

# PHOTO MAGIC: PHOTOGRAPHS IN PRACTICES OF HEALING AND HARMING IN EAST AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

BY

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## ABSTRACT

In this contribution, I present a few examples of practices in present-day African Christian Churches in which photographs 'do magic' and are used to heal or harm. To counter a tendency, inherent in this topic, of exoticizing and othering, I not only give examples of African 'photo magic' but also include European ones, examples that in the 'standard' or 'official' histories of Western photography are missing. In addition, I try to work out the interdependence and the mutual mirroring of Western and African practices and discourses, i.e., aspects of their interculturality, against the background of the Christian Eucharist and cult of relics. For it is in the Eucharist and relics that the paradoxes of simultaneous presence and absence as well as substance and representation are dealt with, paradoxes that will reappear in the photographic practices in Kenya and Uganda. Thus, I attempt to interpret Ugandan and Kenyan photo magic in Christian churches as variations of the Eucharist.

Technological media, for example photography, develop their own cultural biographies, like everything else. New research has shown that they do not constitute fixed, stable units. Technological hardware provides a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for how, in the final analysis, media will be used and what cultural concretion they will receive. So while, on the one hand, they lastingly shape patterns of socio-cultural interaction and human sensory perception, as McLuhan noted, on the other hand, they are themselves culturally shaped. They are integrated in local practices and concretized in specific ways, in accordance with cultural milieus. The following uses the example of the picture-medium photography to show how technological and cultural dispositives interact and bring forth new media concretions and new cultural hybridizations.

In contrast to the vast literature on images Westerners took from Africans, in this paper I present a rather new field of research and knowledge, having as its subject the photographs Africans produced for Africans, and their discourses and practices in relation to photography.<sup>2</sup>

While a certain kind of Foucauldian analysis, putting the steady scrutiny of the disciplinary gaze, power-knowledge conjunctions and institutions in the foreground, has been applied to recent studies of photography,<sup>3</sup> in the following I will concentrate on a different aspect. Against the reduction of the camera to an instrument of surveillance and domination, I intend to show that the camera—in Africa as well as in the West—was used not only as a dis-enchanted, technological-rational apparatus, but also as an instrument of enchantment. Photography as a modern technical medium—as well as other media—produced its own magic.

I will describe a few examples of practices in present-day African Christian Churches in which photographs ‘do magic’ and are used to heal or harm. To counter a tendency, inherent in this topic, of exoticizing and ‘othering’, I will not only give examples of African ‘photo magic’ but also include European ones, examples that in the ‘standard’ or ‘official’ histories of Western photography are missing. In addition, I will try to work out the interdependence and the mutual mirroring of Western and African practices and discourses, i.e., aspects of their interculturality, against the background of the Christian Eucharist and cult of relics. For it is in the Eucharist and relics that the paradoxes of simultaneous presence and absence as well as substance and representation are dealt with, paradoxes that reappear in the photographic practices in Kenya and Uganda. Thus, I attempt to interpret Ugandan and Kenyan photo magic in Christian churches as variations of the Eucharist.

In this context, I also briefly address the term ‘fetish’, which, as used primarily by Western Christian missionaries, served to defame and ‘other’ African religious practices. Yet I will show that the discourses about the fetish in Africa can also be read as a debate on the Christian (Catholic) sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, and on the relics, which have been the object of vehement controversies since the Reformation. The relationship between Eucharist, relics, and fetish has to be taken into consideration even more because, in Kenya and Uganda today, it is African Christians in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches who re-actualize the term ‘fetish’ as a weapon to discriminate against everything ‘pagan’ or ‘traditional’, i.e., non-Christian, often without realizing that by localizing Christian discourses and practices, especially the Eucharist, they reinstate the fetish.

