DOMESTIC DEMONS AND THE INTIMATE UNCANNY

Edited by
Thomas G. Kirsch, Kirsten Mahlke and Rijk van Dijk

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Domestic Demons and the Intimate Uncanny

This book explores local cultural discourses and practices relating to manifestations and experiences of the demonic, the spectral and the uncanny, probing into their effects on people's domestic and intimate spheres of life. The chapters examine the uncanny in a cross-cultural manner, involving empirically rich case studies from sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Europe. They use an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to show how people are affected by their intimate interactions with spiritual beings. While several chapters focus on the tensions between public and private spheres that emerge in the context of spiritual encounters, others explore what kind of relationships between humans and demonic entities are imagined to exist and in what ways these imaginations can be interpreted as a commentary on people's concerns and social realities. Offering a critical look at a form of spiritual experience that often lacks academic examination, this book will be of great use to scholars of Religious Studies who are interested in the occult and paranormal, as well as academics working in Anthropology, Sociology, African Studies, Latin American Studies, Gender Studies and Transcultural Psychology.

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Introduction

Hedging in Demons and the Uncanny

Thomas G. Kirsch, Kirsten Mahlke, and Rijk van Dijk

In contemporary Mozambique, avenging spirits may be appeased by marrying them to young women. For instance, when the spirit of a man who was a homicide victim keeps haunting the murderer's family, ritually making it a spirit spouse turns it into an official family member. This compensates for his death, while the murderer's family can henceforth benefit from the spirit's powerful familial solidarity. However, since marriage with a spirit spouse forecloses marriage to a human husband, the young women concerned do not always experience this arrangement as personally gratifying, to put it mildly. What is more, once they become members of a Pentecostal church, the largely positive attitude towards the spirit spouse that predominates within the women's family is called into question, since Pentecostals take spirit spouses to be 'demons' and as a consequence make great efforts to exorcise them.

The example from Mozambique, which we took from a fascinating ethnography by Linda van de Kamp (2011), is an apt illustration of the multi- and transscalar nature of human-spirit relationships. This becomes evident when we trace the ways in which the social embeddedness of the Mozambican spirit (spouse) is transmuted over time: a given social conflict, here the prolonged civil war in Mozambique, leads to a homicide that is locally interpreted not only as involving interpersonal violence, but also as having repercussions for inter-group relations. The revenge-seeking spirit of the murdered man is then integrated into the domestic unit of the murderer's family through marriage, thus placing it in an intimate relationship with one of its female members. However, in the context of certain other forms of sociality in which the spirit's human wife is involved, especially Pentecostalism, the existence of anything resembling a spirit spouse is seen to be highly problematic in terms of both the spirit's intimate conjugality with the woman and the social effects of this conjugality. Thus, to prevent the woman becoming a danger to others in the wider social sphere, attempts are made to replace her intimacy with her spirit spouse with an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.

What we can see here in an exemplary way is how human attempts to forge peaceful associations with the spiritual world span and interconnect

different levels of sociality: the intimate, the domestic, the wider family and in part even society at large. At the same time, this example of an "ecology of haunting" (Hollan 2019: 451) exhibits different context-dependent interpretations of the nature of the spirit concerned, with some ascribing adverse qualities to it (avenging spirit; demon), while others judge it more favourably (loyal family member in the form of a spirit). What is more, this example highlights two strategies in dealing with malevolent spiritual entities that are also familiar from other empirical contexts: actively incorporating them into the social fold on the one hand, and replacing them by what is experienced locally as a benign spiritual entity on the other.

Spirit spouses are also well known in other religious traditions, such as shamanism, the sexualized concepts of the early modern *succubi* and *incubi*, and the Christian understanding of nuns as 'Brides of Christ'. They therefore speak to a wide range of phenomena that stand at the centre of this book. The chapters that follow explore the cultural discourses and social practices that are related to manifestations and experiences of the occult in the domestic and intimate spheres of life. The book proceeds in a cross-cultural manner, with case studies from the Americas, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, while also pursuing an interdisciplinary approach that engages with the fields of anthropology, literary studies, cultural studies and history in complementary ways.

