ПОЛИТИКОЛОГИЈА РЕЛИГИЈЕ 1/2011

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ПРИКАЗИ, НАУЧНА КРИТИКА И ПОЛЕМИКА
Lubomir Martin Ondrasek, Dušan Stamenković

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Бр. 1/2011 Година V
No. 1/2011 Volume V
Београд 2011 / Belgrade 2011
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CAPABILITIES AND RANGES OF SOCIAL TEACHING OF ORTHODOXY AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH
Године 2008, био сам кодиректор прве велике међународне конференције о медијима и религији у Африци, која је одржана у Абуџи у Нигерији. Главни циљ конференције био је остваривање критичког погледа на сцену религијских медија Африке која се брзо развија. Посебно је била заинтересована за изазове балансирања слободе изражавања и слободе религије и веровања у брзо нарастајућем медијском сектору Африке. Конференција је имала за циљ и да подстакне проучавање спектра религијских медија у ширењу, као и покривеност религије у глобализованој Африци.

Као део текућег дискурса о медијима, религији и култури у Африци, ово посебно издање усмерено је на религију, медије и политику. Његов циљ је истраживање текућих питања у вези с верским праксом у контексту медија и њихових политичких импликација на овом континенту. Како је и конференција у Абуџи показала, постоји много дешавања у сфере религијских медија у Африци.

Ово издање, дакле, академски осветљава три питања која обележавају текућу историју континента у целости: други талас демократизације који је захватао многе земље од почетка двадесетих, либерализацију ваздушних путева, до тада под хегемонистичком контролом аутократских влада, те пораст харизматичних покрета, нарочито у хришћанској религији, чија је једна од темељних карактеристика обилато коришћене масовних медија.

Учесници у овом издању, између осталог, баве се тиме како медијска политика влада у подрегиону Западне Африке утиче на развој религијских медија, како религијски медији утичу на политичке промене у подрегиону, како исти креирају нове верске и политичке заједнице и у каквој су ове заједнице вези с постојећим друштвено-политичким поретком; начинима на које новије верске организации, као што су пентекосталци, користе медије за напредак на политичком и економском плану; тиме како се старије институционалне религије, попут римокатоличанства и ислама, боре за друштвено-политички значај, сучене с масовним присутством новијих верских група у медијима; традиционалном афричком религијом у новом свету медија; тиме како су традиционалне форме моћи и комуникација уклопљене у нове религијске медије, те везом између религијских медија и друштвено-политичким сукобама у региону.

У свом уводном раду испитивао сам суптилан сукоб који се одвија између верских и политичких вођа на континенту. Овај сукоб зависи од редефинисања категорија моћи и статуса, које престају да буду превасходно везане за материјално богатство и политичке везе, а у корист духовног ауторитета и објаве. То је борба за хегемонистичку контролу друштва у Грамшијевском смислу речи. Користећи се италијанским концептима autorità (политичка или сирова сила) и autorevolezza (морална сила) као метафорама, рад представља опште објашњење тог како се спорења верских и политичких вођа одвијају у јавној сферо нових медија.

Рад Асонзе Укаха Изагнана чуда: Политика и политике религијске радиодифузије
у Нигерији, фокусира се на праксу и политику медијског регулаторног тела Нигерије Националне радиодифузне комисије (НБЦ), визави религијске радиодифузије. Рад истражује политике и процесе уређивања дерегулација у оквиру индустрије у којој су се у последње време јавили извесни спорови, посебно с освртом на оно што НБЦ назива „непровереним чудима” у неким програмима вођеним од стране појединих пентекосталних цркава у земљи.

Један другачији поглед на пентекосталне медије остварио је Годвин Окон. Његов рад Телеевангелизам и друштвено-политичка мобилизација пентекосталаца у Порт Харкурту: истраживање КАП-а настоји да утврди у којој мери телееванђелисти у Порт Харкурту користе медије у вези с питањима која се тичу друштвено-политичког развоја. Његов резултат показао је недостатак везе између знања о потенцијалним користима телееванђелизма и потребе тих користи у смеру друштвено-економске мобилизације од стране телееванђелиста.

Удаљавајући се од хришћанства, Ебере Увах разматра обреде традиционалних афричких религија које упркос утицају “вестернизације” и научних достигнућа у Африци још увек имају значајне импликације на свакодневни живот људи. Кроз изнијсану анализу неких нигеријских филмова показао је да је религија коренита парадигма афричких култура и канал изградње афричког идентитета.

За разлику од Оконових закључака у вези са нигеријским телееванђелизмом и политичком мобилизацијом, рад Еше Факи Мвинјихађи и Фредерика О. Ванјаме о муслиманима Кеније и друштвено-политичкој мобилизацији, показује да је појава муслиманских медија утицала на повећање видљивости муслимана на политичној сцени. Они тврде да се сада, кроз ову посредну мобилизацију, муслимани у тој земљи померају из свог ранијег периферног статуса, ступају у националне политичке савезе који могу штитити њихове интересе и, чинећи то, почињу да утичу на политичке прилике у Кенији.

Ови радови показују јасну везу између религијске праксе, политичког активизма и масовног посредовања. Ово није само случај у Африци, већ је евидентно и у другим деловима света. Религија и политика су стога важне варијабле у одређивању изгледа и карактера масовних медија у засебним друштвима.

Радови у овом издању показали су да ни религија ни политика не могу деловати потпуно независно једна од друге, а масовни медији представљају једну од тачака сусрета ових две важних компонената друштвена живота.

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THE WORD OF GUEST EDITOR:
RELIGION, MEDIA AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

In 2008, I co-directed the first major international conference dealing with media and religion in Africa, held in Abuja, Nigeria. The main goal of the conference was to cast a critical look at Africa’s rapidly evolving religious media scene. It was particularly interested in the challenges of balancing freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief in Africa’s fast growing media sector. The conference also aimed at encouraging the study of the expanding range of religious media, as well as coverage of religion, in a globalizing Africa.

As part of the ongoing discourse on media, religion and culture in Africa, this special edition focused on Religion, Media, and Politics in Africa. The aim is to examine current issues related to religious praxis in the context of the media and their political implications to the continent. As the Abuja conference made clear, there is a lot happening in the ambience of religious media within the African continent.

This edition thus throws an academic searchlight on three issues which have marked the current history of the continent as a whole: the second wave of democratization which swept through many countries of the continent from the early nineties; the liberalization of the airwaves which were hitherto under the hegemonic control of autocratic governments; and the upsurge of charismatic movements, especially in the Christian religion, one of whose defining characteristics is the massive use of the mass media.

The contributors to this special edition tackled among other issues: how government media policies in the West African sub-region affect the development of religious media; how religious media affect political changes in the sub-region; how religious media are creating new religious and political communities, and how these communities are relating to the existing socio-political order; ways through which newer religious organizations such as the Pentecostals use the media to advance political and economic agendas; how the older institutional religions like Catholicism and Islam are negotiating socio-political relevance in the face of the massive presence of the newer religious groups in the media; African Traditional Religion in the new world of the media; how traditional forms of power and communication are incorporated in the new religious media; and the nexus between religious media and socio-political conflicts in the sub-region.

In my lead paper, I examined the subtle contest going on between religious and political leaders in the continent. This contest hinges on the redefinition of the categories of power and status, which cease to be primarily tied to material wealth or political connection, but rather to spiritual authority and revelation. This is a struggle for the hegemonic control of the society in the Gramscian sense of the term. Using the Italian concepts of autorita; (physical or raw power), and autorevolezza (moral power) as metaphors, the paper presents a general explanation of how the contestation between religious and political leaders plays out in the public sphere of the new media.

Asonzeh Ukah’s paper, Banishing miracles: Politics and policies of religious broadcasting in Nigeria, focuses on the practices and policies of Nigeria’s media regulatory
body, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) vis-à-vis religious broadcasting. The paper investigates the politics, policies and processes of regulating deregulation within the industry which have raised some controversies in recent times, particularly with reference to what the NBC calls “unverified miracles” in some programmes run by some Pentecostal churches in the country.

A different perspective on Pentecostal media was undertaken by Godwin Okon. His paper, Televangelism and the socio-political mobilization of pentecostals in Port Harcourt metropolis: a kap survey; sought to ascertain the extent to which televangelists in Port Harcourt, Nigeria deploy media content towards issues that border on socio-political development. His findings showed a disconnection between knowledge on the potential benefits of televangelism and the deployment of such benefits towards socio-economic mobilization by televangelists.

Moving away from Christianity, Innocent Uwah considered the rituals of African Traditional Religion, which despite the influence of westernization and scientific developments in Africa, still hold meaningful implications in people’s everyday life. Through a nuanced textual analysis of some Nigerian home based films, he showed that religion is the root paradigm of African cultures and the channel to the construction of African identity.

In contrast to Okon’s findings with regard to Nigerian televangelists and political mobilization, Esha Faki Mwinyihaji and Fredrick O. Wanyama in their paper on Kenya’s Muslims and socio-political mobilization, showed that the emergence of Muslim media have influenced the increasing visibility of Muslims in the political scene. They contend that through this mediated mobilization, Muslims in that country are moving from their previous peripheral status, they are now entering national political alliances that can protect their interests and in doing so, Muslims are edging towards influencing national politics in Kenya.

These papers clearly show a clear nexus between religious praxis, political activism and mass mediation. This is not peculiar to Africa, but is evident in other parts of the world. Religion and politics are thus important variables in determining the outlook and character of the mass media in particular societies.

In all, the papers in this edition have shown that neither religion nor politics can operate completely independent of the other. The mass media provide one of the meeting points for these two important components of social life.

Walter C. Ihejirika

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RELIGION, MEDIA AND POLITICS IN AFRICA
Abstract

In many African countries, since the nineties, there is a subtle contest going on between religious and political leaders. At the heart of this contest is what Rosalind Hackett described as the redefinition of the categories of power and status, which cease to be primarily tied to material wealth or political connection, but rather to spiritual authority and revelation. This is a struggle for the hegemonic control of the society in the Gramscian sense of the term. While political leaders may use the coercive arms of the state – military might as well as their control of the financial resources of the state to impose their authority, religious leaders on the other hand assume the posture of moral icons, personalities endowed with superior knowledge based on divine revelation. As these contestations are played out in the public sphere, the way the leaders are able to portray themselves to their public will determine their followership. This explains the importance of mediation in the process of politico-religious contestations. In the eyes of the public, political leaders have the physical or raw power - the Italian concept of autorità; while the religious leaders have the moral power - autorevolezza. This paper uses these concepts as metaphors to present a general explanation of how the contestation between religious and political leaders plays out in the public sphere of the new media.

Key words: Religious power; political power; politics of recognition, public sphere; new media; mediated religion, hegemony; sacred canopy.

1. Introduction

An incident which happened in the month of August 2010 in Imo State, one of the states in the Eastern parts of Nigeria will help situate this paper: A Catholic priest, returning from an evening activity, was alleged to have obstructed the convoy of the State Governor who was travelling on the same route. The first report by a Catholic
newspaper which brought the incident to public attention narrated thus:

The security aides of the governor ordered the priest out of his car, forced him into their jeep and drove him to the Government House Owerri, where they handed him over to the Governor’s Chief Security Officer (CSO). After interrogating the clergyman, the CSO took several photographs of him before handing him over to the State Security Service (SSS) where he was thoroughly dehumanized, despite explanation that he had no intention to obstruct the Governor’s convoy and that the road was too narrow with a ditch at the sides, adding that within the circumstance, he parked well enough which enabled other vehicles in the convoy to pass. According to the priest, though he was not physically assaulted, he was psychologically and emotionally humiliated as he was ordered to remove his soutane, trousers and inner wear, except his underwear (shorts), before he was thrown into the cell at about 9 pm. He remained in the cell till 8 pm on Monday, when the Director of SSS released him on bail with an order to report back the next day at 11 am. When he returned as instructed, he was ordered to write an apology for obstructing the Governor’s convoy as a condition for granting him further bail. When the priest failed to do that, he was again detained. (Leader Newspaper, 15-22 August, 2010, p.1)

After this newspaper report, the Catholic population of the State - (made up of more than 50% of the citizenry) was enraged. The event became the topic of discussion in every part of the State. It was carried in some national dailies and discussed in internet chat-rooms used by Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora. As the news spread, more anecdotal details were added.