### *Beginnings*

Soon after its presentation to the Parisian Academy of Sciences in 1839, photography, as a new medium, was integrated in a wide vari-

ety of discourses and practices that located it in various domains of science, art, and popular culture. As a ‘pencil of nature’ or as a ‘message sans code’, photography entered into an alliance with the state and sciences and served the production of documents and evidence, i.e., purposes of objectification and the search for truth. Likewise, the new media opened up new fields of visibility: at fairs and in certain spiritualist circles it was used to produce illusions, wonders, and ‘materializations’ of spirits, thoughts, and various fluids. Thus, photography contributed substantially to the emergence of a modern, positivistic ‘culture of realism’, at the same time strengthening the latter’s shadow side, the fantastic. As a rational, technological medium of evidence of a more or less natural, automatic self-inscribing, it also produced ‘shadow images’ that gave ghosts, phantoms, and all kinds of invisible energies and fluid images and that brought back the dead. As Walter Benjamin remarked, the most exact technique of reproduction can give its product a magic value.<sup>4</sup> In certain contexts, the camera and photographic images turn into magical objects that gain agency: they turn into fetishes.

### *The invention of the fetish in Africa*

The term *fetisso*, ‘fetish’, emerged in the intercultural mercantile space of Africa’s West Coast when Portuguese and later Dutch merchants tried to engage Africans in peaceful trade. In these cross-cultural spaces, Europeans were challenged to rethink the capacity of material objects to embody religious, commercial, aesthetic, and sexual values.<sup>5</sup> As Pietz has shown etymologically, the terms *feitico*, *feiticeiro*, and *feiticaria* were used in 15th- and 16th-century Portugal in connection with witchcraft and idolatry.<sup>6</sup> In the fetish, Portuguese traders and seamen attributed to Africans what was excluded from the dominant Christian discourse, namely witchcraft and idolatry. What was repressed of their own was (re)discovered as something alien in Africa.

The Western fetish of the Portuguese and Dutch in Africa shares little, as Wyatt MacGaffey has shown, with African notions of power objects. In contrast to the fetish of the Portuguese, the African power objects were not thought of as purely material, but more as containers that could be invaded and moved by an outside power, force, or a spirit. In addition, fetishes were not the product of chance but were instead carefully composed out of certain materials following complex rules of metaphor and metonymy. The power or force these objects could gain depended on certain restrictions ritual experts had to undergo. Only when he or she kept to the imposed alimentary or sexual taboos

could the power of these objects be generated. The scandal of this sort of practice for the Europeans was the confusion it made between the spiritual body of a human being and the profane materiality of things, between being subject and object of action.<sup>7</sup>

It cannot be excluded, however, that the African notions of power objects, as MacGaffey has described them, are themselves already the hybrid result of Portuguese Catholic missionaries' influence. As has been suggested, the so-called nail-fetishes of the Bakongo could be interpreted as local appropriations of the crucified Christ or Saint Sebastian.<sup>8</sup>

The invention of the fetish and later of fetishism as the 'mental stage of the primitives' clearly served to make Africans 'the Other'. But the fascination and strange career of the fetish in the West is not to be understood solely in terms of this function. Along with this 'othering', there is also the mirroring of one's own societal situation in the other, the wish to work out matters of one's own in terms of the example of the other. This creates the possibility of using the primitive antithesis of one's own thinking as a mirror of European or contemporary institutions.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, the discourses about the fetish in Africa must also be read as a debate on the Christian (Catholic) sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, and on the relics, which were the object of vehement controversies since the Reformation. Apparently, in the 18th century, Europeans in West Africa were aware of these connections, for in the text of the Calvinistic Dutchman Bosman we find African fetishes and Catholic sacramental objects equated.<sup>10</sup> Fetishes are 'false' sacraments.<sup>11</sup>

### *Photography's magic*

In the course of Africa's colonization, the new medium was intensively employed to imagine, classify, type, and dominate Africans—like the insane and criminal in Europe. Yet numerous travel reports, especially since the mid-19th century, show that Europeans—missionaries, colonial administrators, explorers, and travelers—also used the instruments actually intended for scientific research and documentation, especially the camera, to create 'wonders', in order to astonish and terrify Africans. Europeans used fireworks, mirrors, the *laterna magica*, telescopes and cameras in a twofold way: first, displayed as wondrous objects, with an eye to introducing them as commodities in a circulation of desire; and second, as magical instruments to overpower the natives and furnish themselves with an aura of superhuman power. Thus, Joseph Thomson, a Scotsman traveling through East Africa in 1883 on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, stylized himself as a *mganga*, a medicine

man. With the aid of a camera, he produced magic charms for Masai warriors to make them brave and successful in battle. 'This I did by simply photographing them, the pretense of making *dawa* (charms) being a capital and only opportunity of transferring a likeness of the Masai to my collection.'<sup>12</sup>