In this book, we ask what happens in the interplay between different forms and scales of sociality such as those described above when it is assumed locally that occult forces with problematic, in part bodily harmful, characteristics are interacting with social actors in the domestic and/or intimate spheres of life.[1] We probe into the ways in which people's involvement in human-spirit interactions lead to a refashioning of these spheres and the social relations that characterize them. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this book, the case studies it contains cover a broad range of different occult forces which are often, but not necessarily, perceived by local actors as malevolent. While in most chapters these forces fall under the category of 'demons' or 'ghosts', several of them also work with less agency-oriented notions of 'the uncanny' (*das Unheimliche*) or 'spectrality' so as to foreground the affective dimensions that are involved in anxiety-provoking human-spirit interactions.[2]

The chapters in this collection therefore address the following questions. What are the empirical constellations and contexts in which imaginations about and experiences of occult forces and the uncanny emerge in the domestic and intimate spheres of life (see also Good 2015, 2019: 412)? What are the symbolic languages, cultural idioms and discursive repertoires that are used to give expression to these imaginations and experiences? What strategies do local actors use to shape human-spirit relationships in the domestic and intimate spheres of life? In what ways do notions of the occult, the demonic and the uncanny inform the discourses and practices by which the domestic and intimate spheres of life are

socially (re)produced, characterized and interrelated with other, socially more encompassing realms? In turn, how are socio-cultural spheres that are locally labelled 'domestic' and 'intimate' transformed through manifestations of the demonic and experiences of the uncanny?

The contributions to this book address these questions with reference to different cultural settings and historical situations being captured in different modalities of expression that range from textual representations to situated social practices.

Studying Domestic and Intimate Demons Empirically

As our opening example shows, occult manifestations in the domestic and intimate spheres of life are often perceived to be uncanny, abnormal, defective and inadmissible; yet, under certain conditions they can also be deemed desirable. The ambiguity arising from this double-edged nature blends "the ominous and the hopeful: an unknown and incipient threat and an equally unknown and incipient possibility, a constricted dungeon and an open horizon" (Csordas 2019: 518). When dealing with empirical cases, therefore, the overarching questions outlined above must be translated into more specific ones. What sense-making practices can be observed when people deal with occult human-spirit relationships? How do demons enter homes, bedrooms and beds and what characterizes their interactions with the humans who populate these realms? What practices are enacted in order to control occult forces? In what ways do these efforts lead to a reformulation of local understandings of 'the domestic', 'the intimate' and their relations with the wider social setting? What empirical varieties of domestic and intimate relationships between spirits and human beings can be shown to exist?

In addition, this book also probes into people's sense of urgency when it comes to determining how occult forces shape the domestic and intimate spheres of life. These concerns reflect a history of domesticity under crisis, that is, experiences of distress in which people's most intimate circles of social relations are perceived to be beleaguered by unseen and largely unknown forces. Their concerns are also mirrored in distressing imaginations in the form of various "arguments of images" (Werbner 1985) that reinforce and highlight each other.

The book therefore explores how, when and why imaginaries of the occult, the demonic and the uncanny emerge as registers of thinking about the domestic under duress. With reference to the realm of the domestic, we seek to understand the pressure on what Lambek (2003: 41) has called the "art of living with spirits" with a view to this domain's specific sets of social and emotional relations. The domestic has often been described and analysed in terms of household- and family based forms of (re)production (for an overview, see Donham 1981). In the African context, Geschiere (1985) has called this the "lineage mode" of (re-)production in order to

capture analytically the different relations of kinship that the domestic may harbour. In (neo-)Marxist approaches, such domains of (re-)production were primarily studied with an interest in how they become the subject of what was termed 'capitalist encroachment', that is, the encroachment of colonialism and regimes of labour migration that increasingly linked the domestic to global modes of production and accumulation (Van Binsbergen and Geschiere 1985). More recently, scholars have also begun to explore the sensibilities and vulnerabilities of the domestic realm's socio-emotional aspects when that realm is confronted with the alienating effects of capitalist encroachment on the domestic (see also Illouz 1997). Yet, these economy-centred approaches to the domestic fail to account for the manner in which this domain can also be the site of manifestations of spiritual forces, which are not necessarily and predominantly linked to economic pressures (see also Comaroff, this volume).