With the tempers running high, the Governor went with a full entourage of his cabinet to the Catholic Archbishop of the capital city and apologized. He claimed that the arrest and detention were made without his knowledge. The apology was accepted, and the matter would have rested.

However, a day after the private apology, a local news tabloid, Newpoint, which is believed to have links with the government, published a front-page news story titled: “Governor’s convoy latest: Female companion indicts priest”. The report claimed that the priest, when he was accosted by the security men of the governor was in the company of a young lady who was indecently dressed. A picture of the young lady and the priest was published on the front page. The story claimed that the security men seeing the priest in the company of an indecently dressed lady could not believe that he was a real Catholic priest.

This publication of the photo (which many believed was digitally manipulated) enraged the Catholics the more. The Catholic Women Organisation (made up of all married women in the Catholic Church), organized a demonstration in the State Capital and picketed the government house. Lay Catholic organizations, like the Laity Council, the Knights of Mulumba and St. John International, took up full-page advertorials in both local and national newspapers denouncing the Governor and demanding for an accompanied by siren-blaring escort cars, the observance is more in the breach. Officially, the list of those entitled to the use of siren include the President and his Vice, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Deputy President of the Senate, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, governors and deputy governors. Also cleared by the House to use siren are the Air Force, Police, Para-military, Federal Road Safety Commission, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Fire Service as well as ambulances and those on special duties and in time of emergency. (See, Mojeed and Akinbajo, 2009),
public apology.

After three weeks of tense face-off, the Governor ate the humble pie, and on the morning of 4th of September 2010, went on air in the state radio and television and tendered unreserved apology to the priest in question, the Catholic Archbishop and the entire Catholic faithful in the State and the country as a whole.

The incident in Imo State of Nigeria could have happened in any other part of the country and the world at large. The main elements of this provincial drama are the same as in any form of contestation between political and religious leaders: religious leaders adopting moral high ground, while political leaders use the coercive arms of the state or blackmail to attempt to subjugate the religious leaders. This was evident the contest between President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and the Roman Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube.

The cleric and his fellow Catholic bishops were very critical of the President and the way he was ruling the country. Their incessant criticism made Mugabe to say in the government-owned newspaper Herald: “once [the bishops] turn political, we regard them as no longer spiritual and our relations with them would be conducted as if we are dealing with political entities and this is quite a dangerous path they have chosen for themselves.” (Suite101, 2007) Part of that dangerous path was the celebrated sex scandal which led to the resignation of Archbishop Ncube, a scandal which many felt the government was implicated.

At the heart of the contests between religious and political leaders is the struggle for the projection of power: political leaders have raw power – the Italian concept of autorita (the power to command and order people to do things), while religious leaders have moral power - autorevolezza (the power to influence people, to be looked upon by others as worthy of respect). Whichever of the two parties is able to sustain his/her power in the contest carries the day. This is because the contestation plays out in the public arena and public opinion is crucial in the determination of the victor. Mediation is thus a crucial aspect in this struggle.

In Africa, the contestation between political and religious leaders has become accentuated since the nineties with the liberalization of the airwaves and the rise of charismatic religious movements in the continent. This is grounded on the fact noted by Rosalind Hackett (1998): “They have reinvented the categories of power and status, which cease to be primarily tied to material wealth or political connection, but rather to spiritual authority and revelation” (p. 262; See also Meyer, 1995a&b) This struggle could be seen from the perspective of the politics of recognition, especially the strand that deals with identity and status.

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3 Reuters, news agency reported the outbreak of the scandal thus: “State-run media has published what it said were photos of Roman Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube in bed with a woman, a day after the outspoken critic of President Robert Mugabe was sued for adultery. The scandal has dominated radio and television news on Zimbabwe’s state-owned stations, beginning on Monday when a state TV crew filmed Ncube being served with the lawsuit. On Tuesday, the government-owned Herald and Chronicle newspapers ran the photos under the headlines “Pius Ncube Shamed” and “Pius in Sex Scandal.” Several photos showed a man identified by newspapers as Ncube removing his clothes and lying in bed with a woman. The two dailies said the photos were from a security camera hidden in Ncube’s bedroom in Bulawayo by a private investigator hired by Onesimus Sibanda, who is suing Ncube for allegedly having a two-year sexual affair with his wife, Rosemary Sibanda. Adultery is illegal in Zimbabwe. (Chinaka, 2007; See also: McMaster, 2007)
The identity/status model of the politics of recognition

The politics of recognition has been adopted by scholars to explain the efforts of groups within a multi-cultural/ethnic society, especially minority groups, who try to assert their presence in the society. The demand for recognition comes to the fore in situations of contestation between different groups, especially when one of the groups feels unfairly subordinated by the other. (Taylor, 1994; Kiss, 1999; Englund & Nyamonjoh, 2004)

In situations of social contestation, the actors basically try to assert their worth, their importance, and their identity. The idea is that the lack of recognition or misrecognition inflicts harm that threatens the very existence of the affected groups. Thus, the politics of recognition revolves around identity, understood as the self-image that individuals and groups have.

According to Charles Taylor, one of the leading proponents of the theory, the discourse of recognition operates at two levels: “First in the intimate sphere where we understand the formation of identity and the self as taking place in a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others. And then, in the public sphere, where a politics of equal recognition has come to play a bigger role” (1994, p. 105) Thus, “the projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress to the extent that the image is internalized” (p. 104)

The ‘identity model’—starts from the Hegelian idea that identity is constructed dialogically, through a process of mutual recognition. In his Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel noted the difference between the mind and its activity in itself, without relation to an object (the subject of psychology) and the mind as essentially related to an object, external or internal – consciousness. (cf. Copleston, 1985, p. 180) The phenomenology of consciousness as developed by Hegel posits existence of another self as the condition of self-consciousness. The first spontaneous reaction of a self confronted with another is to assert its own existence as a self in face of the other. The one self desires to cancel out or annihilate the other self as a means to the triumphant assertion of its own selfhood.

Hegel posited that recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects, in which each sees the other both as its equal and also as separate from it. This relation is constitutive for subjectivity: one becomes an individual subject only by virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject. Recognition from others is thus essential to the development of a sense of self. To be denied recognition—or to be ‘misrecognized’—is to suffer both a distortion of one’s relation to one’s self and an injury to one’s identity.

As Fraser rightly noted, proponents of the identity model transpose the Hegelian recognition schema onto the cultural and political terrain. They contend that to belong to a group that is devalued by the dominant culture is to be misrecognized, to suffer a distortion in one’s relation to one’s self. As a result of repeated encounters with the stigmatizing gaze of a culturally dominant other, the members of disesteemed groups internalize negative self-images and are prevented from developing a healthy cultural identity of their own. (Fraser, 2000)

In this perspective, the politics of recognition aims to repair internal self-dislocation by contesting the dominant culture’s demeaning picture of the group. It proposes that
members of misrepresented groups reject such images in favour of new self-representations of their own making, jettisoning internalized, negative identities and joining collectively to produce a self-affirming culture of their own—which, publicly asserted, will gain the respect and esteem of society at large. The result, when successful, is ‘recognition’: an undistorted relation to oneself.

Going a step further, Fraser sees recognition as a question of social status. From this perspective, what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of group identity, but social subordination—in the sense of being prevented from participating as a peer in social life. To redress this injustice still requires a politics of recognition, but in the ‘status model’ this is no longer reduced to a question of identity: rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrepresented party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest.

Recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality. When, in contrast, they constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible—in other words, as less than full partners in social interaction—then we can speak of misrecognition and status subordination.

From this perspective, misrecognition is neither a psychic deformation nor a free-standing cultural harm but an institutionalized relation of social subordination. To be misrepresented, accordingly, is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in others’ attitudes, beliefs or representations. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.

What emerges from the foregoing discussion is that an institutionalized pattern of cultural value constitutes some social actors to relate to others in a certain way. If this relationship is seen to demean the status of the other, it provokes contestations. This is what happens when political leaders relate to religious leaders in such a way as to demean their social status, and in like manner, if religious leaders act in such a way as to usurp the position and authority of political leaders in the public arena. Contestation bordering on religious and political issues is one of the areas which the politics of recognition is played out in the African public sphere. (Bereketeab, 2004)

Social actors in a social drama

The politics of recognition involves social actors – in our case – religious and political leaders. These leaders in their social relationship are consciously and unconsciously acting out ingrained scripts of a social drama on the public stage.

Victor Turner drawing on the work of van Genep, sees social drama as aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations; an eruption from the level surface of ongoing social life, with its interactions, transactions, reciprocities, its customs making for regular, orderly sequences of behavior. (1974, p. 37; 1985, p. 180, 196)
In social dramas, the actors perform according to a script socially ingrained in their consciousness.

David Boje identified four phases of public action in Turner’s social drama theory:

1. Breach of norm-governed social relations that have liminal characteristics, a liminal between more or less stable social processes;
2. Crisis, during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen and in public forums, representatives of order are dared to grapple with it;
3. Redressive action, ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual.
4. Reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contesting parties. (Boje, 2003)

Victor Turner used the well known contest between Thomas Beckett – the Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury and King Henry of England to illustrate the activation of a social drama. According to him, the Beckett-Henry confrontation, evince the presence and activity of certain consciously recognized (though not consciously) grasped cultural models in the heads of the main actors which he called root paradigms. These paradigms have reference not only to the current state of social relationships existing or developing between actors but also to the cultural goals, means, ideas, outlooks, current of thought patterns, patterns of belief, and incline them to alliance or divisiveness.

Based on this, Turner concluded:
I believe that Thomas Beckett came more and more fully under the sway of a linked set of such root paradigms as his relationship with Henry moved from the private to the public sphere, from amity to conflict, and in his attitude shifted from self-interest to self-sacrifice on the belief of a system of religious beliefs and practices which itself concealed, even from Becket intuition of the central good of human communitas.
(1985, p. 185)

Thus, the culturally engrained root paradigms determine the posturing of both religious and political leaders in situations of contestation. Political leaders seeing themselves as the repositories of social power expect to be recognized as such and treated with utmost respect from all other members of the society. They are the ‘commanders’ of social affairs, the ‘big men and women’ of the society. Religious leaders on the other hand see themselves as the custodians of what Peter Berger has called the ‘sacred canopy’ and as such demand even greater respect than the political leaders. Some detailed presentation of Berger’s concept of sacred canopy and the concept of ‘big man’ in Africa will be important in arriving at the conclusions of this paper.

**Autorevolezza – Custodians of the Sacred Canopy**

Religious belief systems, according to Peter Berger, are essentially the body of transcendental knowledge which helps to provide individuals the necessary guide for a meaningful life in a society. Without this guide, the individuals within a society will
find it difficult to make sense of their individual and social lives, because the most im-
portant element for individuals living in society is meaning.

