



# Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison

*Peter Geschiere*

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In Dante's *Inferno*, the lowest circle of Hell is reserved for traitors, those who betrayed their closest companions. In a wide range of literatures and mythologies such intimate aggression is a source of ultimate terror, and in *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust*, Peter Geschiere masterfully sketches it as a central ember at the core of human relationships, one brutally revealed in the practice of witchcraft. Examining witchcraft in its variety of forms throughout the globe, he shows how this often misunderstood practice is deeply structured by intimacy and the powers it affords. In doing so, he offers not only a comprehensive look at contemporary witchcraft but also a fresh—if troubling—new way to think about intimacy itself.

Geschiere begins in the forests of southeast Cameroon with the Maka, who fear “witchcraft of the house” above all else. Drawing a variety of local conceptions of intimacy into a global arc, he tracks notions of the home and family—and witchcraft’s transgression of them—throughout Africa, Europe, Brazil, and Oceania, showing that witchcraft provides powerful ways of addressing issues that are crucial to social relationships. Indeed, by uncovering the link between intimacy and witchcraft in so many parts of the world, he paints a provocative picture of human sociality that scrutinizes some of the most prevalent views held by contemporary social science.

One of the few books to situate witchcraft in a global context, *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust* is at once a theoretical tour de force and an empirically rich and lucid take on a difficult-to-understand spiritual practice and the private spaces throughout the world it so greatly affects.

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