In probing into the 'encroachment' of spiritual forces in the domestic realm, we need to acknowledge that the spirit possession of individuals, which engenders an "ex-centred selfhood" (Rahimi and Good 2019: 410) and which has up to now been the main focus of anthropological research on spirit manifestations, differs from constellations in which spirits 'take possession' of a wider social space. In the latter case, the specific form a human-spirit relationship takes is also relevant to a *collective* (see also Kirsch 2013a, 2013b). It thus creates a different modality of the 'art of living with spirits' than what happens on the level of personal accommodations of spirit possession.

In setting out to answer the questions outlined above, this book draws attention to the fact that the empirical phenomena that are explored in the chapters that follow are not, first and foremost, bound to situations of social crisis and moral panic, as much of the older literature on witchcraft and demonic possession has it. This is because the domestic and the intimate are not always and necessarily in a state of crisis when such manifestations occur. Our perspective hence differs from many of the above-mentioned studies in the field of hauntology in that we do not assume conflict, violence, suppression and trauma as being necessary preconditions for the emergence of spectral manifestations. Instead, we suggest that assessing the level of distress that is relevant to a thorough understanding of domestic and intimate demons should be seen as a matter of empirical research.

Furthermore, when examining people's anxieties about the ways in which they feel that occult forces penetrate the intimacy of their domestic spheres, we take these experiences and perceptions to be an everyday cultural idiom and a register of discourse about 'the domestic' and 'the intimate' – about its nature, demarcation and symbolic (re)production. This also means that the existence of the categories of 'the domestic' and 'the intimate' cannot be taken as self-evident, taken-for-granted realities. Instead, both categories are constantly in the making and need to be explored with reference to

a variety of fields of discourse and practice, of which one important field pertains to the occult, the demonic and the uncanny.

We argue that this is because, for members of local communities, one way of coming to an understanding of the domestic and the intimate is through signs of the occult. More particularly, in many cases this happens through the rise of new institutions, such as missionary Christian churches or New Age shamanism, that express and delineate the contours of where the occult and the demonic encounter, endanger and unsettle realms that, according to the respective institution's definition, qualify as being 'domestic' or 'intimate'. This holds true even for social formations in which certain forms of 'intimacy' did not exist before, such as the 'intimacy' of the bedroom or of private dealings in the living room, since the ascription of these qualities to specific spaces is a cultural and historical construction.

Moreover, we aim to highlight the processes by which the social construction of the domestic and the intimate through the lenses of the occult, the demonic and the uncanny becomes a target for inspection and introspection. In many instances, the latter can be said to be the product of institutional developments in specific historical settings, such as the Spanish Inquisition (Silverblatt 2004) or the Mchape witchcraft eradication movement on the African continent (Green 1997; Richards 1935). Alternatively, it can be the result of the introduction of new technologies, such as the spectral equipment that is used by so-called Ghost-busters (see also Voss, this volume) or the use of virus scanners in the digital age to combat the malware that surreptitiously inserts itself in our home computers. Constellations like these raise questions about the manner in which people's domestic and intimate spheres are drawn into the dynamics of power, opening them up to inspections and disciplinary measures by others. Relatedly, we need to address how people's concerns about their domestic and intimate spheres of life find expression in imaginaries about the occult, the demonic and the uncanny. What are the available discourses and forms of articulation that allow people to explicate these imaginaries? And in what ways do these imaginaries give rise to new forms of introspection?

Socio-Spiritual Relationalities: Hedging in the Occult

The analytical purview of the above questions becomes apparent when they are seen in the light of the multi-faceted ambiguities associated with the domestic and intimate spheres of life. Interpersonal intimacy is widely thought of as a safe refuge from people's otherwise often alienating experiences in navigating the world and as representing a stronghold of private authenticity, emotional comfort, intercorporeal communion and intuitive familiarity. But these positive associations cannot belie the no less widespread perception that intimacy can easily tip over into something else that is deeply troublesome. Intimacy implies vulnerability and therefore provides fertile ground for transgressions by and exploitation through others.