In formulating his theory, Berger drew insight from the sociology of knowledge
which he had elaborated earlier with Thomas Luckmann. He shows the importance of
meaning in a society by establishing the dialectical relationship between the individ-
ual and society: society as a human product and the individual as a product of society.
Society is the product of man’s externalising activity, but once formed, it becomes an
objective reality which in turns acts upon its creator and is re-appropriated through
the process of internalisation.  

The end result of man’s world-building activity is to impose order and meaning-
fulness in his world. Through the socially constructed world, a meaningful order, or
nomos is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals. Anomy,
or the opposite of nomos poses a serious threat to both the individual and society as a
whole, and must be kept at bay. According to Berger, the anthropological presupposi-
tion for this rejection of anomy is a human craving for meaning that appears to have
the force of instinct.  

Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality. Mean-
inglessness is therefore a nightmare to human beings. “To be in society is to be ‘sane’
precisely in the sense of being shielded from the ultimate ‘insanity’ of anomic terror.
Anomy is unbearable to the point where the individual may seek death in preference
to it. Conversely, existence within a nomic world may be sought at the cost of life itself,
if the individual believes that this ultimate sacrifice has nomic significance.” (Berger,
1967, p. 22)

Society shelters the individual from the anomic terror, especially in what Berg-
er calls the marginal situations of life. The marginal situation par excellence is death.
Society does this by integrating the marginal situations into the socially established
reality, and encouraging the individual to accept this reality as normal, i.e. to be taken
for granted. When this happens, there occurs a merging of the meaning of the socially
constructed reality with what are considered to be the fundamental meanings inher-

4 Berger depicts the dialectic process of society as consisting of three moments: externalization, objectivation and
internalization. Externalisation is the ongoing construction of meaning projected into the world, both in the physical and
the mental activity of men. Objectivation is the attainment by the products of this activity (again both physical and mental)
of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves. Internalization is the
reappropriation by men of this same reality, transforming it once again from structures of the objective world into structures
of the subjective consciousness. (Berger, 1967, pp. 4, 19). In this postulation, Berger shows his indebtedness to Karl Marx
and Emile Durkheim. He borrows from Marx his idea of dialectics and, the idea of religion as alienating to the individual.
Durkheim’s idea of religion as a collective representation of the society is also evident in Berger’s presentation.

5 Berger’s presentation of the need and process of meaning construction, is one aspect of his theory that has been criticised.
Hamilton criticises the way Berger presents man’s need of meaning, noting that it does not tell us much about why a religious
outlook occurs in some situations and in some individuals but not in others. (Hamilton, 1995, p.163). Robert Wuthnow and
his companions criticise Berger’s theory for its emphasis on subjectivity, concluding that the framework has received more
use for appreciating religion than for studying it. (Wuthnow et al, 1984, pp. 30-32, See also Wutnow, 1992 & 1994). John
Bowker criticises Berger for putting much stress on the subject in the process of meaning construction, noting that such an
over-stress underestimates the fact that external stimuli may actually cause man to react in one way or another. For Bowker,
there are important external sources of influence which are not of social or human origin. (Cf. Bowkwer. 1973; 1978; 1981)
However, Berger’s postulation could be understood from the sociological and phenomenological standpoint from which it
was formulated. In these traditions, the subject occupies a central position.
ent in the universe. *Nomos* and cosmos appear to be co-extensive.

In this view then, individuals cannot tolerate a meaningless world. Every society makes an effort to help individuals come to terms with the crisis of meaning which arises when they are faced with baffling and unusual situations and experiences. In Nigeria for instance, when individuals are faced with unusual sickness, unexplainable deaths, perennial poverty – they need answers. According to Berger, religious belief-systems play a central role in providing such answers because religion is required for the conjunction of the *nomos* with the cosmos. Berger sees religion as the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established, or as he puts it, “cosmization in a sacred mode”. (p. 25) It is thus that Berger arrives at his definition of religion as, “the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. …the audacious attempt to conceive the entire universe as humanly significant” (Berger, 1973, pp. 34, 37).

He identified two important functions of religion in the social process of world-building and meaning construction:

1. supporting the process of legitimation (that is socially objectivated ‘knowledge’ that serves to explain and justify the social order); and
2. offering solutions to the problem of theodicy (that is, the explanation of the anomic phenomena in terms of the *nomos* established in the society in question).

Religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference. The historical constructions of human activity are viewed from a vantage point that, in its own self-definition, transcends both history and man. Religion thus legitimates the social order (*nomos*) and relates the disorder that is the antithesis of all socially constructed *nomoi* to that yawning abyss of chaos that is the oldest antagonist of the sacred. To go against the order of society is always to risk plunging into *anomy*. To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated, however is to make a compact with the primeval forces of darkness.

The legitimising efforts of religion occur in the moments of confrontation with the *anomic* situations in society: death, suffering, injustice, etc. Religion explains and

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6 Berger and Luckman differed on their definitions of religion. While Berger views religious phenomenon as similar but not identical to the general human activity of meaning construction, Luckmann argued that religion is but one aspect of the ordinary human enterprise of transcending biological nature through cultural systems. Berger uses the sacred as different from other systems of meaning – the sacred is according to him, “a quality of mysterious and awesome power other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects or experience.” (1973, p. 34). In an earlier book, Berger presented further explanation of his conception of religion. The core of the argument is that in the observable human propensity to order reality, there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to this order, an impulse which implies not only that human order in some way corresponds to an order that transcends it, but that this order is of such a character that man can trust himself and his destiny to it. (cf. Berger, 1971, p. 75)

7 This word theodicy was first used by Max Weber. Hamilton summarised this view thus: “… in Weber’s view, religion is fundamentally a response to the difficulties and injustices of life which attempts to make sense of them and thereby enables people to cope with them and feel more confident when faced by them. Religious conceptions arise as a result of the fact that life is fundamentally precarious and uncertain. Uncertainty implies that human beings desire certain things but find their desires are not always fulfilled. There is always a discrepancy between what we think ought to be and what actually is. It is the tension generated by this discrepancy which is the source of the religious outlook. … Religion is an attempt to cope with such (discrepancies), and by its mediation with the supernatural world it is believed that material desires can be satisfied. Through its doctrine the apparent injustices of the world can be made to seem only apparent.” (Hamilton, 1995, p. 138).
resolves these anomic situations through theodicy. Theodicy directly affects the individual in his concrete life in society. A plausible theodicy permits the individual to integrate the anomic experiences of his biography into the socially established nomos and its subjective correlate in his own consciousness. It is not happiness that theodicy primarily provides, but meaning which is important both for the individual and the society as a whole. Through theodicy, entire collectives are permitted to integrate anomic events into the nomos established in their society.

The sacred canopy created by religion over society functions as a meaningful reference or ‘a plausibility structure’ for both the individual and the society. Religion therefore suffers when this canopy is perforated or collapses and the human beings in the given society can no longer find in it a meaningful reference point for their lives.

This was the practical inference arrived at by Berger. According to him, the process of secularisation which is spreading through the western world of Christendom, hinges on the disintegration of the Christian theodicy in the consciousness of Western man. “The social theodicy of Christianity (that is, its legitimation of the inequities of society) has been collapsing along with the over-all plausibility of the Christian theodicy ….” (1967, p. 79). Explaining further, Berger notes: “Probably for the first time in history, the religious legitimations of the world have lost their plausibility not only for a few intellectuals and other marginal individuals but for broad masses of entire societies. This opened up an acute crisis not only for the nomization of the large social institutions but for that of individual biographies. In other words, there has arisen a problem of ‘meaningfulness’ not only for such institutions as the state or the economy but for the ordinary routines of everyday life”.

8 For Berger theodicy does not need to entail a complex theoretical system, but rather ranges from an illiterate peasant who ascribes the death of his son to the will of God, to a theologian who writes a treatise on death and suffering. (1967, p. 50). There are however some fundamental attitudes underlying theodicy, deriving essentially from the surrender of the self to the ordering power of society (the same attitude that led to the establishment of the nomoi). In his use of the well-established theological notion of theodicy, Berger is careful to say that his specific meaning varies from that adopted and customary in theology. For him, theodicy focuses upon the human task of legitimation rather than any questioning of the purpose of an almighty and beneficent deity in the light of evil occurrences. (cf. Douglas, 1984, p. 29).

9 Berger and Luckmann see a plausibility structure as the social base for the particular suspension of doubt without which the definition of reality in question cannot be maintained in consciousness. (Luckman & Berger, 1967, p. 175. James Douglas identifies religious plausibility structures with the promise of salvation. He defines salvation as “a state of cognitive and effective well-being within the currently available system of world-interpretation”. Continuing, he notes that “salvation is that state of sufficiency of durable plausibility existing for an individual or group, under given ideological and social structural conditions such that no alternative is sought”. (1984, pp. 32-33).

10 Robert Wuthnow and his companions (1984) see the presentation of religion as a plausibility structure as one of the weak points of Berger’s theory. Describing it as a ‘weak’ form of sociology-of-knowledge reasoning, he notes that it specifies only the most general connections between social conditions and beliefs and flies in the face of a long tradition of sociological research that has shown relationships between specific types of belief and variations in social class, region, family structure, and political systems. Maintaining only plausibility structure, according to them, diminishes other factors. (pp. 30-32). While taking due note of the criticism, I hold the same view as James Douglas, that the plausibility theory, when applied to religious phenomenon, does not only concern itself with doctrinal schemes or philosophical systems of abstract forms, but also pays due regard to the emotional elements entering into religious conceptions and to the manner in which people hold to and maintain their beliefs. (Douglas, 1984, p. 29).

11 Thomas Luckmann criticises the conception of secularisation as the shrinking reach of the churches. He notes that this conception derives from the sociological view which identifies religion with institutional religion. He described such
If a religious belief system succeeds in serving as a reference point of meaning for individuals and collectives, that is, if it succeeds in erecting a meaningful sacred canopy, it not only maintains adherents, but also the religious leaders become influential in the society and are treated with utmost respect. Thus, the power of religious leaders which we have termed autorevolezza hinges on their role as the custodians of the sacred canopy. The extent to which this canopy is perceived to be plausible by majority of people living in the given society determines the level of authority and influence of these leaders.

**Autorita – The African ‘big men’**

As we noted earlier, at the heart of the contestation between religious and political leaders is the public manifestation of power. In other words, which one of these two groups of leaders commands more influence over the people. Within the African context, this point could be rephrased thus: ‘Between the two groups, who is the big man?’

The notion of big man or the big man syndrome, or bigmanism, within the context of political science, refers to corrupt, autocratic and often totalitarian rule of countries by a single person. It is generally associated with ‘neopatrimonial’ states, where there is a framework of formal law and administration but the state is informally captured by patronage networks. The distribution of the spoils of office takes precedence over the formal functions of the state, severely limiting the ability of public officials to make policies in the general interest.

In current usage, the African big man is synonymous with ruthless eccentric leaders who have insatiable passion for self-gratification and with an orgy of self-enrichment. They amass wealth and become sometimes richer than the state. Their wealth affords them the opportunity to engage in patronage politics or the politics of clientelism – whereby their subjects become their clients who have to be bought over with material and financial favours.

