

### **Demonology and the enchantment of modern life**

by H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen and Wilhelmina van Wetering

The main theme of this contribution is the continuing preoccupation with witchcraft, sorcery and other black powers in the modern world. The authors argue that such interest is characteristic of open and 'progressive' societies, rather than backward looking and isolated communities. It is also asserted that the exotic and weird fantasies woven around demons and witches, betray underlying economic and social tensions. The imagery is shown to provide a key for the understanding of transformation processes.

The argument is based primarily on a 25-year period of field work and oral history studies among the Maroons of Suriname's interior. The discussion is widened to include a few other, well-known case-studies such as Salem in New England, Mora in Sweden and present-day Haiti. The authors' aim is to demonstrate the relevance of their approach for cultures in different parts of the world.

### **Public Courts and Recent Witch-Hunts in Eastern Cameroon**

by Peter Geschiere

Since 1981, the State courts in Eastern Cameroon condemn 'witches'. The accused – men and woman, old and young – are sentenced to heavy penalties without 'concrete' evidence being produced. This is a remarkable change. In colonial times, State courts rather persecuted witch-doctors for creating unrest by their accusations. Now, witch-doctors appear before the courts as key-witnesses. Their testimonies are crucial in the conviction of 'witches'. The issues involved here, have wider relevance. All over Africa, post-colonial regimes feel obliged in one way or another to attack witchcraft. According to some authors 'sorcery lies at the centre of the State-building process' in present-day Africa. In this article, Geschiere analyses the witchcraft court-cases from Eastern Cameroon in the broader context of the precarious relations between State and peasants. The interventions by the judges bring about a confrontation between two different discourses on witchcraft. In the official discourse, witchcraft is unequivocally evil. The Maka conceptions of *djambe* (witchcraft) are more complex. The judges have enough power to impose new sanctions. But, in practice, their attacks on witchcraft are subverted by the impact of local conceptions. Especially their alliance with local witch-doctors – to the Maka the pre-eminent representatives of the *djambe* – has ambivalent effects. Thus, in some respects, the official offensive against witchcraft has the opposite effect of re-inforcing local witchcraft beliefs. The ambivalent position of State-elites and their continuing reliance on witch-doctors or other local specialists strengthen the resilience of local beliefs and make the relation between State-formation and witchcraft in Africa a very complex issue.

## Hidden Force and group boundaries in Netherlands East Indies. A view from the Indies fiction

by D. Moesbergen

In the past three-quarter century of the existence of the colonial society the relations between the main population groups have changed considerably. This was also the case within the European group, especially when we look at the relation between the Europeans that were imported and those born in the East, who for the greater part were of mixed race. This development can clearly be traced back to the Indies fiction, especially in the stories about the man-woman relationships across the racial boundaries. During this entire period this remains a prominent theme in literature.

Particularly in relation to that theme the hidden force (*goena-goena*) emerges. Usually it is applied by a Eurasian woman to 'work on' a European man.

After having generally denoted the political and social changes in Netherlands East Indies and having underlined the significance of the Indies fiction for the social sciences, a few stories are analysed which together cover this entire period. At the centre will be the reaction of this group to changes which accompany the transformation from colony to colonial state. This transformation became evident in the growth of the group of Europeans that were born and educated in Europe. At the same time more and more civil servants were recruited from the Indonesian population as a result of the so-called Ethic policy (*ethische politiek*), which after 1901 determined government policy with regard to the colony. As a result, the bottom layers of the European upper class, who were of mixed origin and by tradition best represented in the lower ranks of civil servants, got into a tight corner. The frequent occurrence of *goena-goena* practices, which originated in the Indonesian society, can be explained as a reaction of despair by this group. In the article examples from novels and stories are discussed that demonstrate these events in the field of the relations between the sexes, namely between European (*totok*) men and Eurasian woman.

