors from Four Square, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist and Lutheran churches, denominations that mostly fall within the P/e umbrella ("*Gorey End*", 2009, para. 2; "*Sorcerer butchered*", 2009). After several hours of unsuccessfully obtaining a confession, villagers were said to have "[forced] him to admit to practicing sorcery" ("*Sorcerer butchered*", 2009, para. 13). The court unanimously found him guilty based on this forced confession, while Ogono's final words to the court were "in the eyes of the leaders, only God knows, I am innocent" ("*Sorcerer butchered*", 2009, para. 14). Ogono was then "taken away to be chopped to death by a group of men armed with bush knives", regardless of an onlooker Dr William Pomat, the head of the Papua New Guinea Institute for Medical Research (IMR), who pleaded for the court to spare Ogono's life ("*Gorey End*", 2009, para. 2). The church pastors who openly condoned and allowed the butchering of Ogono were also reported, in another article on this incident, as "nearly [joining] the crowd to run [Dr Pomat] out of the place" ("*Multitude of churches*", 2010, para. 10). Another example that demonstrates P/e Christians not only sanctioning witchcraft and sorcery-related violence but also directly providing the identity of the alleged agents involved a group from the Revival (Pentecostal) Church, in Lihir, New Ireland Province, who were employed to identify the sorcerers responsible for a girl's illness. The girl felt "an odd sensation in her heart" which led the Pentecostal group to pray over her, a process that also revealed the names of the three women responsible for the daughter's illness (Ellison, 2019, para. 3). From this information given by the church group, the girl's father and five other men apprehended the accused women and tortured them to extract a confession. They were tortured with heated rods, had boiling water poured over them and were kept close to a fire, which subsequently caused all the women to suffer severe burns (Ellison, 2019). The women were saved by police before they were even more badly harmed

or killed. This example is significant to recent witchcraft and sorcery-related violence given that Pentecostal healers were sought out to heal the sick daughter but instead used their position to reveal speculative information about alleged sorcerers which led to their torture. Moreover, the perpetrators sought out no other form of evidence to support the healers' claims before brutally torturing these women. All of these cases demonstrate how P/e Christians, or those influenced by their ideologies, are acting as the final judgment and authority in situations before the accused witch or sorcerer is tortured and killed, all of which is underpinned by the P/e ontological intensification, moral vilification, and ritual annihilation of witchcraft and sorcery.

Another link that P/e Christianity has with the upsurge in violence against witches and sorcerers in recent times is that practices of spiritual warfare against evil spirits have led directly into real-life violence. In the previous section on spiritual warfare, I examined the various ways that P/e use techniques of magical violence to fight against alleged witches and sorcerers, however, I here show that this has gone beyond spiritual violence to physical beatings, torture and killings. For instance, exorcisms within the region today are no longer symbolic ritual processes but often lead to violent beatings to try and kill the physical vehicle of evil. For example, McAlister (2014) states "sometimes people are brutalized or killed during exorcism ceremonies, in which the demons are beaten out of the accused witch" (para. 11). Rio (2014) presents a similar example whereby accused witches were subjected to violence during acts of spiritual warfare led by Pentecostals within Port Vila, Vanuatu:

> Accused witches in these suburbs are held captive in their neighbourhood and the righteous people of the community legitimately beat them up over several days, in order to get them to tell the truth and confess … different relatives attack someone who is their son, nephew or cousin. They beat him so severely that he confesses and gives up other accomplices' names. The violence produces its own self-legitimizing evidence … the beating is also justified not just as an attack for correcting a wayward son or nephew, but also a cure for removing an evil force that has obstructed and captured his true identity. (p. 332)

Another case of spiritual warfare occurred on Ahamb Island, Vanuatu in 2014, where revivalists used spirit mediums guided by the Holy Spirit to engage in spiritual warfare with a "network of sorcerers" (Bratrud, 2019, p. 123). For five months, they held intensive prayer sessions every day, removed sorcery stones hidden on the island, gathered community members to visit certain areas to pray the "evil spirits" away, and cut down trees that held "evil powers" (p. 124). The commotion of the "spiritual war" evoked rampant fear of

sorcerers throughout the community, so much so that local men were afraid to go to the bathroom or sleep alone (Bratrud, 2019, p. 123, see page 66). In the end, five men confessed as being a part of the group of sorcerers, vividly describing their killings and the objects they had used. They also ousted their two senior leaders who did not choose to confess, which led the community to fear their reversion to sorcery practice and subsequently kill them.