This is contrary to the notion of ‘big man’ in traditional African societies. Ogbu Kalu citing examples from his native Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria notes that the concept represented an achieved person who had, by the support of his ‘ikenga’, performed all the traditional rituals and taken all the titles, fulfilling the dream of old age lived with dignity. He notes that the title was loaded with moral implications demanding that the persons tongue be as sharp as that of the tiger; that is, he was to always tell the truth according to his conscience. The big man is thus a person endowed with wealth and moral integrity who would carry his carved stool to sit among the elders to judge the community. Similarly, among the Teso people of Uganda, the big man is a person who assiduously climbs through the status ladder by being elected to hold civic offices; while for the people of Malawi, the big man is a ‘kuhwima’, that is, a ‘ripened’ or ‘empowered’ person, a person of immense status and power. (Kalu, 2008, p. 113; See also Jones, 2005; van Djik, 1992)
According to Karin Barber, the attributes of big men among the Yoruba of western Nigeria include wealth, toughness, educational achievement, position in local government, new professions, leadership in political parties, towns or city affairs. Big men are excepted to sponsor their clients by using their networks of influence to secure them jobs, send their children to school, get them out of trouble or sponsor their various ceremonies like naming, marriage or funeral. In return they owe him their adulation and allegiance. (1991, 183,247)

With political independence and the advent of nation state in Africa, the notion of big man became bastardized. The Sixties were a heady time for Africans. All over the continent colonial flags were being lowered and Africans looked forward to freedom and a glittering future. But for most of the continent the last forty years have been a shattering experience. Since independence, most of the political leaders, the African big men, turned the state into personal fiefdoms; the national coffers become their personal accounts which were used arbitrarily to buy over loyalties. They lived in oasis of extravagant luxury in the middle of a desert of poverty and underdevelopment. (See, Russell, 2000; Beck 2008; Guled, 2009; CSM, 2006).

The Enjoyment of the trappings of political power made most of them not to want to leave it again. This is the genesis of the sit-tight leaders of Africa. The BBC’s Peter Lewenstein has compiled a list - in reverse order, by length of continuous time in office - of the 10 African heads of state who have remained in office for more than 25 years. On the number one spot is President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. Others include, Ben Ali of Tunisia, Blaise Campore of Burkina Faso (21 years each); King Mswati III of Swaziland and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (23 years each); Paul Biya of Cameroon (26 years), Hosni Mubarak of Egypt (27 years); Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, (29 years), Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola and Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea (30 years).

The big man syndrome has impacted negatively on the economic life of the continent. Abdi Guled’s (2009) view aptly captured this scenario: Intimidating monolithic bureaucracy and red tape frustrates entrepreneurship and growth of small businesses in all over Africa. Pervasive corruption and nepotism in all levels of governmental structures undermines public confidence on those at the helm of affairs. Statism and cult of personality thrives supreme, breeding cronyism which supersedes meritocracy. As the rule of law gradually faded in many African countries, draconian rules are being implemented in kangaroo Courts. Dissent remains virtually stifled; political prisoners terrorized in gulags and fear and dismay seizes the dismayed general population. Inevitably, a police state scenario abounds.

Roger Tangari (2000) conducted a general survey of the political factors (especially patronage) on economic performance throughout sub-Saharan Africa. With case studies drawn from Ghana, Zambia and Uganda, the survey noted the difficulties in developing a private enterprise economy. The book explained the problems of African business, involving antagonistic stances of politicians, the state, international financial institutions and foreign investment.

The African big men, the politics of patronage, clientelistic democracy; by whatever name it is called, the concept remains the same: political leaders who bestride the continent like mighty colossus, and expect every other person in the society is be under them and approach them with fear and trembling. The powerful big men of Africa seek total hegemonic control of the state structure as well as the citizenry.
It is the status of these ‘powerful big men’ of Africa which is being challenged by the ‘powerful big men of God’.

**Mediated religion in the African public sphere**

Three major social phenomena have marked the history of the African continent from the 1990s to the present. These are the second wave of democratization which saw the dethronement of many sit-tight leaders; the liberalization of the broadcast media which ended the State monopoly of the broadcast media in many countries of the continent; and the upsurge of charismatic movements within Christianity and their massive appropriation of the mass media. The Pentecostal use of the media also motivated the in-road of the other religious groups into the world of the new media, especially the broadcast media and the internet. With the growth of the new media, the world of religion and the media has become more closely intertwined.

The dismantling of state monopolies of the broadcast media and the commercialising of airtime and ownership have radically altered the media landscape, with significant consequences for religious communication and practice (See, Nyamnjoh, 2004; Fardon & Furniss, 2000; Meyer, 2006).

Both radio and television stations increased dramatically in the 90s. Hackett citing Panos (the Institute which actively encourages radio pluralism, as well as development-focused broadcasting in Africa and other “developing” regions), noted that between 1993 and 2001 the number of radio stations had grown from 40 to the 426 stations. They also became more diversified and commercialised in that period, moving from the region’s capital cities to local neighbourhoods where they broadcast their programs predominantly in FM. Most of these stations are community radios.

Rosalind Hackett provided instances in specific countries on the growth of the broadcast media in the continent: South Africa had over sixty community radio stations and Uganda had 117 private FM stations by 2002. Mali too has over a hundred. Two hundred new local community rural FM solar stations have been installed in the last few years in Niger. Before 2002, Sierra Leone had no community radio stations; by 2006 it had 24, of which 7 were religious. Most countries have at least twenty. This is why Africa is known as the “radio continent”. It is often said that there are more homes with radios than access to running water in Africa. (Hackett, 2010, see also, Mytton, 2000).

The liberalisation of the airwaves has afforded religious leaders more access to the media. A number of scholarly works have explored the appropriation of the media by various religious groups in the continent (Arnsten & Lundby, 1993; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004, 2005: De Witte, 2005; Hackett, 1998, 2006, 2010; Haron, 2002; Hirschkind, 2006; Ihejirika, 2005,2006,a,b, 2008, 2009a&b; Lundy, 1998, 2002; Lyons & Lyons, 1991; Marshall-Fratani, 1998, 2001; Meyer, 2003a,b,c, 2005, 2006a,b, 2008a,b; Tomaselli, 1995; Ukah, 2005, 2006, 2008a,b) The appropriation of the various means of communication for religious purposes is not limited to the new Pentecostal movements, but historical religions like the Catholic church and Islam are now actively engaged in this practice.

The increased access to the media has given religious leaders the possibility of affirming more forcefully the necessity of religious belief and praxis in the lives of individuals and the society. As Myer and Moors (2006) rightly noted; “with the diminishing
capacity of the nation-state for constructing communities of belonging, sub-publics and transnational publics that are grounded in religious convictions, imaginaries, and networks have become increasingly important. Essential for the emergence of these new publics has been the proliferation of new technologies of communication and representation”. (p. 11)

The religious visibility and relevance in the public sphere is accentuated in the era of the new media, especially the increased availability of satellite television in Africa and access to the internet. Among the defining characteristics of the concept of new media is the provision of the possibility to forge new relationships between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies. This implies changes in the use and reception of image and communication media in everyday life and in the meaning that are invested in media technologies. The new media technologies have made it impossible for political leaders to have absolute control over access and use of the mass media. Internet chat rooms, social network websites and radio broadcasts make it possible to overcome geographic boundaries and reach wider publics. The same possibility is gained through the reception of television stations outside the confines of a specific country through satellite broadcasting.

With the increased access to the media, brought about by liberalization and the new media, religious leaders in Africa are able to portray themselves as distinct from political leaders and show themselves as leaders who can assure the welfare of the people through the interventions of an Almighty Being. The African public space is more and more inundated with religious symbols, thanks to this increased access to the media.

Mediated religion thus presents a challenge to the political leaders, the big men; because it presents completely new repertoires of images and narratives about ‘modernity’, and ‘modernisation’ which are quite different from those hitherto monopolised by the state. By so doing, they challenge the hegemonic control which the political class hitherto had over the people

Today, in the African public sphere, the distinction between religious leaders and political leaders has become clearer. This difference is central to the development of new publics. Particular identities and interests are at play in the contestation between various groups in their attempts to take up a position as the public. Myer and Moors notes: “The presence of mediated religion in the public sphere is both constitutive of and constituted by political activism, specially identity politics or the politics of difference.” (2004, p. 11)

The importance of the new media to religion is not limited to the technological possibilities it offers for the production and dissemination of ideas, images, and narr-
tives, but that, “such images, ideas and narratives provide a series of elements… out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, scripts which while interpreted in terms of local, everyday experience, are taken from global repertoires, and as such, provide means for imagining communities outside or in defiance of the nation-state’s bid to monopolise the resources of community formation.” (Marshall-Fratani, 1998, p. 280)

Through the new media, religious sensibilities and identities have continued to grow in the continent. Religious leaders have made a very solid in-road into the national public sphere, that is, the notional space between the leaders and the led; and re-conceptualised the structure and normative basis of the nation. Nation-states worldwide are faced with this significant problem in attempting to control religion and its inclusion in state-driven imaginations of the nation. In colonial and post-colonial Africa, the state had to a large extent subordinated the ‘religious’ in the public sphere. But with the rise of the new media, this subordination has become ‘fiercely contested’, and religious leaders are gaining not only more visibility but also social ascendancy.

Conclusions

The African public sphere today is ferment with religious and political activities. Part of these activities is the contestations between the various leaders. These contests, as already noted, may not manifest openly in physical struggles or persecutions, but may be more subtle, operating at the level of identity formation, that is, the determination of the basis of peoples’ vision and behaviour. At this level, politico-religious contestation has to do with some basic values and attitudes toward the society. The issue at stake is: between political and religious leaders, who commands more respect before the people, who is seen to be more relevant, more influential, and ultimately who has more followership among the general public.

The new media have afforded religious leaders the opportunity to permeate the public sphere more and more with religious symbols. These symbols resonate with the traditional African world view and life style. In traditional African societies, religion was considered an important component. Andrew Moemeka sees religion as one of the defining characteristics of African communalistic societies. Religion pervades life and gives force to the bases of social life. Religion is used for safeguarding social order and protecting social norms. (Moemeka, 1998, p. 182) Wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crops; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 2)

In Africa, the sense of the sacred is still very strong. The new media have given religious leaders the opportunity to continue to affirm the relevance of the sacred can-
opportunity over the individuals and the society as a whole. This is contrary to what Stewart Hoover sees as one of the consequences of mediated religion in the western world. According to him, due to the intervention of the media, the central cultural momentum is towards the relativizing, not the entrenchment of religious authority and religious claims:

Shared, mediated experiences come to define the terms and outlines of social and political discourse. Through such trends, culture increasingly functions with a kind of autonomy that is in many ways unprecedented. At the same time, practices of religion are changing, with individuals assuming more responsibility for the direction of their own spiritual quests. Through their ‘seeking,’ the influence and legitimacy of formal religions of all kinds has increasingly come into question.

(Hoover, 2006, p. 2)

This claim does not reflect the African context where religious sensibilities and praxis are still, to large extent, communitarian and public. In Africa, majority of people still find meaning and shelter under the sacred canopy in its various manifestations. Rather than de-legitimizing religion, the increased availability and access to the media in Africa have accentuated the power and authority of religion and its leaders. This explains the respect and honour that is still accorded to them. As custodians of the sacred canopy, they are treated with respect. Because religious leaders still retain the moral authority in the society, they determine to a large extent people’s way of life. This explains why, political leaders either endeavour to align themselves with them, or attempt to ‘buy’ them over with material gifts; and when these fail, to call their moral authority into question through exposing their short comings.