The missionary François Coillard, who spent time in the Buluzi kingdom in western Zambia toward the end of the 19th century, used the camera as a weapon in the struggle against the devil, as he proudly declared. He took photographs on site to prove to the Lozi that he possessed supernatural power—like Thomson among the Masai. In addition, he showed prints of executed rebels and recorded that the king's sister recoiled. 'These people (missionaries) are dreadful', she said. 'They carry the living and the dead in their pockets!'<sup>13</sup>

Coillard may have been an extreme case, but in no way an exception. When establishing their mission stations, most Christian missionaries calculatingly employed technical media—the book, the printing press, film, the gramophone, and photography—to spread Christian doctrine and the accompanying way of life as effectively as possible, but also to demonstrate their own and their God's extraordinary power. The effects of this power are detailed in their reports: the unfamiliar media evoked fear, terror, panic, and submission; the 'savages' or 'heathens' did not know how to operate the apparatus, ran away screaming, shook with fear, fell on their knees begging for mercy, etc. The missionaries' reports exhibit a conspicuously large number of variations of these scenes of media-technological superiority;<sup>14</sup> they suggest that Europeans possessed a (technical) knowledge enabling them to magically dazzle the others.

Here I would like to underscore that, in Africa, it was Europeans who initially placed photography in a context of power, healing, killing, sorcery, and witchcraft. They converted technology into magic.<sup>15</sup> In Europe, too, photography was used to discipline, identify, and frighten the 'lower' classes, for example, the homeless.<sup>16</sup> But while in Europe the spread of amateur photography around 1880 and 1890 increasingly repressed the 'profound madness'<sup>17</sup> of photography or turned it into an everyday routine, Europeans used the new medium in Africa as a magical practice to heal as well as to harm, as medicine, as a photographic gun to kill, or as an apparatus 'to steal souls', so that Africans repeated the fear and terror that the enlightened Victorian gentleman thought he had left behind.

*Photography's routinization in East Africa*

With the establishment of the colonial state, photography—originally a foreign, Western medium<sup>18</sup>—was then integrated in many ways in everyday urban life in East Africa and in everyday life in the rural regions by the 1950s and 1960s. The colonial state, too, used the new technology of reproduction to identify, oversee, and control its subjects more effectively. In doing so, it opened a new discursive field and created a practice of identifying the photographic portrait and its subject 'in truth'. But, additionally, photography connected with existing local practices, for example pre-colonial traditions of creating sculptures or textiles and, above all, established itself as portrait art. Despite initial resistance against the new medium (as a 'soul-stealing machine', etc., see above), very soon many commercial photo studios arose, allowing African women and men to use photography as a new technology of the self and to experience themselves in pictures as aesthetic subject and object at the same time.<sup>19</sup> The new medium was integrated, not only in portrait art but also in numerous local practices: the cult of the dead, rites of passage, the culture of celebration and remembrance, and certain traditions of healing and harming. Photography developed highly individual local media histories of enchantment and dis-enchantment. As mentioned above, I address in the following the use of photos in practices of healing and harming in (independent) Christian Churches in Africa, because precisely here—in a certain continuity with and in reaction against the missionary practices of staging media-technological superiority, as noted above—photos are turned into magical objects that not only represent but also create presences and, in addition, achieve the power to act.