> Fearing for the security and future of the island, a small mob of furious men took it upon themselves to kill the two men mentioned in order to protect the community. From the mob's point of view, the killing was an act of self-defence and a way of restoring safety on the island. Given how afraid Ahamb people are of sorcery, in all its brutality the attack became a way for these men to close the main channel from which incomprehensible deaths and misfortunes are believed to occur. (Bratrud, 2019, p. 125)

Moreover, in situations of spiritual warfare where a suspected witch or sorcerer is killed, these deaths are considered justified based on P/e theology.

The presented cases demonstrate just how easily spiritual warfare can spill over into real-life violence against accused agents, as it is evident that processes of "[engaging] the enemy by aggressive confrontation through prayer" (Jorgensen, 2005, p. 446) have translated into prolonged physical beatings and killings. This violence is enacted on the premise of urgently needing to reinstate the morality of a "wayward" person (Rio, 2014, p. 332) and to rid the community of unwanted evil.

Eriksen and Rio (2017) explicitly confirm the involvement of Pentecostals in the recent attacks and violence inflicted on alleged witches and sorcerers, by stating,

> The Pentecostal way of life is a form of constant warfare, which also results in the direct attacks on the specifically local diversity of spiritual forms … In the recent decade in Vanuatu this has also resulted in violent attacks on accused witches, and sometimes even the murder of witches. (p. 202)

The "Pentecostal way of life" is not only epitomized as constantly attacking and destroying evil spiritual forces but has been identified as 'legitimately' participating in the killing of accused agents. An example that illustrates the involvement of P/e-influenced Christians in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, is one of the preliminary cases I provide in Chapter 3 where a man accused of practising sorcery is tied up, beaten, cut and burnt throughout the night, and set on fire in Jiwaka Province (Kolma, 2019; see page 34). The supposedly "peaceful … Christian community" condoned and directly participated in the torture and

killing of this man (para. 2). Moreover, there are strong suggestions that this community was powerfully influenced by P/e theological and ritual attitudes as shown in the opening passage of this thesis, which is drawn from this specific case. The passage graphically details that sinners (witches and sorcerers) are considered by some churches as synonymous with sin whereby both must be "pulled out, root and stem, and fed to the fire, hung or drowned" (para. 7). Kolma (2019) also states that, "churches exist on the firm foundation that there exists a spiritual realm where the forces of good and evil are constantly at war" and that "sorcery is the work of the [D]evil" (para. 9). So, while it is not explicitly stated that people in this community are P/e Christians, at the very least, they are influenced by such teachings.

The significance of this wide range of cases is not only that P/e Christians sanction, witness, support, and participate in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence, but that these situations of brutal violence are powerfully informed by the P/e way of thinking that recognizes witches and sorcerers as evil spiritual forces that need to be fought against and annihilated. In light of the previous analysis whereby these agents are deemed as ontologically intense, horrifically evil, satanic forces that threaten society, it is hardly surprising to discover that these groups themselves are directly involved in the recent violence towards alleged witches and sorcerers. Overall, this section strongly suggests a clear relationship between P/e Christianity and the rise of violence against suspected witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia.

5.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have established vivid links between P/e Christianity and the recent rise of witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. Through its experientialist, pneumatological approach, P/e Christianity has made the threat of witches and sorcerers within Melanesia more intense and real than before, which has increased people's fears of these agents of evil. By heightening fears around witchcraft and sorcery practices, people will do whatever it takes to protect themselves and their families from evil, even torture and kill those they believe are harbouring evil. P/e Christianity, through its characterization and approach to witchcraft and sorcery, actively contributes to an ethos, morality, and destructive framework for encouraging this new culture of violence. These diabolic ideologies of witches and sorcerers *make* people think about the evil forces always looming in their lives as something they need to banish by whatever means necessary. In addition to this diabolisation,

spiritual warfare is encouraging an attack-based mentality that provides a crucial template for real-life violence against alleged witches and sorcerers; the violence is simply an extension of spiritual warfare, sharing the common goal of exterminating evil from the community, distinguished by its insistence on attacking the vehicle as well as the spirit of Satan.

What is most worrying about this relationship is that the impact of these forms of Christianity in Melanesia are so pervasive that it can be assumed all Christian churches within the region are in some way influenced (Hovey, 1990). As P/e beliefs of witches and sorcerers as sinful agents that must be annihilated are increasingly influencing non-P/e Christians, the ability to minimize and stop witchcraft and sorcery-related violence is becoming much more difficult.