## Dutch witchcraft in the 16th and 17th century

by Hans de Waardt

This contribution deals with the Dutch situation in matters of witchcraft in the 16th and 17th centuries. Central problem is the question which sources can be used to detect the more informally uttered witchcraft-accusations. Until quite recently historians almost exclusively concerned themselves with judicial data only. The point is that if one tries to get an overall-sight of the ideas about witches and sorcerers once – or eventually still – common in early modern Europe, one has to probe in as many sources as are accessible.

It is presumed here that only a minority of the primary accusations among e.g. neighbours were brought to trial under criminal law. Probably an even smaller portion ended in a formal sentence.

In the 16th century the learned explanation of sorcery as the craft of devil-worshippers only was time and again thoroughly exposed to the common people in the course of the witchcraft-trials. In 1976 Richard Kieckhefer supposed that as a result of this the populace at large accepted this elitarian demonology and that popular interpretations of sorcery were put aside. Here it is shown by the hand of material coming from civil suits, for slander and defamation with an accusation of witchcraft, the registers containing the censures of members of the Reformed Church, the reports of jesuits working in the Netherlands and pamphlets, that as a rule in the 17th century in original accusations of witchcraft still no mention was made of the devil's pact. The only thing with which people seemed to be bo-

thered was the illness of cattle or child etc. ascribed to a witch. On the other hand, quite a few people admitted without any force what so ever to having made a pact and written contract with Satan. These pacts gave only very seldomly the power to harm other humans by magical means. Most women who confessed this deed had had sexual intercourse with the devil and had completely submitted to his will. Men ordinarily drew up contracts in which the vice-versa obligations were neatly pointed out.

So it is clear that learned interpretations of witchcraft were only partially incorporated by the people. Sorcery and diabolism remained separate conceptions in the world-view of non-elitarian-groups.

### **Witch belief; witchcraft and religion in the Netherlands between 1890 and 1940**

by Willem de Blécourt

Although recent European witchcraft has been a blind spot for most anthropologists and historians, it has drawn the attention of folklorists. Despite the mass of material collected by the latter, their witchcraft texts contain some serious gaps. The constitutive link between witchcraft and religion is one factor that has not been acknowledged generally.

This article hypothesizes that there is a close relation between orthodox Calvinism and witchcraft. Since direct proof is lacking (the religion of those who interpreted illness in terms of witchcraft is not known) it is offered in a roundabout way. While collecting witchcraft texts, folklorists have used the negative category of superstition, i.e., everything not accepted as an official belief. In practice, however, their informants sought help against witchcraft from specialists, among them Roman Catholic priests. One of the most public instances of witchcraft was the boiling of a live black hen in order to draw the witch to her alleged victim and compel her to withdraw the curse. Another way to recognize a witch involved the rotation of the Bible. These practices coincided geografically with orthodox Calvinism. Loose remarks from various regions even point to a direct link: orthodox Calvinists found justification in the Bible for the existence of witches. As their own religion offered no counter charms, they had to apply to Roman Catholics or to resort to violence.

It seems likely that similar relations between witchcraft and orthodox Calvinism can be found in other parts of Europe.

### **A demon in a chute; research notes from Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam**

by Mildred Kuiperbak

Afro-Surinamese religion or 'winti' is a controversial topic for Suriname's Creole group, at home as well as in The Netherlands. Whereas some will recommend it as a prop to ethnic identity, others regard it as a relic from the past and, at best, a source of moral support for the disadvantaged. The latter category is notoriously well-represented in Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer, and so is 'winti'.

The author makes light of current interpretations, both of well-meaning liberal views as of conventual disdain. She takes issue with the prevalent notion that 'winti' believers are traditionalists, clinging to an outdated life-style and stuck in 'idolatry'. She shows that 'winti' adepts try to pave the way to a more successful participation in a wider world. She is at pains to present an inside or 'emic' view, and adds a touch of feminism. She explores the participant women's own ideas about demons, which only partly coincide with written statements about the subject. Moreover, she tries to indicate which social forces are at the root of the social reproduction of this world view.