*Photo magic in Kenya*

In the 1950s, photography spread into rural areas of Western Kenya. About the same time, a form of sorcery emerged there that integrated the new technological medium into local practices. If someone wanted to harm someone else, he brought the latter's photo to a 'witch doctor',<sup>20</sup> who held it behind glass or a mirror, objects that reflect an image like a calabash filled with water or that create a double, like a shadow. Here, photography was integrated into techniques of divination that served to identify the victim. The interplay of photograph and words—a curse or a song sung by the witch doctor—generated power and gave life to the person portrayed in the image, who began to move and

returned the gaze. Then the witch doctor cut the photograph into pieces or pierced it with a needle or knife. If blood dripped from the picture, this was a sign that the act of injury or killing was successful. It seems obvious to connect the bleeding photo with the type of the 'injured cult image', with Christo-mimetic techniques, but which here are turned into their opposite in practices of sorcery. Instead of healing and blessing, the blood in the photo served as evidence of damage, injury, and perhaps even the successful killing of the victim.

In Europe, too, photo-sorcery was practiced. Albert de Rochas (like Balzac) assumed that a quasi-material relationship existed between a person and his or her photograph. In an experiment, he took three pictures of Madame Lux, who worked as his medium, showing her sleeping, awake and in a sort of hypnotized state. To prove that different psychic conditions produce different intensities of the photograph's medial quality, he pierced the three photographs—like the Kenyan witchdoctor—with needles. When he perforated the third picture, Madame Lux felt a strong pain and later showed stigmata at those parts of her body that had been pierced by the needles.<sup>21</sup>

In western Kenya, this new kind of photo magic was considered extremely effective and was greatly feared. Many people did not dare permit themselves to be photographed. But the Balokole,<sup>22</sup> members of a Christian fundamentalist movement that had spread in East Africa since the 1940s, invented a counter-sorcery: if one had oneself photographed with a Bible, the sorcery would not work. The Bible in the photo guaranteed protection against sorcery. Thus, in western Kenya, the use of photos in sorcery practices did not lead to a general rejection of photography, but to the invention of a counter-sorcery, which was taken into the photo in the form of the Bible.<sup>23</sup>

The medium in the medium, the book in the photograph, prevented photo-sorcery. It also shows the hierarchical relationship of the two media. The competition between the media of photography and book here is clearly decided in favor of the book: the Book of Books is victorious.

Among the Christian missionaries who came to Africa, the Bible was the primary medium of evangelism. Christianity, indeed, defined itself as a book religion, and the ability to read and write was the condition for conversion. But the missionaries introduced not only the camera, but also the Book of Books—in a manner that cannot be termed anything other than magical. Holding up the Bible, they promised protection against disease, witchcraft, and wild animals. For example, the very short-sighted Protestant missionary Ludwig Krapf, whom local people named the 'book man', accompanied a caravan from the East Coast



The Bible as counter-sorcery. Loise Andeso and Nelson Omwakwe, Western Kenya, around 1950. Courtesy of Helen Murala, granddaughter of Loise Andeso (collection of Heike Behrend).

inland in the mid-19th century armed only with a Bible and an umbrella. When a wild rhinoceros attacked the porters, they immediately fled and climbed the nearest trees. Krapf, who had not even seen the rhinoceros, remained calmly standing in the tumult, whose cause he did not understand. When the rhinoceros disappeared and the porters returned to their places and told him what had happened, he held aloft the Book of Books and declared that the Bible had protected him.<sup>24</sup> Europeans thus presented the Bible, like the camera, not so much as a secular commodity, but primarily as a magically-charged object traceable to a divine, inaccessible, alien origin in the beyond.<sup>25</sup>

The missionaries were thus taking up certain popular European practices that were officially rejected there, but nevertheless common among



the believers: the use of the Bible as an oracle, as a relic, and to protect against and heal diseases.<sup>26</sup> For example, Augustine of Hippo recommended combating fever by placing the Gospel of John under one's head.<sup>27</sup> And the so-called imprecatory psalm, 109, on which Heinrich Heine also comments, was used to try to 'kill enemies through prayer'.<sup>28</sup>

### *Mary Akatsa and the Church of Bethlehem*

In the 1980s, Mary Akatsa, a young woman from western Kenya, founded an independent Christian Pentecostal Church, the Church of Bethlehem, and took up residence as a healer and prophetess in a suburb of Nairobi. Prior to her calling, she, like other healers and prophets, suffered a severe illness, died, went to Heaven, and was sent from there back to earth because she had not yet fulfilled God's providence. After her recovery, she began working as a healer, treating disparate diseases and evils, including lack of money, unemployment, tobacco smoking, alcoholism, and AIDS.<sup>29</sup> With God's help, she could also smell thieves and recognize witches and sorcerers.