6. Conclusion

The current situation whereby accused witches and sorcerers are being brutally tortured and killed in Melanesia has been a topic of concern for numerous governments, researchers, 'grassroots' groups, international and regional NGOs (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a). All of these groups have been trying to make sense of the recent surge of new forms of violence by advancing various explanations and approaches that I have described in the thesis. However, my main intention has been to establish P/e variants of Christianity as a crucially important factor in these situations. My argument has been based on a careful examination of the moral, theological, and ritual attributes of these kinds of Christianity and how they have fed directly into examples of real-life violence against those suspected of practising witchcraft and sorcery. It is important to note that Melanesia already contained many violent practices traditionally, and as I have shown accused witches and sorcerers were a common target of these. Therefore, any factor contributing to the new forms of violence, including P/e Christianity, builds upon these pre-existing violent practices, rather than producing them entirely new.

Among the essential findings of the thesis have been that P/e Christianity is heavily experiential and very much concerned with spiritual realities, which has meant that followers view the world as being in a constant war of good and evil. The importance of this to my overall argument is that in the Melanesian context, traditional occult practices, such as witchcraft and sorcery, were reestablished in the Christian cosmological framework as representative of the utmost evil force, the Devil, through processes of diabolisation. In short, this meant that witches and sorcerers were considered as vicious, all-pervading threats that are capable of committing inhuman and horrifying acts which, in turn, intensified the reality and fear of these agents. These ideologies that P/e Christianity has formulated, through their theology and beliefs, has created an environment that encourages people towards fighting against evil spiritual forces, for instance, witches and sorcerers, with spiritual warfare. What I have shown in this thesis is that spiritual warfare practices provide a ritual template to which followers can apply this mindset in battling evil that has spilt over into torture and physical violence against suspected witches and sorcerers. Therefore, P/e attitudes towards witches and sorcerers strongly inform a moral climate conducive to real violence inflicted on people that is being acted upon and resulting in the torture and killing of accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia. As evidence, P/e Christians are illustrated throughout

this thesis as witnessing, sanctioning, supporting and participating in this violence themselves; literally applying their ritual and spiritual approach of annihilating evil.

These core findings speak most directly to the emerging current literature that examines P/e Christianity, witchcraft and sorcery, and their intimate relation to the recent upsurge of violence, such as Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes (2017b), Eriksen and Rio (2017), Rio (2014, 2019), and Jorgensen (2005, 2014). My thesis has built upon and also extended the insights of these authors by identifying and analyzing the precise attributes of P/e theology and rituality that provide a robust platform for the performance of real life violence against accused witches and sorcerers in Melanesia. I also wish to position my findings briefly in relation to the anthropology of Melanesian Christianity and also studies of witchcraft and sorcery in Melanesia.

6.1 The Anthropology of Christianity in Melanesia

There is a substantial body of literature written about P/e Christianity in Melanesia that have researched various topics such as morality and illness (Eves, 2010), dreaming (Eves, 2011; Lohmann, 2003); Holy Spirit movements (Barr, 1983); secondary conversions (Barker, 2012); revival movements (Eriksen & MacCarthy, 2019; Macdonald, 2019; Robbins, 2001); globalization (Robbins, 2004); growing schisms between P/e Christianity and mainline churches (Handman, 2015; Maggio, 2016) and its history within the region (Douglas, 2001; Gallagher & Gallagher, 2019; Gore, 2019). There is also a considerable volume of work that looks at the connection between P/e Christianity and its influence upon witchcraft and sorcery (Bialecki, 2017; Geschiere, 2017; Jorgensen, 2005; MacCarthy, 2017; Macdonald 2015; Strong, 2017) and, as stated above, a small but growing list of studies on P/e Christianity in relation to the recent rise of violence in the region.

While current research has discussed how these forms of Christianity have diabolised traditional phenomena, including witchcraft and sorcery, what my research has importantly revealed is that P/e attitudes espousing the condemnation of and ritual battle with witches and sorcerers aligns directly with real-life violence. As shown in previous studies, traditional witches and sorcerers have always represented a source of danger, malice, and harm. However, P/e variants of Christianity built upon ideas of already malicious entities and conduced a reimagination of them as the purest exemplification of Satan, who must be fought against and destroyed. Among the many explanations of why violence towards these agents

has increased, there were no explanations of why this violence has become brutalized and intensified. I make the point that it is the wide range of P/e theological and ritual practices such as, processes of diabolisation and practices of spiritual warfare, in combination with a range of other explanatory factors, that have essentially supercharged this kind of violence. This P/e fight against evil is not figurative or symbolic; followers are made to believe that the threat of evil is real and visceral, that those harbouring evil live among them and must be eradicated. These groups then go further by providing a means to actively combat these evils through spiritual warfare. It is these kinds of ideologies that are so provoking and intense that they incite those influenced by P/e theology to attack and annihilate suspected witches and sorcerers. This likely association of P/e Christianity with the rise in violence is something that the literature on Melanesian Christianity is only starting to pick up on.