The contestation between religious and political leaders is a healthy development as it keeps the African public sphere vibrant and dynamic. It creates checks and balances which is very important for socio-cultural and political development.
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ФИЗИЧКА СНАГА И МОРАЛНА СНАГА: ОБЈАШЊАВАЊЕ СПОРОВА ПОЛИТИЧКИХ И ВЕРСКИХ ВОЂА У ЕРИ НОВИХ МЕДИЈА

Резиме

У многим афричким земљама, од деведесетих година, траје суптилан спор између верских и политичких вођа. У срцу овог спора је оно што Розалинд Ха-кет описује као редефинисање категорија моћи и статуса, које престају да буду превасходно везане за материјално богатство и политичке везе, а у корист духовног ауторитета и објаве. То је борба за хегемонистичку контролу друштва у Грамшијевском смислу речи. Док политичке вође, у циљу наметања свог ауторитета, могу да користе државни апарат принуде – војну силу, као и сопствену контролу финансијских ресурса државе, верске вође се, с друге стране, постављају као моралне иконе, те личности обдарене супериорним знањем заснованим на божанском у откровењу. Будући да се ови спорови одигравају у јавној сферни, начин на који су вође у стању да се представе својој јавности определиће њихове следбенике. То објашњава значај помиřења у процесу политичко-религијских трвења. У очима јавности, политички лидери имају физичку или сирову силу, што одговара италијанском концепту autorita; док верске вође располажу моралном силом – autorevolezza. Овај рад користи се тим концептима као метафорама како би дао опште објашњење тога како се спорења верских и политичких вођа одвијају у јавној сферни нових медија.

Кључне речи: религијска моћ, политичка моћ, политика признања, јавна сфера, нови медији, посредована религија, хегемонија, свети балдахин.
BANISHING MIRACLES: POLITICS AND POLICIES OF RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING IN NIGERIA

Abstract

Nigeria is home to a vibrant media marketplace. Excluding more than a hundred titles of daily tabloids and weekly newspapers, there is a densely saturated broadcast industry consisting of radio, television (terrestrial, satellite, pay per view and cable channels) and video-film in Nigeria. Since the deregulation of the broadcast industry in 1992 with the issuing of broadcast licences to individuals and groups, the country has witnessed a burgeoning growth such that at the beginning of 2008, there were about 284 broadcasting stations in Nigeria. Since then, more licenses have been approved and issued, indicating a further expansion in the industry. Focusing on the practices and policies of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) vis-à-vis religious broadcasting in a multi-religious society, this paper investigates the politics, policies and processes of regulating deregulation within the industry which have raised some controversies in recent times, particularly with reference to what the NBC calls “unverified miracles”.

Key Words: Broadcasting, Television, Pentecostalism, Politics, Miracles, Deregulation.

Introduction

Since Nigeria received political Independence in 1960, all the Constitutions drafted and promulgated have guaranteed freedom of religious association, expression and practice. What the Constitutions have not granted citizens, in a straightforward, uncomplicated manner, is freedom to own and operate a broadcast medium. In a multi-religious society such as Nigeria, the role of the state with respect to religious communication is critical. And as Rosalind Hackett (2006:167) argues, “the role of public

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2 I am infinitely grateful to Dr. Chuks Okoye of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, and Chikas Danfulani of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Bayreuth/Jos, Peter Ochigbo, NTA Jos Programmes Manager, for their invaluable assistance in the course of researching this paper. Both were helpful in facilitating the interviews with the officials of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and in locating archival material. Earlier drafts of the paper were presented at two conferences: “New Media and Religious Transformation in Africa” (Abuja, Nigeria, 10-12 July 2008) and “Media, Religion and Culture”, Methodist University of Sao Paulo, Brazil (11 – 14 August 2008). I am grateful for comments from participants as well as from the editor of this journal and anonymous reviewer. The usual caveats hold.

RELIGION, MEDIA AND POLITICS IN AFRICA
religion in a nation-state in political transition [as Nigeria obviously is] ... provides an important insight into the mechanics of religious representation in the mediated public sphere”. There is a long and complicated history of mutual suspicion among the Nigeria’s different religious collectivities to warrant a cautious approach to the liberalisation of the media as well as the role of the state in the strategies of public representation of religion (Harnischfeger 2008; Toyin and Heaton 2008:238f). Bala Musa (2000:107) points out that “the volatile religious atmosphere in the country, the abuse of religious speech in the past, the excessive politicization of religion, and the constant use of the mass media to heighten religious tensions” in Nigeria have necessitated the institutionalisation of a policy of “prior restraint” on evangelising communities in relation to religious broadcasting. This paper argues that, these factors notwithstanding, the role of the state as a principal player in the media market plays a not insignificant role in the equivocations evident in the state policies and politics of deregulation and regulation of the media marketplace, particularly in respect to religious broadcasting.

The liberal character of the Nigerian broadcast market is the unique achievement of the last two decades. It was during this period that the broadcast arena increasingly took on a competitive texture quite different from what it had been since 1932 when the first broadcast medium was established. In that year, the British Broadcasting Corporation established an experimental monitoring station in Lagos; in 1935 a Radio Distribution Service was commissioned in Lagos, followed by another one in Ibadan in 1934 and Kano in 1944. It was only in 1951 that the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) was founded as an agency of colonial government (Akintunde 1995). This was the backbone of broadcasting infrastructure in Nigeria which expanded under a two-tier government — federal and state — control and monopoly. This paper examines the political economy of television broadcasting in Nigeria — leaving alone for now the related issue of radio transmission — and its interface with the public representation of religion.

The first television broadcast station in Nigeria, Western Nigerian Television (WNTV), was established in 1959 by the Western Nigerian Regional government. It was three years before the federal government-owned and -controlled Nigerian Television Service (NTS) was established in Lagos in 1962, and another five years before the integration of the NBS with the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) to form NBC-TV in 1967. The Nigerian Television Authority Act No. 24 of 1977 created the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), which is the largest television network in Nigeria. All through this period, television broadcast rights were vested and controlled by the federal and state governments (from 1979). It was only in 1992 that the enabling laws were put in place for the liberalisation of the broadcast industry. Partial commercialisation had started a few years earlier. The first private broadcast license was issued on 10 June 1993 for the first time in the history of Nigeria. At the beginning of 2008, there were 97 federal government-owned television stations; 32 state-government owned television stations, 18 private television broadcasting stations, 4 Direct to Home Television stations; 35 cable stations using Multichannel Multipoint Distribution Service (MMDS or wireless Cable) channels; and, 4 Direct Satellite Stations (DBS) in Nigeria.3

3 There are six federal government-owned radio stations known as Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), in addition to 37 Frequency Modulated (FM) stations and an external radio station, the Voice of Nigeria (VON). There are also 40 state
In Search of a Market for Loyalties

In contemporary societies, the broadcast media are perhaps the strongest instruments for the production and distribution of allegiances. In order to provide a more critical and nuanced perspective on the ambiguities of legal provisions that both deregulate and regulate broadcasting in Nigeria, it is helpful to evoke a theoretical framework first articulated by the American media scholar, Monroe E. Price (1994; 2002; 2007). Monroe Price (1994:667) postulates what he aptly describes as a “market for loyalties – in which large-scale competitors for power, in a shuffle for allegiances, often use regulation of communications to organize a cartel of imagery and identity among themselves”. Price argues that states generally compete in a market for loyalties for the hearts and minds of its citizens. States have vested interest in political and social control and demand, sometimes through anticompetitive measures such as the regulation of broadcast media, that their citizens “buy in” to their messages in order to maintain power and control (Price 2002: 32). Governments play dual role of operating mechanism for the functioning of the cartel and cartel player. The quest for political stability or social order is usually deployed as the manifest reason for the control of the media marketplace. Although this market for loyalties has existed “everywhere and at all times”, it is dynamic with changes in the nature and scope of participation, extent of boundaries and “the nature of the regulatory bodies capable of establishing and enforcing the rules for participation and exclusion” (Price 1994:667).

While acknowledging that it is easier to describe a conventional market for goods than the market for loyalties, Price insists both types of markets share certain features in common. Both kinds of markets have “sellers”, “buyers” and forms of “payment” for goods and services exchanged. The sellers in the market for loyalties “are all those for whom myths and dreams and history can somehow be converted into power and wealth – classically states, government, interests groups, businesses and others” (Price 1994: 669). Religion, according to Price (2007:87), “has always been a major aspect of markets for loyalties”. Religious organisations, like governments and other social actors, are formidable producers of allegiance, all in competition for public loyalties. The “buyers”, on the other hand, “are the citizens, subjects, nationals, consumers — recipients of the packages of information, propaganda, advertisements, drama, and news propounded by the media”. Consumers pay by exchanging one set of identities with a different set, becoming obedient to certain laws and carrying out specific duties such as paying taxes, patriotic support for a national cause (such as to fight in a war), including paying “with his or her own sense of identity” (Price 1994:670). The cost for loyalties could sometimes be very high, meaning that the competition for them may become very strident as well. As shall be adumbrated shortly, the equivocation evident in the media laws and the ways religious communication is regulated in Nigeria strongly point to the fact that the state is a primary actor in the market for loyalties, constantly in competition with religious organisations as producers and sellers of allegiance. Confronted by the inexorable power of religion, the state is frequently unwilling to allow equal participation of religious organisations in the market for the production

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government-owned radio stations and 17 privately owned radio stations. For a comprehensive listing of all these broadcast stations, see http://www.nbc.gov.ng/broadcast.php (accessed 28.05.2008).
allegiance and competition over loyalties. Media legislations in Nigeria have always been made by the powerful who use state infrastructure to contest for and reinforce their grip on social and political power. Hence a variety of regulatory instruments is put in place even when a specific media environment is presented as deregulated or self-regulatory.

**Legal Frameworks of Broadcasting in Nigeria**

Over the years, the legal framework for private participation and management of television broadcasting in Nigeria is foregrounded by certain principal instruments, namely, the Constitutional provisions, particularly of 1951 and 1979; the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1961; the Nigerian Television Act of 1976; and the National Broadcasting Commission Act 38 of 1992 as amended by the National Broadcasting Commission (Amendment) Decree No. 55 of 1999. In varying degrees, these legal structures increasingly decreased the amount of control and monopoly of the broadcast industry by the federal government.

The McPherson Constitution of 1951 vested more powers on the regional governments to own and operate broadcast stations, a situation that was markedly different from what was the case previously. This Constitution granted autonomy to regional governments by putting broadcasting on the concurrent legislative list or within the administrative jurisdiction of both the federal and regional governments. This constitutional provision, therefore, provided the added impetus for the expansion of state-owned broadcasting media from the late 1950s to present. Part of the reason why the McPherson’s constitution recognised the importance of regional governments and granted them a measure of autonomy, according to Michael Chukwuma (1985: 283; 285) was because it “was the result of about two years [of] discursive [sic] exercise” between different regional governments, pressure groups, political associations and the colonial authority, “from the village level to the national level”. While the 1951 McPherson constitution granted more powers to regional governments to own and operate broadcast media, it was the 1979 Constitution which expanded this provision by explicitly stating that private individuals and groups could participate in the ownership and management of broadcast media. In Section 36(2) of the Constitution, the provision was made that “every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions”. In principle this seems to be a recognition of parts of the rights of citizens, although in a strange twist, the very next subsection of the Constitution circumscribed the said provision by stating: “no person other than government of the federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the President, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever”. The operative 1999 Constitution enshrines similarly worded provisions in Section 39 of Chapter IV on “Fundamental Rights”:

> Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions: Provided that no person, other than the Government of
the Federation or of a State or any other person or body authorised by the President on the fulfilment of conditions laid down by an Act of the National Assembly, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for, any purpose whatsoever.

The Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1961 made it legally mandatory that government should license all broadcast stations. The first Wireless Telegraphy Ordinance was enacted by the colonial government in 1935 which underwent a series of modifications that finally resulted in the Wireless Telegraphy Act No. 31 of 1961 although it never came into force until 1 July 1966. It was this Act which prohibited the establishment of wireless telegraphy unless under a licence issued by the Minister responsible for communications. Besides been invested with the power to grant broadcast licence to regional or state governments (Section 31(1)), the Act in Section 8(1) also empowered the Minister to use his discretion to grant licence to citizens of Nigeria to conduct experiments in wireless telegraphy for scientific and research purposes. Under this Act, the broadcast media were firmly controlled and monopolised by the federal and state governments, with resultant lack of quality programming and competition in the industry (Mohammed 1994). The power of the Minister responsible for communication to grant license for broadcasting was never exercised:

As a result of the fact that the radio station was always the first target for coup-makers and has always been an important tool for the coup maker to announce a change of government, successive governments have nursed the fear that relinquishing control of broadcasting by allowing private concerns to own and operate broadcast stations would worsen their state of insecurity.

Political self-interest, rather than the common interest of Nigerians, had informed the laws undergirding public broadcasting, the same factor that is evident in the political use of religion in Nigeria. Governments that were not responsible to, and for, the Nigerian citizens dreaded the power of the broadcast media in the hands of critics and opponents, and these included individuals and groups such as religious organisations. The electronic media are the most potent instruments of influencing thought in modern society; its control is therefore critical for the survival of governments, particularly those that are less democratic or popular such as Nigeria’s military dictatorships which were responsible for drafting almost all the media laws since 1960.

A major policy shift of the government was the promulgation of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree no. 38 of 1992 which raised the constitutional provisions a step higher. It was signed into law on 20 August 1992 by Ibrahim B. Babangida, the military president of Nigeria and amended by decree No. 55 of 1999 promulgated by another military ruler of Nigeria, General Abdulsalami Abubakar on 26 May 1999, just three days before he vacated office. These two pieces of legislation, which effectively abrogated the Wireless Telegraphy Act, were occasioned by a number of factors. Of these, three pertinent factors deserve mention: the first is the liberalisation of the economy starting from the mid-1980s; this is followed by increasing agitation for democratisation, and finally, the anxiety against unregulated access to direct foreign

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broadcast by a sizeable but also increasing number of Nigerians.

Decree No. 38 established the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and outlined its responsibility, which, among other things, include receiving, processing and considering applications for the ownership of broadcast stations (radio, television, cable, direct satellite, etc.), regulating and controlling the broadcast industry. In addition, the NBC has the responsibility to maintain the principle of equity and fairness in the broadcasting industry; receiving, considering and investigating complaints from members of the public (private and corporate) regarding broadcast contents and the conduct of broadcasting stations; setting standards about the contents and materials for broadcast as well as establishing a national broadcasting code. Furthermore, the NBC is to intervene and arbitrate in conflicts in the broadcast industry, ensure qualitative manpower development, monitor broadcasting for harmful emission, interference and illegal broadcast and set and apply sanctions, including revocation of licenses of defaulting stations. A particularly intriguing responsibility of the NBC spelled out in the enabling law is to ensure that a licensed station shall be used to promote national interest, unity and cohesion and that it shall not be used to offend the religious sensibilities or promote ethnicity, sectionalism, hatred and disaffection among the peoples of Nigeria (NBC Decree 38, Section 9(1e)).

In the light of these awesome powers of broadcast media to form and influence thought, conduct and actions, it is appropriate and legitimate to prohibit licensed broadcast stations from fomenting and disseminating hate speech and national disunity. However, it is hardly the responsibility of commercial broadcasters to promote “national unity”, whatever this is. The law setting up the NBC, and its amendment, deployed the concepts of “national interest”, “public interest” and “interest of the public” six times (NBC Decree No. 38 Section 2(n); 4.4; 9(1e); 25(8d); NBC (Amendment Decree No. 55 Section 10(2B); 10(8A). Nowhere in the text were these concepts defined or given content as legitimate objectives to be safeguarded, protected, or promoted by private broadcasters. Particularly in Nigeria, what amounts to “national interest” often represents the interest of the politician(s) or a certain segment of the political class or elite who evoke the notion rather than the “common good”, the good of the largest segment of the citizenry. Ordinarily, national interest may be conceptualised as any action, circumstances, policies, or decisions that are generally considered to benefit the nation-state as a whole. However, in Nigeria, as historical experience amply shows, the “state” is not often synonymous with the public or the citizens of the nation such that the interest of the abstraction called the “state” becomes co-terminus with what benefits the general public.

The liberalisation of the broadcast industry happened in spite of state reluctance. According to Chuka Onwuchili (2007:126-128), the Babangida regime that pioneered this state loosening of the broadcast industry was visibly under “pressure” and “coercion” from several quarters such as the country’s international lenders and the threat of new information technologies. The contest for public mind figured and still plays important role in the way the laws were crafted and are being administered.

The Broadcast Regulator and Religious Broadcasting

The “myth” of national/public interest plays itself out once more in another provi-
tion of the NBC law. In Section 10a, the NBC is prohibited from granting broadcast license to a religious organisation. The law proffers no reason or justification for the blanket ban. This ban is apparently illegitimate, considering the constitutional provision guaranteeing freedom of expression as well as the provision in the NBC law that applicants for broadcast license “give an undertaking that the licensed station shall not be used to offend the religious sensibilities or promote ethnicity, sectionalism, hatred and disaffection among the peoples of Nigeria”. There are ample safeguards in the NBC law which allows the Commission to wield enormous powers, including the revocation of licenses of erring stations, to protect the society from religious hate speech to warrant the blanket ban on granting broadcast license to religious organisations. In many other countries (such as Cameroon, Kenya (Parsitau 2006), Tanzania, the Vatican and the United States), religious organisations own and operate broadcast media. In the United States of America, for example, religious broadcasting has evolved to become an industry in its own right, with its own “code of conduct” first written in 1944 (Courtright 1996:226). Bala Musa (2000:107) suggests that “The decision not to license these [religious] stations may be due to the volatile religious atmosphere in the country, the abuse of religious speech in the past, the excessive politicization of religion, and the constant use of the mass media to heighten tensions”. One important aim of the liberalisation of the broadcast market is plurality and diversity; yet, the prohibition of ownership of broadcast media by religious organisations starkly sabotages this objective. Some socially relevant groups are systematically excluded by the NBC laws which were undemocratically drafted and enacted.

Considering that the contents of the NBC decree are contradictory or at best deliberately ambiguous in some parts, the confusion in respect of religious broadcasting clearly illustrates the difficulties state officials have in dealing with religious issues or deregulating the media market, the fear of losing their grip on the market for allegiance. Allowing religious organisations to own and operate broadcast media would in practice “alter the mix of voices” in the society, and consequently affect the composition of its market for loyalties; it would destabilise public opinion by asserting “soft power” for new religious opinion makers (Price 2003:51-52).

While Section 10 of the NBC Decree 38 states clearly that “The Commission shall not grant a licence to a religious organisation; or a political party”, Section 2(1)(c) states unequivocally that the responsibility of the Commission is “recommending applications through the Minister [of Information] to the President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces for the grant of radio and television licenses”. As stipulated in both the 1979 (Section 32(6)) and 1999 constitutions (Section 39(2)), the final authority for the issuance or denial of a broadcast license rests squarely with the president of the country, and not with the NBC as has been generally assumed, which only exercises an

6 There are about five radio stations owned and operated by religious organisations. I thank Barrister Dave Ebong for confirming this information for me.

7 In Kenya alone, there are more than 16 broadcast stations owned and operated by religious organisations, both Christian and Muslim, see “Kenya: International religious Freedom report 2007”, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90103.htm (28.03.2008). I thank Esha Faki Mwinyihaji of Maseno University, Kisumu, Kenya, for additional information. In Tanzania, there are about 24 privately-owned and operated radio and television stations; about 18 of these owned by religious organisations; the Catholic Church alone operates 10 of these while four belong to the Protestant/Evangelical communities. I thank Dr. Bernardin Mfunbusa of St. Augustine, Tanzania, for the information.
advisory function in the process. This is consistent with the idea of the state competing with other power blocs or dominant groups for the allegiance of the citizens by maintaining a near-monopoly in the market for loyalties.

**Broadcasting Code and Religion**

One of the responsibilities of the NBC as set out in the legal instrument establishing it is “establishing and disseminating a national broadcasting code and setting standards with regard to the contents and quality of material for broadcast” (Decree 38, Section 2(1h)). The *Nigeria Broadcasting Code* (hereafter “the Code”) was first published by the NBC in 1993; a second edition was released in 1996, with a third edition out in 2003. It is now in its fourth edition (2006, all citations from this edition). According to the current Director-General of the NBC, M. A. Atoyebi, the current document was a product of broadcasting professionals from all over the country, mass media scholars “as well as other interested members of the public [who] freely and democratically debated every provision in it”. The purpose of the Code, Atoyebi insists, is to assist broadcasters to make sound decisions, build credibility and serve the Nigerian “society in an ethically responsible and constructive manner”. The Code serves both prescriptive and restrictive functions towards the achievement of the social, cultural, political, economic, technological and professional objectives of broadcasting. The NBC further listed 15 objectives of broadcast regulation, including the broadcasting of services which respect community standards (whatever these are!), fairness, protection of the rights and interests of consumers and sustainable competition in the broadcast industry and “self-regulation … within the framework of professional standards” (*Nigeria Broadcasting Code*, Section 0.3.3 g, k, n, o). In these objectives, the Code conforms to similar industry codes designed to reflect “role expectations”, socialise newcomers in the industry, and increase public confidence (Courtright 1996).

As a regulatory instrument, the Code set out very specific guidelines in respect of religious programming. The whole of Section 4.4 is devoted to the complex issue of religion broadcast, which begins with a preamble that recognises the centrality of religious beliefs and practices in the lives of Nigerians, the capacity of religion to evoke “strong passions and emotions” since it carries “varying sensibilities and sensitivities”, the multi-religious character of the society. One of the central prescriptions of the Code is that “religious broadcast shall not exceed 10% of the total weekly airtime of any station” (Section 4.4.1.i). This regulation is designed to prevent broadcast stations from being dominated by religious programmes. If the 10% weekly religious airtime is considered to be the most significant postulate of the Code, the second in importance is equal access and public service: “Equal opportunities and equitable airtime, not less than 90 minutes of a station’s weekly airtime, shall be made available to all religious groups in the community as a civil responsibility without charge” (Section 4.4.1a). The NBC seems to recognise the community-building function of religion such that it stipulates that broadcast stations offer “community service” in terms of free airtime dedicated to religious news and activities. How a particular station responds to these two injunctions, or interprets them, is not the responsibility of the NBC but

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There are other provisions of the Code which deal with the manner and content of broadcasting religion in the media. “Religious programmes shall be presented respectfully and accurately” (Section 4.4.b); broadcasters are to avoid casual use of names, words or symbols regarded as sacred by believers; when members of a particular religious community exercise control over the content of a programme, the programme should be presented by “a responsible representative of the given religion”; religious programmes should not attack or ridicule any other religious group or community. Religious broadcasts are to be restricted to creedal exposition, and this needs to be done in a manner that does not mislead the public. Furthermore, the broadcast of rites and rituals involving cruelty and obscenity are prohibited, “except in programmes designed specifically to teach the beliefs of a religion” (Section 4.4.h). It is not clear what the Code is intended to safeguard here: ritual slaughter of animals in African indigenous religions and in Islam or rituals such as circumcisions. What the provisions of the Code have dealt with seems to be doctrinal criticisms, bias and misrepresentation of religions by non-adherents of those religions. It is still possible, however, for members of a particular religion to deliberately misrepresent their own faith in ways that may be considered exploitative. It is how to handle this issue that led the NBC to postulate what became known as the “verifiable miracle hullabaloo”. By far the most controversial single item in the Code dealing with the broadcast of religion relates to “miracles”.