Her Church not only had an official photographer who took pictures of all important events, thus documenting her successes, in particular her miraculous healings, it also used photos as surrogates for patients whom she treated *in absentia*. She told women who had been abandoned by their husbands to bring a photo of the man to her. She then prayed over the photo, hit it with the Bible, and promised that now, with God's help, the husband would return to the wife. Another time, a mother brought the photo of her ill child, who lay in the hospital and whom the doctors had already given up as a hopeless case. The child died. But once again, Mary Akatsa prayed over the photo, hit it with the Bible, and, as the parents testified, the child came back to life.<sup>30</sup>

Mary Akatsa possessed a divine media technology. She called herself a *kiti*, in Kiswahili a stool or throne. Her body became a throne on which she received God's power. Hitting the photo with the Bible activated it, which in turn, as part of the child's person, directed God's power toward and healed the child. Persons and things—Mary Akatsa as healer, the book, the picture, and finally the child as addressee—were connected with one another in a media chain by the power of God. Here, too, the various media stand in an unambiguously hierarchical relationship in accordance with their proximity to or distance from God, the source of healing power: Mary Akatsa as *kiti*, as the medium of God, stands at the top as initiator; followed by the Book of Books, another source of power, which is passed on to the photo

through contact, through hitting; while the photo—at the end of the chain—establishes the connection with the patient, the child. As in the previous example, here too, the photographed person is reached and contacted via the picture; and again, book magic and image magic work together, and the book takes clear priority.

Just as Mary Akatsa, as *kiti*, was able to activate the power of God, she was also able to use it to harm an enemy, for example a notorious witch. Thus, the Christian God's actualised power in this context differed not so much from the power generated by the Kenyan witchdoctor.

In Europe, as well, photography was integrated in healing practice. Around 1850, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond, an Englishman who had headed the women's ward of the Surrey County Asylum since 1849, confronted his mentally ill patients with their photographic portraits and attempted, by talking to them about their photos, to impart a consciousness of the gap between their insane self-images and the 'real' photographic portrait. Where earlier the psychiatrists, applying 'moral treatment', exchanged glances with the mentally ill, now the latter were referred to their own picture, as if to a mirror. In the course of this photographic cure, the 'truthful precision' of photography was to combat the insanity, exert a purifying effect, and to assist the true image to victory.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, however, photographic resemblance had already become problematic in discourses about the new medium. Experiments had proven that a photographer can take pictures of a person in such different ways that, to strangers, each appears to be a different person.<sup>32</sup> As far as I know, Dr. Diamond's photographic cure was not developed further, although it had successes—according to the doctor.

While, in the Kenyan healing practices, the photo loses its representational function, providing access to the depicted person and becoming part of a media chain, in Dr. Diamond's healing procedure it remains an object, a 'freezing' picture that is tied to a claim to truth, but gains no agency against the background of the doctor's godlike power. Here, medicalization has already established clear subject-object relations that can no longer be reversed.

### *Drinking images and the revitalization of photographs*

In 1998, I came to know the photographer Ronnie Okocha Kauma, who for about a year had operated a studio named for himself, the 'Ronnie Studio', in Kampala. He specialized in photo collages, i.e., he used existing photos from illustrated magazines, calendars, and travel