In a similar vein, the domestic sphere, which is first and foremost associated with the family household, has many favourable connotations in both social theory and everyday understandings of it (Ghanbari 2011; Koselleck 1981; Rabe 1974). The idealizations involved in many such examples do not need to be rehearsed in detail here. Suffice it to note that the domestic sphere has long lost its (purported) innocence by virtue of being seen as a site of interpersonal tensions, conflicts and non-public politics. In other words, as Geschiere (2013) has succinctly argued in his work on the dangers of the home, the domestic and intimate spheres of life should not be romanticized as representing a space of social harmony and (spiritual) comfort. Instead, this space can often turn into a threat to the person's physical and psychical integrity, social status and life prospects.

What is more, ambiguities also characterize the categorical relationship between 'the domestic' and 'the intimate'. Depending on the semantics of this notion in the different languages and the context-dependent pragmatics of its use, 'the intimate' can refer to a sense of mutual familiarity within a small social grouping, such as a person's core family and best friends, but also to sexual relations between individuals. In this way, the term 'the intimate' can be applied to denote both the general quality of 'the domestic' *and* an extremely personalistic and socially exclusive form of relationship that can be found within the domestic realm as well as outside it. In other words, in perplexing ways it would be equally true to say that 'the intimate' is coextensive with, nested in and detachable from 'the domestic'. In this way, the word 'intimate' conjures up the possibility of social relations that are not restricted to the domestic sphere but are sometimes seen critically as representing a form of 'leakage' of what the domestic sphere is unable to control.

Thus, taken together, this book explores the role of the occult, the demonic and the uncanny in social spaces that are characterized by marked ambiguities. It asks how social actors make reference to these forces and their experiences with them when dealing with the ambiguities, amplifying or resolving them in one way or another, if only temporarily. The book also raises the question of how people's characterizations of these forces as either social or anti-social entities inform how they interpret the influence of these forces on human affairs. For example, the chapter by anthropologists Rijk van Dijk and Senzokuhle Doreen Setume explores wedding ceremonies in certain parts of Botswana in the context of how ambivalences about the trustworthiness of the parties involved are locally overcome. They demonstrate that while enactments of certain 'traditional' practices have long been intended to ensure the couple's mutually well-meaning intentions, in recent years these very practices have increasingly been interpreted as being of a demonic nature, leading to a situation in which a public 'declaration of one's intentions', as in Pentecostal wedding ceremonies, has gained prominence.

It is one of the basic assumptions of this book that human-spirit interactions in the domestic and intimate spheres of life are widely regarded as

tense, precarious and daunting, even potentially dangerous, which is often attributed to the spirits' unpredictability and subversive capriciousness. The chapters in this book consequently explore how people make sense of their feeling that these interactions need to be controlled, not only in terms of their modalities and dynamics, but also by delimiting the specific social contexts in which they are supposed to take place as well as where they are not. Adopting this perspective, the chapter by anthropologist Thomas G. Kirsch enquires into strategies whereby people in Zambia cope with the dangers associated with spirits whose potentially demonic intimacy with their human hosts the public interpret as a withdrawal from the social sphere in ways that are disquieting. He suggests that one of the self-protective strategies in Pentecostal Christianity consists in striving for what he calls 'collective intimacy' with the Holy Spirit, thus making intimacy part of a collective endeavour to avert danger.

In this book, we use the notion of 'hedging in' (in German: *einhegen*) to describe such attempts to control human relationships with occult forces. This notion refers to the practical strategies that are deployed to keep the influence of occult forces restricted to clearly circumscribed social realms or a given ritual practice in order to make sure that they do not impact on other spheres of life. As we shall see in the chapters to follow, this can mean that the forces are being hedged in either *within* the domestic and intimate spheres of life or, alternatively, *outside* them. The latter strategy is one of the reasons why we decided not to speak of the 'domestication' of occult forces. Moreover, in contrast to 'domestication', our metaphorical use of 'hedging in' presupposes the view that it is not possible for humans to exert total control over occult forces. Instead, we argue that the unruly and ambiguous agency of occult forces is something to be constantly reckoned with in human-spirit relationships, thus making efforts to hedge in these forces the only strategy available to humans in dealing with them. While the term 'domestication' appears to suggest a unilinear trajectory that results in a successful appeasement of ulterior powers, by contrast the term 'hedging in' points at an open-ended process in which questions of effort in how these forces are accommodated become important. In addition, as pointed out by Jean Comaroff (this volume), the notion of the 'hedge' presupposes a groundedness and embeddedness in local resources and conditions since the hedge 'feeds' on its environment, and often quite literally so.