Another distinctive finding of the thesis is that P/e Christians, or those influenced by their teachings, have been facilitating and participating in actual physical violence towards accused witches and sorcerers. This differs from existing work as it lays out the several ways that these groups have been directly involved in recent violence, whether as participants, onlookers, or facilitators. Some key accounts show how P/e Christianity intensified the use of violence against witches and sorcerers by *raskol* gangs (Dupont, 2012; Rio, 2019); have been involved in the judicial processes whereby accused witches and sorcerers are confirmed as guilty and then directly attacked ("*Gorey End*", 2009; Kolma, 2004; "*Multitude of churches*", 2010; "*Police looking for PNG pastors*", 2016; "*Sorcerer butchered*", 2009); helped in identifying suspected sorcerers who were then tortured (Ellison, 2019); performed practices of spiritual warfare that led to the physical beatings, torture and murder of accused witches and sorcerers (Bratrud, 2019; Jorgensen, 2005; McAlister, 2014; Rio, 2014); and finally, those influenced by P/e teachings, who were the direct perpetrators that tortured and killed witches and sorcerers (Bratrud, 2019; Kolma, 2019). This evidence shows that it is no longer just speculation that P/e Christianity is contributing to the recent witchcraft and sorcery-related violence. The entire repertoire of theological and ritual strategies within P/e groups result in real violence.

6.2 Witchcraft, Sorcery and Violence in Melanesia

Witchcraft and sorcery have long been an object of ethnographic fascination in Melanesia (for example, Douglas, 1970/2010; Fortune, 1932/2004; Hogbin, 1932; Knauft, 1985, 2002;

Malinowski, 1925/1974; Patterson, 1974; Stephen, 1987b; Tonkinson, 1981; Trompf, 1991; Tuzin, 1980). The same can be said for violence as a part of Melanesian history expressed as warfare, homicide (Foster, 2001), rape, domestic violence, gender-based violence and of course, witchcraft and sorcery-related violence (Jolly, 2012) all regular components of traditional Melanesian societies. Violence towards accused witches and sorcerers thus existed within a pre-existing culture of violence within Melanesia and has been found in a range of literature throughout time.

However, the current situation of a rise in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence can most definitely not be reduced to a continuation of traditional violent practices towards accused witches and sorcerers. This violence comprises of much more brutalized and dehumanizing methods of torture and murder that have no precedent in the historical ethnographic record. Alleged witches and sorcerers are being tortured with an extensive range of horrific weaponry used to cause suffering, these acts of violence are deliberately prolonged, and the large mobs of men that are the new perpetrators of this brutal violence make it incredibly difficult for authorities to intervene and stop what has increasingly become public and humiliating spectacles of torture and death. These prominent changes in witchcraft and sorcery-related violence show that the very nature of this violence has fundamentally shifted to involve barbaric acts enacted less for quickly eliminating the suspected use of witchcraft and sorcery, but rather to make the accused suffer agonizing pain. I have argued that a crucial contributing factor to this transformation has been the deepening influence and spread of P/e Christianity, in particular of its focus upon diabolisation and practices of spiritual warfare.

Witchcraft and sorcery beliefs have survived processes of modernity, albeit in a transformed state, into contemporary times for a range of reasons. An absolutely crucial reason that I have argued is that P/e Christianity has reinforced, intensified and increased beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery because of their deeply experientialist, spirit-focused drive and strong tendency to see the world as a battle of good and evil (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a; Geschiere, 2017; Macdonald, 2015, 2018; Robbins, 2004). Along with this, the exponential rate of followers converting to P/e groups continues to grow their already expansive reach to further influence people to concentrate on witches and sorcerers as “devils”, “demons”, “heathens”, hyper-real and visceral threats that need to be fought against (Eriksen & Rio, 2017, p. 198-206; Bratrud, 2017, 2019; Strong, 2017). These thoughts are emphasized by P/e followers who also advocate for people to use aggressive and physical strategies such as

spiritual warfare to combat these apparent threats in their communities. As it has been shown, this attack-based mentality does not only include magical violence but feeds into physical violence towards alleged witches and sorcerers. Therefore, it can be strongly suggested that as long as these kinds of Christianity exist, witchcraft and sorcery-related violence in Melanesia will continue.

6.3 Final thoughts

I hope that the new insights I have provided within this work improve the recognition of P/e Christianity and its important role in contemporary violence against accused witches and sorcerers. This is so all the contributing factors to this violence are realized and those combating these situations gain a greater understanding of where violent behaviours, enacted on these agents, are stemming from. I hope the findings of my thesis contribute to making this factor as well-known as all of the other factors that academics have suggested as influencing this violence.