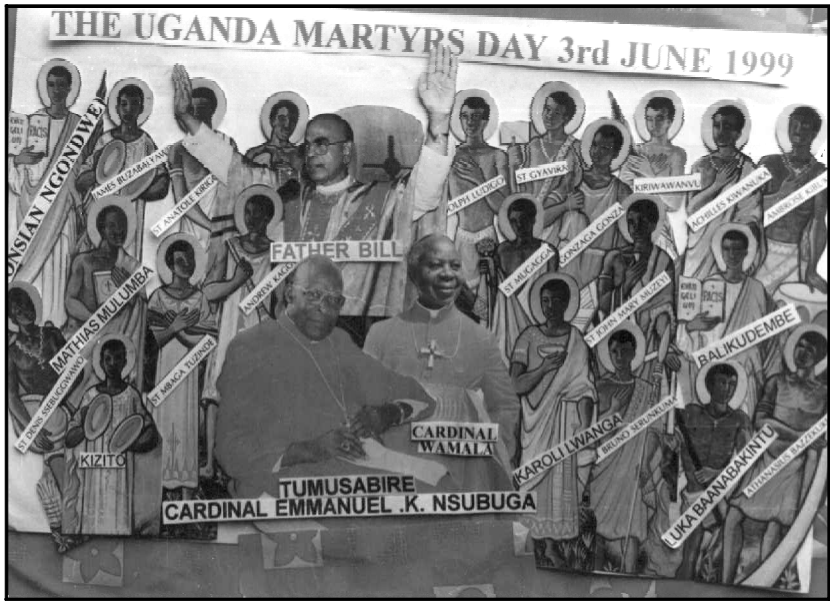
catalogues, cutting out what he considered usable and reassembling the fragments. These collages usually provided the background in front of which he placed his customers or himself in the picture. When he had finished his paste-up work, he photographed it to make it—as he explained—reproducible and ‘to transform the image into a real photograph’.<sup>33</sup>

Ronnie Okocha Kauma transformed photography into a wish-fulfilling machine. In his collages, he worked hard to satisfy his customers’ wishes for higher status, luxury, riches and publicity. In his collages, his customers—mostly poor people—transformed themselves into VIPs, members of the jet-set, friends of the president or the king, brave soldiers à la Rambo, or famous footballers. They entered spaces from which they were normally excluded and by doing so empowered themselves. On the background of a psychoanalytic interpretation of magic as wish fulfillment, Ronnie’s collages could be seen as a form of playful magic. It is possible that the collages of social success may anticipate or even oblige this to happen in ‘real’ life.

Ronnie told me that he produced not only photos, but also a kind of button, by sealing photos of famous international or local personalities—the Pope, Bill Clinton, or the King of Buganda—in plastic, onto which he mounted a safety pin. The photo could then be worn as a kind of insignia to express a certain affinity with, membership, or liking for the depicted person. When Father Bill, a Christian Charismatic preacher from India who is famous in Uganda, came to Kampala, Ronnie did a booming business with Father Bill buttons. He sold them to many people, who wore them like amulets on their bodies.

Ronnie also took part in one of Father Bill’s healing sessions and saw how he performed numerous miracle cures. After the sermon, believers collected the earth on which Father Bill had stood. They used it, like a devotional copy that takes on healing powers through contact with the original, as medicine that they ingested as a substance in which Father Bill’s healing powers still resided. Additionally, Ronnie told me, some believers put Father Bill’s sealed photo in a glass of water, let it soak there for awhile, and then drank the water.

The practice of ingesting substances for purposes of healing and of gaining power is widespread. For example, *shariffs*, Islamic scholars and healers, chalk certain Qur’anic verses onto a blackboard; the writing is then washed off with water and the water given to patients to drink as medicine. And in a more ‘pagan’ context, part of the initiation of spirit mediums and of healers is for them to ingest substances treated



Father Bill and the Ugandan Martyrs  
Photocollage by Ronnie Okocha Kauma, 1999.

in a certain way, which then empower them in diagnosing and treating ailments. Like relics in Europe, which were eaten or drunk in particles as a special medicine, these ingested substances also give special healing power in Africa. And, to return to Father Bill's photo, the cannibalistic act of ingesting the water in which the photo floated becomes immediately understandable against the background of the Eucharist.

In Europe, too, a tradition of images for eating and drinking is reported. For example, devotional images were not only placed as healing plasters on diseased parts of the body or wound up within bandages, but also placed in water that was later drunk. Small-format so-called 'swallowing pictures' ('Schluckbildchen'), the size of postage stamps, were eaten or even put in livestock's feed.<sup>34</sup> In the context of saints' cults, pictures were kissed and anointed with oil; miraculous powers attributed to them were invoked in situations of illness and distress; even the water used to wash the pictures was attributed healing power.<sup>35</sup> Like exuvia—for example hair or fingernails—and relics, photographic pictures took on the healing power of the person they depicted or embodied. For the photos are not merely representations of the depicted person; as with the host or relics, the person is considered present in the photo.