Banishing Miracles from the Airwaves

A programme promoting religion in any form, shall present its claim, especially those relating to miracles, in such a manner that is provable and believable [...]. An advertisement promoting religion in any form shall present its claims, especially those relating to miracles, in such a manner that is verifiable, provable and believable (NBC Broadcasting Code, Sections 4.4.1g & 7.5.1a)

The above prescriptive items in the Code have always been part of all previous editions of the NBC Code and were not just inserted in the latest edition. To safeguard the public against deception has consistently been a goal of the NBC Code. Similarly, in The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice (3rd ed, 2005) published by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), there are two significant postulates dealing with the public representation of religion. Section 4.16 titled “Advertising of Religious and Related Products and Service” contains explicit prohibitions such as: “no religious

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9 In order to avoid the controversies surrounding religious programming in the 1990s, a private television station in Ibadan and Lagos, Galaxy TV, decided to boycott sponsored religious programmes altogether. To achieve the 90 minutes’ weekly free airtime quota, the same station devotes airtime to what it considers as newsworthy religious events.

10 Pentecostal pastors frequently ridicule elements of African indigenous religions in their “evangelistic broadcasts”. In 1996 a pentecostal bishop in Owerri displayed human skulls during his television programme to demonstrate his powers in breaking “ancestral curses” which he alleged to be responsible for the lack of progress and prosperity in the lives of many Born Agains. He was neither prosecuted for the illegal possession of human remains/disrespect for the dead nor was the television station that broadcast the programme sanctioned for airing such abuse of elements of indigenous religious practices such as the veneration of ancestors (see Ukah 2008:284). It took mass outrage and violent demonstrations during the “Otokoto Uprising” in Owerri in mid-1996 for the incident to be officially registered and questioned.
advertisement shall be seen to try to exploit the weaknesses, handicaps, shortcomings or state of desperation of members of the public” (4.16.1). This is a verbatim reproduction of NBC Code (Section 7.5.1c) indicating a unified position between the two regulatory agencies on the public representation of religion. Not being satisfied with this general statement, the APCON Code specifies further:

Advertisements/promotions of any religious product or service shall: i) avoid exaggeration in its claims pertaining to miracles on the adherents of the religion through the use of spurious testimonials likely to deceive the audience; ii) avoid promise of financial prosperity; iii) Not cast aspersion on any other sect or religion; iv) not coerce, cajole or otherwise compel anyone to become an adherent of a particular sect or belief, (APCON Code Section 4.16.2.i-iv).

Obviously, these regulations were observed in the breach by both the broadcast media and the religious organisations, particularly the Pentecostal churches that sprung up like wild fire all over urban southern Nigeria. The new churches were in stiff competition among themselves for membership and therefore attractive packaging became increasingly very important in their self-representation. “Instant Miracles”, as a poster advertising miracles in Lagos in 2005 captioned it, soon became a specific feature of Pentecostalism that differentiates it from other religions. Miracles transformed into Pentecostalism’s “unique selling proposition” (USP), the most important product offered religious consumers, something special and convincing to attract attention and precipitate the possible switching of allegiance from one church to another. Miracles as UPS also provide legitimation for the activities of church owner-founders in the religious media marketplace; it is the proof of their divine call to mission, the reason for engaging the media.

The intriguing issue, however, is not so much the role of miracles in religious broadcasting or communication but why the regulations governing religious broadcasting were left dormant and not enforced until April 2004. As shall be shown shortly, the contest for loyalty in Nigeria’s religious media market prompted some groups to instigate the resurrection of a dormant law in order to exercise control. The acrid debates raised by the NBC’s attempt to enforce these regulations expose the politics of policy implementation and enforcement with regard to public representation of religion in the media.

Religious believers, particularly in Nigeria, generally maintain that there is an intrinsic connection between the mundane activities of individuals and the intervention of the deity. According to a foremost Nigerian Pentecostal pastor who is renowned for his “mediatised miracle evangelism”, and founder/owner of Believers’ LoveWorld Inc. (alias Christ Embassy), Chris Oyakhilome, “A miracle is an inexplicable intervention by a supernatural power in the natural affairs of man. A miracle is something beyond the normal course of events. Usually, a miracle is a positive event.” 11 The belief that the supernatural can inexplicably intervene in the affairs of human beings is the foundation of the belief in miracles. This belief sits differently among the different faith communities of Nigeria. For many Christians, particularly the “New Pentecostals”, at the heart of being “Born Again” is not just the possibility, but the reality, of the miraculous in the believers’ everyday life. Again, Chris Oyakhilome articulates the opinion of a majority

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of the new Pentecostal class when he insists that: “I have a message that certainly heals people. You cannot hear that message and remain sick, poor or dejected. It would bring you hope and life. … [O]f a necessity, there will be healing and miracles” [following the hearing of the message].12 Femi Emmanuel, founder/owner of Livingspring Chapel International (Lagos and Ibadan) is unequivocal: “Miracle is the crux of the gospel. Gospel minus miracles becomes ridiculous. Christianity is the religion of signs and wonders”.13 According to another prominent Pentecostal leader, Enoch Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, every illness is the outworking of the mischief of the devil, and so requires a religious solution as no true Christian can simultaneously accommodate the Holy Spirit and sickness in his/her person (Adeboye 1994: 10-11; see Ukah 2008:196-9).

The Pentecostal conceptualisation of illness to embrace the “physical, psychological, socio-economic, or political” (Kalu 2008:265) makes the miraculous a common daily occurrence. Miracles are “your credentials” for preaching the gospel: “If you preach Jesus Christ and he sent you, he will back up your claims [with miracles]. Now if he doesn’t back up your claims, you have to find out whether or not you are called”.14 There is a telling paradox here: the same miracles that legitimate a preacher before his followers also delegitimate him using the broadcast media. In some other religious traditions, such as Islam and African indigenous religions, miracles and the miraculous are subdued themes which are not emphasized or publicised as is the case with Nigeria’s New Pentecostalism. The nub of the issue with the leaders of the Pentecostals, however, is that the competition for adherents, social visibility, and prestige is a strong factor in pastors using the media in displaying their “credentials” and credibility.

The so-called “miracle broadcast”, therefore, emerged in a two-fold relationship in which pastors recognised the power of images and the technology of broadcasting media in creating leverage in the competition for loyalties and the cash-strapped media organisations, particularly the government-owned and -controlled stations, which craved for the patronage of religious entrepreneurs in recruiting revenues from sponsored religious programmes and religious advertising. The broadcast media, particularly television stations, paid significant instrumental role in the emergence of what G. A. Akinola calls “commercialised religious empires” that boast of billions of dollars in untaxed revenue15 through a variety of practices such as “the harvesting of donations” from the public, the collection of tithes from members and the marketing of media products, namely, books, magazines, videos and audio tapes (also Hackett 1998:258). Oluyinka Esan (2009:157) graphically captures the state of affairs within the government-owned television stations when she writes: “Commercialised [television] stations featured productions with a questionable mix of claims and values by traditional and spiritual healers, with little effort made to verify those claims. Religion (Christian and Islamic evangelists) became a brand […] and personal celebrations of the privileged tended to dominate the screen.” Esan concludes that state general man-

12 Chris Oyakhilome, p. 25
13 Cited in Festus Eriye, “Televangelists told to Verify Miracles or Pull the Plug”, The Sunday Times (Lagos), 16.05.2004.
14 Chris Oyakhilome, p. 25.
agers where “most unapologetic for this trend even when [they] found some of the programmes distasteful”.

As an industry, religious advertising, for example, is the second highest income earner for media organisations in Nigeria; it is second only to alcohol and tobacco advertising combined (Ukah 2004: 83; 2002); religious adverts and sponsored programmes provide more than 40% of the revenue of both government and privately owned and operated media houses (Ihejirika 2006a: 163). For example, in 2002, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) claimed it was investing “over eight million naira [ca. $571,428.57] each quarter of broadcasting session” to finance its programmes on 28 television and radio channels in Nigeria. One of the television channels engaged by the church is a satellite station (Ukah 2003:156). An hour of sponsored programme on such satellite broadcast station costs as much as the equivalent of $10,000. Some churches, such as Christ Embassy, the RCCG and T. B. Joshua’s Synagogue of All Nations Church, sponsor well over 20 hours of programmes each week. This is only a tiny fraction of the revenues broadcast organisations derive from sponsored religious programmes.

Miracle broadcast, therefore, was generally recognised as mutually beneficial to the broadcast industry and to a class of church owner/founders who specialises in the production of miracles. The section of society whose interest seems not to have been adequately covered or protected happens to be the consumers of religious broadcast. Since the early 1980s when the Pentecostal phenomenon emerged and started spreading like “wild fire”, there had been accusations and allegations that there are “some fake Pentecostal pastors who utilise magical powers and cultic mediums to manipulate and cajole their credulous adherents” (Magbadelo 2004:15). Continuing, Magbadelo (2004: 15-16) asserts that “Pentecostal churches in the country have continued to feast on the psychology of the masses who genuinely are desirous of relief from their sordid existential realities; … [some pastors] pursue their pre-occupation as a commercial venture, and utilise any means to accumulate profits”. The Guardian (Lagos) newspaper editorial of 21 April 2004 states with forthright poignancy:

The rise of the so-called Pentecostal churches in Nigeria has led to the proliferation of all sorts of churches preaching prosperity to millions of unemployed Nigerians who having failed at every effort to secure employment now seek the sanctuary of a chanting and titillating church. A number of these churches claim the power of miracle healing. With many Nigerians too poor to afford drugs, these churches have replaced both doctor and chemist [pharmacy]. Many of their healings are done on television...
with testimonies that are often unverifiable. […] However], there are Nigerians who have come to grief by their association with some of the more unscrupulous elements of these miracle-peddling groups.

As a consequence of these concerns which were part of the public debate about the presence, function and modus operandi of new Pentecostal churches, it was generally thought, the NBC, through its then Director-General, Dr. Silas Babajiya Yisa, stated on 30 March 2004, that all broadcast stations in the country “which indulge in transmitting […] programmes that profess indiscriminate miracles as events of daily fingertip occurrence [should] put a stop to this by the 30th of April 2004”. Yisa made explicit references to the two sections 4.4.1 and 7.5.1a of the NBC Code dealing with the broadcast of miracles. It was obvious therefore that NBC’s action was not a ban as such but an enforcement of existing provisions of the Code, which hitherto had been observed only in their breach. Clarifications followed the furore which NBC’s pronouncement immediately generated; the prohibition was not on “miracle broadcast” per se, but such broadcast should follow certain procedures which had been in place since 1993. They should be “provable”, “verifiable” and “believable”. The NBC did not proffer any definition or description of what qualifies as a “miracle” nor did it offer any procedural steps for the verification of a purported miracle so that it becomes “believable”. Similarly, the agency did not specify to whom or which group in the society a purported miracle should be proved, verified or become believable. Evidently, to Pentecostal Christians, miracles as broadcast on television are believable, the barrage of “supporting testimonies” that usually accompany them serve as “scientific proof” of authenticity. The popularity of miracles means that they are generally believable by the target audience. While there were no punishments spelt out for churches who major on miracle broadcast, television or radio stations which fail to abide by NBC Code in this respect risk being fined, and their equipment could, in addition, be confiscated or their broadcasting licenses be withdrawn. The irony is: the NBC which does not issue broadcast license now has the power to withdraw licence from erring broadcast stations. The chairman of APCON, May Nzeribe, provided further details when he stated in an interview:

There’s no ban on miracle advertising on TV or any other broadcast media…. If you have to do any promotion at all because of the inherent danger involved in leading people on a slope, because of our attachment to hope in life which is the major product of evangelism, what we said is the testimonial of the miracle to be advertised must be well documented so that it can be verified. Testimony should contain full contact addresses and names of the beneficiary of this miracle … the names and addresses given must be authentic.