The key issue underpinning much of this discussion begins with the ontological standpoint one takes when addressing these issues which is "Who are the victims"? Forsyth and Eves (2015b) touch on the extreme difficulty of producing practical outcomes on the level of lived reality for the violence surrounding witchcraft and sorcery practices as there are conflicting ontological beliefs between local people and external observers. On one hand, a large majority of Melanesians take the ontological reality of witchcraft and sorcery very seriously and believe the "victims" are those who "have been killed or otherwise negatively affected by the actions of a witch or a sorcerer" (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b, p. 2). This is opposed to most academics, human rights groups, international NGOs and media outlets with a Western ontological viewpoint who consider the "victims" to be "those who are accused of *being* witches or sorcerers and consequently attacked" (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b, p. 2). What this means is that the witchcraft and sorcery-related violence occurring currently in Melanesia is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future if this first ontological difference is not addressed.

The idea provided by P/e Christianity that accused witches and sorcerers are agents of the Devil that need to be destroyed, with spiritual warfare providing a template for real violence is continuing to spread throughout Melanesia. With these beliefs fomenting violence that NGOs, churches, 'grassroots' activists and local people are trying to combat, can it be

expected to stop? Are these efforts going to result in this 'problem' going away, if people's ingrained beliefs in P/e Christianity, witchcraft and sorcery continue to persist and often mutually reinforce each other? Former University of Goroka Vice-Chancellor, Gairo Onagi (2015) states that "belief systems cannot be simply erased from people's minds" (p. ix), so how can violence towards accused witches and sorcerers be stopped if contemporary P/e Christian beliefs assert that evil within their lives is caused by witches and sorcerers? The reality of the situation is that there is going to continue to be violence enacted against accused witches and sorcerers so long as the various contributing factors, one being P/e Christianity, carry on influencing people to commit such heinous acts. This essentially means that any efforts to stop this violence are going to face challenges that place Melanesian religious ontology into question. This is not to dismiss the efforts of the many people who are working to improve these situations, it is more about drawing attention to the complex issue of trying to find a solution to this situation.

I suggest developing knowledge about all of the factors that contribute towards this violence as a first step forward. However, once all of the factors contributing to this violence are better understood, where to from there? Onagi (2015) states that "sorcery-related violence will continue unless we educate our people on the negative impacts of sorcery and witchcraft beliefs. Heinous murders of innocent lives on suspicions of sorcery or witchcraft will continue to rise" (p. ix). I agree in the respect that there need to be ways in which academics who conduct this research can inform the population, who are dealing with the brunt of these situations, on what we believe is occurring and why, as any positive change is unlikely to happen if academics do not make it an active priority to pursue this. If the work we produce is not to gain a better understanding of situations to educate those living under those circumstances, then who does the work serve? While I do not have succinct thoughts on how exactly to stop the violence enacted on accused witches and sorcerers in contemporary Melanesia, I do know that the positive steps towards comprehending these situations are in vain if these efforts do not translate into communicating our knowledge with those who need help. So, while I have argued that P/e Christianity is an influencing factor in the contemporary violence against witches and sorcerers, it is vital to reflect on how this crucial insight can make a genuine difference.

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Appendix

List of cultural groups and their corresponding home province in Papua New Guinea, unless otherwise stated

Agarabi	Eastern Highlands Province
Ahamb Islanders	Malekula Province, Vanuatu
Arapesh	East Sepik Province
Dobu	Milne Bay Province
Duna	Southern Highlands/Hela Province (2012)
Etoro	Southern Highlands Province
Fore	Eastern Highlands Province
Gebusi	Western Province
Gururumba	Eastern Highlands Province
Hewa	Southern Highlands/Hela Province (2012)
Huli	Southern Highlands/Hela Province (2012)
Kaluli	Southern Highlands Province
Kamano	Eastern Highlands Province
Kilenge	West New Britain Province
Kove	West New Britain Province
Kuma	Western Highlands/Jiwaka Province (2012)
Kwoma	East Sepik Province
Mekeo	Central Province
Mendi	Southern Highlands Province
Mintima	Chimbu Province
Oksapmin	Sandaun Province
Onabasulu	Southern Highlands Province
Samo	Western Province
Tauna Awa	Eastern Highlands Province
Toaripi	Gulf Province
Tolai	East New Britain Province
Urapmin	Sandaun Province
Usurufa	Eastern Highlands Province
Wola	Southern Highlands Province