Furthermore, in Europe, too, the idea existed that the act of pho-

tographing entails a transference of substance from the person photographed. The French photographer Nadar reported that Balzac was convinced that with each photograph taken the subject lost a layer of skin, thus losing substance.<sup>36</sup>

There were also attempts to counteract the disincorporation<sup>37</sup> associated with photography: for example, with the aid of the rubber-bichromate process, human substance was added to certain post-mortem photos. The ashes of the deceased were thereby brought together with a photo taken earlier in the following way: 'The ashes will adhere to the parts unexposed to light, and a portrait is obtained composed entirely of the person it represents.'<sup>38</sup>

### *Photo-fetish*

In Western discourses on photography, numerous debates have focused primarily on topics like reproducibility, objectivity, and truth, but, again and again, a few authors have underscored in their photo theories the magical, the uncanny and the insane aspects of photography. For example, Walter Benjamin noted that those depicted in a photo gain power and can return the viewer's gaze—as in Kenyan photographic magic. He extensively quotes Dauthendey, who described the uncanniness of photography in the following words: 'At first, people did not dare look for a long time at the pictures. They shied away from the clarity of the people's images and believed that the tiny faces of the people in the picture could see the viewers . . .'.<sup>39</sup>

Roland Barthes worked out perhaps most radically the magical empowerment of the photo in the *punctum* in 'Camera Lucida'. For in the *punctum*, the subject-object relationship is reversed. The *punctum*, an element of the viewed photograph, becomes active, becomes the subject, becomes an arrow that pierces, while the viewer becomes passive, wounded, the object of activity. But with Barthes, it is less the photo itself that is the subject of activities; its empowerment and its power to harm are rather based in the viewer's subjective relationship to the picture.

For Barthes, the photo does not heal when it is active in the *punctum*; rather, it wounds or injures, as in the Kenyan witchdoctor's and Albert de Rochas' photo magic, when they attack the image with a scissors or needle, thus revitalizing it and rousing it to action, injuring or killing the victim. Although Barthes' text never explicitly refers to 'savages', spirits, or fetishes, they have nevertheless left their trace in the book. In 'Camera Lucida', he writes: 'Face à certaines photos, je

me voulais sauvage, sans culture.<sup>40</sup> His text also refers to Edgar Morin's 'L'homme et la mort', a book on death in cultural comparison that appeared in 1970. In it, we encounter Frazer, Tylor, Lévi-Bruhl, Frobenius, Westermarck, and the idea of the double, shadow, or mirror image as part of the person. Here, among the primitives or among the anthropologists who wrote about the primitives, the images regain their power. As a matter of fact, Barthes' theory of photography is based on the scandal of the fetish and the Eucharist: that the fetish and host do not symbolize anything, but directly *are*. For according to Barthes, we do not see the photo. We see the referent that clings to it.<sup>41</sup>

What ties together Ugandan and Kenyan photo magic, the fetish, and the Eucharist is then (to bring in the Christian symbolism) the resurrection of the referent, the attempt to undo the separation of sign and signified.<sup>42</sup>

This resurrection of the referent in African practices is not a resurrection 'in the spirit'. Against the disincorporation and desensualization<sup>43</sup> inherent in the photographic image, African Christian healers and patients attempt to give corporeality, blood, voice, and the power of action back to the photographic copy—like the host in the moment of transubstantiation. But photos, too, can create the physical presence of the depicted person only for a short time<sup>44</sup> before the paradox of simultaneous absence and presence and of real unreality dissolve again in favor of the depiction of an absence.<sup>45</sup>

#### NOTES

1. This text is a continuation of Behrend 2000 and Behrend 2002b. It is to be considered preliminary, since it is part of the research project 'Culture as Image and Text', which is headed by Renate Schlesier (Paderborn) and which has been generously supported by the state of North Rhine/Westphalia's Ministry of Education, Science, and Research, whom I would like to thank. The text was written in the context of the Special Research Programme 427 'Media and Cultural Communication' of the Universities of Aachen, Cologne and Bonn in Germany. I would also like to thank Irene Albers, Inge Brinkman, Albert Kümmel, Birgit Meyer, Erhard Schüttpelz, Tobias Wendl and the readers of the *JRA* for helpful criticism and numerous suggestions.