Hedging-in strategies can take different forms, such as apotropaic practices, symbolic or physical boundary-making to fend off demons, or even entering into contractual agreements or a reproductive relationship with them. Providing a case study of the latter, the chapter by literary scholar Kirsten Mahlke traces the transatlantic trajectory of a notorious intimate demon, the 'familiar spirit', between early modern France and agro-industrial Argentina. She shows that the different cultural understandings of this demon reflect historical changes from intimate one-person one-spirit relationships in French preindustrial agriculture to the asymmetrical contracts

between one boss's devil and thousands of workers on Argentinian sugar plantations. The historical transformation of the imaginary about human-spirit relationships accounts for the unboundedness and thus the loss of enclosure that characterizes labour relations in industrial capitalism.

At the same time, the boundary work of hedging in, here understood as a relational and open-ended process, often shapes the domestic and intimate spheres of life in specific ways. On the one hand, the hedging in of occult forces reflects people's anxieties about the ways in which they feel the occult penetrating into the intimacy of their domestic spheres of life. This is what Sigmund Freud (1919) referred to when he pointed to the ambiguity of the 'home' (*Heim*) as a space that is 'homely' but that can turn 'uncanny' in unexpected ways (*unheimlich*) precisely because of its (seeming) familiarity. As such, hedging in can be said to reflect a register of discourse and practice that demarcates the boundaries of the domestic and the intimate in contradistinction to other spheres of life and which also serves their symbolic (re)production. Thus, exploring the ways in which occult forces are being hedged in can help us understand how the domestic and the intimate are culturally scripted, thus allowing them to be made sense of locally and experienced in specific ways.

For example, the chapter by historian Florence Bernault examines how, in the context of colonial intrusion and domination in Gabon, imaginations of the great apes as demon-like characters served local and foreign actors in describing the wilderness and the non-human as well as in conjuring up images of the dangers implied in transgressing the boundary between ego and alter.

On the other hand, the analytical focus on the ways in which occult forces are being hedged in within domestic or intimate contexts allows us to assess how these spheres in particular are placed vis-à-vis wider social relations. More specifically, the strategies used in this regard can be understood as constituting a *vernacular diagnostic* of general developments in society. For instance, in certain contexts in Christianity the idea of the existence of an infinite Manichean conflict between 'good' and 'evil' finds expression in the enactment of domestic exorcism rituals. These rituals usually go along with a heightened reflexivity among the actors involved concerning the question of what social influences might have played a role in making the afflicted person susceptible to demonic spirit possession. Depending on what answer they come up with in the end, exorcism in the domestic realm can therefore prompt practitioners of Christianity to hit the road and to start mission-izing or engaging in witch-finding activities in the wider social realm. In this way, hedging the occult within the domestic environment can inspire a kind of 'scaling up' so as to include ever-widening circles of social interaction whereby the domestic becomes increasingly significant in constructing safe and protected forms of sociality on the meso- and macro-scales. The Christian practice of addressing co-religionists as 'brothers' and 'sisters' (Koschorke 2001), however distant their social relationship actually is, is a

striking example of how this extraverted process of hedging in can acquire a prescriptive status as regards the ways in which other and wider social realms are expected to function.

At the same time, as has been so elaborately explored in discussions of the 'modernity of witchcraft' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Favret-Saada 1980, 2009; Geschiere 1997; Moore and Sanders 2001), the perception of an increase in occult activities often intensifies the public interest in people's domestic and intimate lives, which are suspected of being the seedbed of occult-driven anti-social behaviour. By forcing them to publicly confess their (alleged) secrets and to renounce their occult practices, attempts are made to tear down the boundary between people's private and public lives, thus also thwarting (alleged) attempts to hedge in occult forces exclusively in the domestic and intimate spheres of life. Similarly, the chapter by anthropologist Isak Niehaus argues that what can be observed in present-day South Africa is a momentous shift from witchcraft accusations against elderly men and women to young women's public confessions of participation in Satanism. He interprets this process as reflecting wider social anxieties about the influx of foreigners, rampant consumerism, the feminization of labour and the erosion of kinship. While the new fears of Satanism reflect the newness of these wider processes and people's unfamiliarity with them, the local community examined by Niehaus is responding to the latter by drawing on long-standing repertoires of the in(tro)spection of private and public lives.