2. Behrend and Wendl 1997; Behrend 1998; Vera 1999; Njami and Pivin 1998; Wendl and Behrend 1998; Behrend and Werner 2001; Behrend 2002a and 2002b.

3. Spyer 2001; Ranger 2001.

4. Benjamin 1977; cited by Busch 2001: 524.

5. MacGaffey 1994: 123.

6. Pietz 1987.

7. MacGaffey 1993; 1994.

8. Shelton 1995: 20.

9. Schüttpelz 1999: 274 ff.

10. Pietz 1987: 39.

11. This statement is to be seen primarily in the context of the sometimes bitter conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in Europe. While Protestants liked to define themselves as the advance guard of modernity, they seized the opportunity to cast the Catholics as primitive and to equate them with the 'savages'.

12. Thomson 1885: 220.

13. Prins 1992: 219, 221.

14. Schüttpelz 2001.

15. Schüttpelz 2001.

16. Gasser 1998.

17. Barthes 1989.

18. On the Kenyan coast, however, photography was introduced not only by Europeans, but also by Indians. For centuries, the East African coast had been integrated in a cosmopolitan net of trade relations cast over the Indian Ocean and including Arabia, Persia, and India. As early as 1868, A.C. Gomez, from Goa in India, opened a photo studio on Zanzibar. In India, almost at the same time as in Europe, photography had been established as portrait art, but also in the form of ethnographic photography in the framework of state policy, as well as in supplementation to court art (MacDougall 1992, Pinney 1997).

19. Behrend 2002a.

20. 'Witch doctor' is a highly ambivalent term that, in the colonial context, was actualized in the missionaries' and colonial administration's struggle against pagan or 'traditional' practices of healing. I use it here because it has prevailed as a *terminus technicus* for traditional healers among English-speaking Africans.

21. Stiegler 2001: 133.

22. This movement sought to reform the Protestant Churches. Its origins are in the English and American revival movements of the 18th and 19th centuries. In Africa, the Balokole increasingly indigenized the Christian doctrine and employed the Holy Ghost, Jesus, the Bible and the rosary (as an amulet) in the struggle against witchcraft and sorcery.

23. Behrend 2000.

24. Krapf 1964.

25. Harbsmeier 1992: 21.

26. Vezin 1992: 101 ff.

27. Schreiner 1990: 339.

28. Schreiner 1990: 339.

29. While in the dominant medical discourses of early 19th-century Europe the patient's body, clearly separated from and closed to spiritual powers, became the object of healing practices, and the doctors thought the causes of disease were to be found in the individual organs, in many African societies the activity of healing comprised not only concern with the body, but also other forms of misfortune, including lack of money and unemployment. Disease and misfortune were interpreted in the context of a complex cosmology of disparate powers or forces. Healers worked on two levels to fight off misfortune and threats to life and social and physical self-maintenance. First, on the local level of kinship groups and households, they healed individual suffering and infertility. Second, on a more general societal level, they healed famine, drought, epidemics, wars, and sorcery. They thus healed in areas that, in the West, are considered more political or religious (Feierman 1995: 75 ff).

30. See my ethnographic film 'Mary Akatsa, Stool of Jesus', 1989.

31. Burrows and Schumacher 1990.

32. Buddemeier 1970.

33. Behrend 2001.

34. Brauneck 1978: 155.

35. Brauneck 1978: 155.

36. Pontrémoli 1996: 25 f.
37. Albers 1998.
38. Scharf 1969: 27.
39. Benjamin 1977.
40. Barthes 1989. Hervé Guibert 1990 provides an example of current photo magic; see also Irene Albers 2001.
41. Barthes 1989: 14.
42. Derrida 1987.
43. Albers 1998.
44. Theologians in the 20th century determined that the sacramental period was eight to ten minutes long (Lang 1998: 354).
45. Castel 1981: 238.

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