Taken together, we are interested in exploring and comparing across time and in various cultural contexts the different modalities of 'doing' hedging in. In the remainder of this chapter, we distinguish between three modalities: first, speech acts of naming and explicating spirit manifestations; second, the enlisting (or de-listing) of occult forces into (re)productive relationships; and third, the sedimentation of spiritual manifestations in writing.

Hedging in the Occult through Spirit Idioms

In the social sciences and humanities, a prominent way of addressing the occult has been to examine it through the lens of local 'spirit idioms' (Beattie and Middleton 1969: xiii), that is, with a view to the culturally dependent role of references to spiritual forces in people's sense-making practices and social constructions of reality.

We understand these spirit idioms to be a modality of the various ways in which the practice of hedging in the occult, the demonic and the uncanny can be accomplished, namely through naming and explication. Since it is widely assumed in different parts of the world that there is power in the word, the discursive labelling and characterization of a given demonic or uncanny force is often perceived as a royal road towards controlling it or at least towards building some form of relationship with it that enables

some degree of socio-spiritual mediation and negotiation. Spirit idioms accordingly allow people to navigate the powers of the unseen by discursively 'pin-pointing' the powers, which then becomes sedimented in people's meaning-making practices, at times culminating in the idea that *nomen est omen.*

In anthropology, it has been demonstrated that the 'spirit idioms' that lie at the heart of discourses and practices relating to demons have served to gain control over others by, for example, claiming privileged access to the power of spiritual forces (Middleton 1999; Sharp 1993). Conversely, ethnographic studies have also shown how spirit possession may be used by subalterns to resist dominance of different sorts, most prominently gendered inequalities (Behrend and Luig 1999; Boddy 1989) and colonial or capitalist hegemonies (Comaroff 1985; Kramer 1993; Stoller 1994; Taussig 2010).

An important controversy in this field of research pertains to the question of whether interpretations should mainly concentrate on sociological processes or should also be culturally sensitive. In her renowned review of anthropological work on spirit possession, Janice Boddy criticized the fact that, following I.M. Lewis' discussion of spirit possession as an aspect of what he called the "sex war" (Lewis and Wilson 1967; see also Lewis 1971), too much "attention was directed to instrumental, strategic uses of consensual beliefs by socially disadvantaged (so-called status-deprived) individuals, who, in claiming to be seized by spirits, indirectly drew public attention to their plight and potentially achieved some redress" (Boddy 1994: 410). As she also points out, since the 1980s anthropological research on spirit possession has diversified and increasingly started to draw on phenomenological, feminist, praxeological, poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches.

This trend, which has continued ever since, and to which this book makes a contribution, entailed a shift to more contextualized interpretations that pay attention to local cultural understandings, the lived realities of spirit possession and its symbolic and communicative implications (see, for example, Lambek 1981; 1993; Masquelier 2001; Rasmussen 1995). In much of this work, spirit possession is seen as having a political dimension in the broadest sense of the word, either as a representational practice, as serving the intersubjective articulation of socio-political pressures, predicaments and inequalities, or as experientially grounded and subjectively embodied ways to cope with, accommodate or confront them. In addition, spirit possession is no longer studied exclusively in relation to structural inequalities and the position of the disenfranchised and the marginalized, since emerging middle classes and elites may also express their imaginations and concerns about the workings of spiritual powers in their intimate relationships (Behrend and Luig 1999).

In this research, spirit possession is therefore commonly interpreted in relation to the historically embedded experiences of individual subjects or as a reflection of or response to the predicaments of the wider social

context. This is also reflected in a distinction that became prominent in the anthropology of religion some time ago, namely that between 'spirit possession' and 'spirit mediumship'. Referring to John Beattie's and John Middleton's *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (1969), Ute Luig outlines this distinction as follows:

> While spirit possession is an individual affair between the spirit and the afflicted person, spirit mediumship is oriented to collective problems, be it of a village, a neighborhood or a lineage. Spirit mediums can exercise substantial social and political power, especially when they are considered to be the reincarnation of ancestor heroes. They not only transmit important messages for the community but are also considered responsible for the well-being of its members. In contrast, spirit possession is not related to official power, the afflicting spirits belonging either to common ancestors [...] or to 'free' spirits representing different aspects of society and nature. [...] The relation between spirit possession and spirit mediumship corresponds to the private and public domain with a certain amount of overlapping and/or competition between the two.
> (Luig 1994: 35)

However, what is noteworthy in this typology and related conceptualizations is that they are based on a differentiation between 'the private' and 'the public' which for the most part tends to equate the private domain with individuals and the public domain with the wider society. What is missing in models like these is an explicit acknowledgement of the relevance and role of spirit idioms in intermediate and middle-range forms of sociality that stand at the centre of this book, namely the domestic and the intimate.

Also, the conceptual model outlined above presupposes that there is basic unanimity among those who are dealing with human-spirit relations regarding the question of which specific spiritual entities are engendering 'spirit possession' and which ones 'spirit mediumship'. However, in actual religious practice, distinguishing between spiritual manifestations with a view to the different ways in which they are addressing 'private'/'individual' or 'public'/'collective' concerns requires acts of interpretation. In the terminology introduced by Thomas G. Kirsch (2013b), this interpretation involves assessments concerning the 'locus' and the 'focus' of a spirit manifesting itself. The term 'locus' stands for the entity or realm(s) of sociality in which a spirit makes its appearance, for instance, a prophet, a patient or a community of religious practitioners. The term 'focus', however, designates the entity or realm(s) of sociality for which this spiritual manifestation is assumed to be of relevance, indicating that it ought not be ignored and that adequate measures must be taken against it. For example, in the case of afflictive spirit possession, where a spirit induces an illness in a person, the locus of the spirit manifestation is the afflicted person's body, while the cure of the spiritual affliction often also focuses on relevant others who are

said to be directly or indirectly implicated in it, such as when one is accused of witchcraft or is called on to actively support the healing process. But the spiritual affliction of an individual can also be perceived as merely an exemplary symptom of the fact that a spirit is exerting a socially more comprehensive influence, perhaps on the family of the afflicted person, which makes the whole group the locus of the spirit's manifestation. In turn, the divinely ordained revelations of a spiritual healer might have as their focus solely the individual patient, while on other occasions they may be directed at the whole world.

It is important to note, however, that human-spirit relationships do not always or necessarily involve lasting afflictive conditions, even though many of them begin that way. There is a host of literature showing how humans and spirits can accommodate to each other with the aim of shaping the relationship in ways that makes it highly personal, gratifying and in remarkable ways emotional. As Colson (1969), Lambek (1995), Luedke (2011) and others have demonstrated, the human host of a spirit learns how to accommodate the spiritual entity, becoming responsive to its needs and whims over time, while the spirit reciprocates by protecting and assisting its host.

What is crucial in these human-spirit relationships is the fact that the identity of the spirit is known or at least that the spiritual entity becomes addressable by its name. By asking the spirit to identify itself and by invoking its name, an attempt is made to hedge its force, intentions and potential effects within the human world. The name of the spirit thus puts it in its (rightful) place, renders it approachable and allows people to communicate with and accommodate it.

The fact that such discursive accommodations of spirits are not always and necessarily confined to the religious realm is demonstrated in the chapter by anthropologist Ehler Voss on present-day ghost-hunting practices by American parapsychologists and spiritualists. Viewing them against the background of 19th-century mediumism, he argues that these practices are based on a notion of the demonic that lies between the religious and the secular and that can be experimentally tested. Here, a variety of different discursive fields play a role in how ghosts and spirits are being hedged in through the practices of naming and characterizing their manifestations.

Assuming the perspective outlined above allows us to see how spirit idioms are used in context-specific ways to forge different sorts of connection between different levels and forms of sociality, from individual actors to groups of different sorts to society in general. This holds true especially for human-spirit relationships that are feared as detrimental to the human sphere due to the spirit's potentially evil influences. Yet, as we shall see in the next section, the hedging in of occult forces and spiritual powers is not always and necessarily informed by people's desire to expel or constrain them: it can also be motivated by the wish to benefit from them in order to enhance one's fortunes, well-being and social relationships.