A three-fold step was required of religious leaders who seek to broadcast miracles of any type: they should provide a valid/authentic medical report on a patient’s condi-


20 “Nobody has Banned Miracles on TV … All we’re Asking for is Confirmation’ – May Nzeribe, Chairman, APCON”, The Sun (Lagos), 8 November 2004.

cholera, meningococcal meningitis, and yellow fever are not uncommon … HIV prevalence rate is on the rise … (Falola and Heaton 2008:238).
tion before an alleged healing took place; they should also submit a video evidence of the healing process itself; and finally, they need to provide another medical report confirming that the earlier diagnosed condition no longer exists.

Though difficult, these conditions are not impossible to satisfy. The clarifications provided by APCON rather than the NBC indicates that miracle broadcast, contrary to the views of its sponsors which see it as part of “evangelism”, is officially categorised as commercialised performance or advertisement on television.

However, an important question that illustrates that the regulation of religious broadcast is an important instrument of anti-competition in the contest for loyalties is: why did it take the NBC twelve years to enforce a provision of its Code of Broadcasting? Religious broadcast is not new in Nigeria; it was there even before the liberalisation of the broadcast media in the 1990s (Lyon and Lyon 1991). As Alozie (2003; 2005; also Ukah 2005) demonstrates, the veracity of media advertising in Nigeria is generally unscrutinised. Product manufacturers and service providers use the media to make unsubstantiated claims about their products and services; yet they are hardly called upon to account for their actions or are they charged to court for attempting to mislead the public. What, then, is special, or different, about miracle broadcasts?

By May 2004, it became obvious that the NBC’s belated attempt at enforcing elements in its Code of Broadcasting was instigated by officials of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), an umbrella organisation of many Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Livinus Okpara, a top official of the NBC, confirmed in early May 2004 that the enforcement of the Code on unverifiable miracles on television and radio was announced after extensive consultations and agreement with the PFN. The National Secretary of the PFN, Bishop Joseph Ojo, founder/owner of Calvary Kingdom Church, Lagos, commented that it was not miracle that was prohibited; the NBC was rightly “regulating the broadcast of miracles on television which I support because many of the people [broadcasting miracles] on TV are not preaching [the] gospel … they are advertising themselves and bringing reproach to the name of the Lord.”

Significantly, he likened miracle broadcasts to the menace of fake drugs in Nigeria, which, before the aggressive crackdown of National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), was alleged to have claimed many innocent lives and at the same time made many businesspersons prosperous (Erhun et al. 2001; Alubo 2001; Cockburn et al. 2005). Joseph Ojo’s statement, which reflects the official position of the PFN, is a strong one indeed that lumps money laundry, advance fee fraud, miracle broadcast and sundry corrupt practices together (Shehu 2005; cf. Laniel 2001). The assertion effectively links miracle broadcast to corrupt practices which warrants state intervention and control in order to protect citizens from unscrupulous activities of greedy preachers.

Furthermore, the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was in support of the enforcement. According to the then CAN president and the then Prelate of Methodist Church of Nigeria, Sunday Mbang, Pentecostal leaders have abandoned the message of salvation and now dwell more on miracles because of money and cheap publicity. He asks rhetorically: “What has miracle got to do with making Christians good people?” The Catholic hierarchy also indicated its solidarity with

the NBC. According to the Director of Social Communication of the Lagos Catholic Archdiocese, Gabriel Osu, the enforcement of the NBC Code would take care of the “bastardised” state of religious broadcasting in the country: bastardised because the production and dissemination of “miracles” have taken over the airwaves.  

From the above expressions of support for the enforcement of Sections 4.4.1 and 7.5.1a of the NBC Code, it is obvious that the attempt was a targeted enforcement directed at a specific segment of the Pentecostal community which has become notorious for the “miraculisation” of the broadcast media. Even when no names were named by the NBC, the arrowheads of the miracle group are generally known to be Chris Oyakhilome of Believers’ Loveworld and Temitope Joshua of Synagogue of All Nations. Both are not members of the PFN, and for a long time both have been excoriated on several occasions by prominent pastors such as Chris Okotie, Matthew Ashimolowo, Mike Okonkwo and the leadership of the PFN as epitomising thinly veiled occultic healing practices (Hackett 2001:195; Gaiya 2002:24-25; Ihejirika 2006b). Not insignificantly, these are the two topmost spenders on miracle broadcast in Nigeria as at 2004 and have been embroiled in controversies well-documented in the media since late in 2002. Chris Oyakhilome in particular, who claims to have over a million followers in Nigeria, has had a running battle with the CAN and the PFN before the enforcement came in 2004. He started his television ministry in 1996, and was the biggest patron of Nigerian television stations. His Atmosphere for Miracles (ATM) ran seven days a week on about 20 TV stations. Even with the NBC ban, Oyakhilome still retains his slots, replacing the ATM with Teaching Programme and LoveWorld. The ATM continues to run, twice a week, on Ghana’s Metro TV and throughout the week on LoveWorld Christian Network, a satellite channel owned by Oyakhilome. It also runs on TBN in South Africa.

At the moment, Oyakhilome runs a huge, worldwide television ministry and organisation that explores every media outlet (print, audiovisuals, Internet, satellite) to disseminate his message and products. The enforcement compelled him to relocate the headquarters of his broadcasting empire to South Africa, instead of Lagos his original base, where the media laws and policies accommodate his type of miracle broadcast. T. B. Joshua has also established his own satellite and Internet television, Emmanuel

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23 The Vanguard (Lagos), 14 April 2004.
24 Because of their dramatic healing style, peculiar teachings and practices as well as the relationship between Oyakhilome and Joshua, both churches are constantly involved in controversies. In 2003 and 2004, two members of Christ Embassy stole huge sums of money ($400,000) from their employers and gave large portions ($100,000) to the church as “seed offering” (for details see Ukah 2007:627). Recently, the Campus Fellowships of Believers’ Loveworld were accused of being the nest of campus prostitution and campus gangsterism. According to the Chaplain of the University of Ibadan Chapel of Resurrection, Venerable J.A.F Olusola, the fellowship is a “haven” for student commercial sex workers and cultists who recruit young female students into prostitution rings, see Segun Olugbile and Abimbola Adelakun, “Campus Prostitution: Varsities Turn Spiritual to Vice”, The Punch (Lagos), 10.06.2008, http://www.punchontheweb.com/Artic.aspx?theartic=Art200806104543835 (accessed 23.06.2008).
television, which is also hosted from South Africa principally targeting Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and North America. Chris Oyakhilome and T. B. Joshua are unarguably two of the richest Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria who blur any distinction between the bible and economics, drama and prayer in the process drawing scathing criticisms (or jealousy and envy as some of their admirers claim) from people within and outside the Pentecostal community.28

The enforcement, therefore, rather than being a case of “prior restraint”, is in reality, an attempt by a religious cartel (the PFN, supported by CAN) to regulate the media space through the NBC. Part of the reasons that emboldened the PFN to seek to squeeze certain religious actors out of the media marketplace was the public image of the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, as a “Born Again” Christian, who actively courted and received the endorsement of the PFN during his political campaign for the office of the president of Nigeria in 1999 (Obadare 2006). The public display of Pentecostal piety by the former president, in addition to the granting of 20 billion naira worth of import waivers to the Redeemed Christian Church of God, inspired the PFN to seek to deploy state machinery and power in muffling the voices and presence of other competitors. For the PFN, sanitising the Pentecostal media market is a holy zeal that may attract presidential reward in form of financial or material support, in addition to guaranteeing a market niche.29

Conclusions

“In any society characterised by religious pluralism, choice of what or what not to broadcast is clearly difficult” (Lyons and Lyons 1991:103). According to Yusuf Danesi, a top executive of Nigeria’s advertising watchdog, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), “churches threaten to take over Nigeria’s airwaves”.30


29 See Ikenna Emewu, “Holy Scam: Obasanjo’s Church in N20b Import Waiver Deals”, Saturday Sun (Lagos), 3 November 2007, http://sunnewsonline/webpages/features/newsonthehour/2007/nov/03 (accessed 03.11.07). According to this report based on disclosures from the Senator Udoh Udoma-led Senate Committee probing tax waivers and incentives during the regimes of Obasanjo (1999-2007), the importation amounted to N100 billion which ordinarily should have attracted import tariff worth about N20 billion into government coffers because the goods brought into the country by the church included 300 cars worth $6,923,000.00; 100 jeeps (SUV), worth $8,000,000.00; video equipment, worth $12,000,000.00, etc. These are essentially luxury goods that cannot be classified as “religious” brought into the country in outrageous quantities at a very high cost made possible through the manipulation of state power.

tion of miracle broadcast represents one clear case of persistent government attempts to protect citizens from perceived “bad” religion, but instigated by a religious cartel rather than the state working for public interest. Jeremy Stolow (2005:121) rightly observes that there is “a long history of anticlerical political philosophy [which attempts] to delegitimate religiously encoded practices by presenting them as tricks of mystification, as cynical deployments of technologies of imposture designed to generate secret profits, or to exploit the credulities of the innocent.” Implicit in the prohibition of the ownership of broadcast media by religious groups is the perception and belief that religious speech is imbued with such a tremendous, or rather transcendental, power as to be a form of violence. This perception informs the doctrine of “prior restraint” which seeks to justify the prohibition. As we have seen, however, this prohibition enables government to exclude significant competitors in the market for loyalties of citizens. The government’s policy on religious broadcasting remains largely negative, focusing on the power of religious speech to define and motivate large-scale social action with negative, rather than positive, outcomes. While there is general agreement by Nigerians that religion is an important element in their social, economic and political behaviours, this has not warranted a shift or reconsideration of government’s attitude towards religious communication.

The laws liberalising the ownership of broadcast stations in Nigeria brought about a certain degree of fragmentation of state power and monopoly over the loyalty of allegiance of the public. The state being a principal player in the market for allegiance, still retains, or craves to retain, a firm grip on the structures of media competition. This it does through media laws that exclude socially significant groups, the activities of the NBC (a government-dependent agency that wields considerable powers over public and private broadcasting), and selective implementation of media regulations, particularly those pertaining to equal access of all religious groups to broadcast media, public service broadcasting that reflects uniform coverage of all religious groups. The NBC is not neutral in its policies and practices in respect of religious broadcasting. The policies and politics within these two state organs are as a consequence of religious partisanship of federal and state governments contrary to the expressed constitutional guarantees. Media policies are demonstrably instruments of political manipulation. The doctrine of “prior restraint”, while pointing to certain incontrovertible historical antecedents about the political manipulation of religion in Nigeria, fails to adequately factor in the inconsistencies, contradictions, ambiguities and equivocations evident in media legislations, policies and practices. Significantly, it fails to examine how these policies are politicised at the implementation stage. An alternative, or rather complementary, model of examining the “broadcast scape”, as this essay argues, is to factor in the role of the state as umpire and player, regulator and participant, in the market for loyalties. It also illustrates the influence of powerful cartels, such as the PFN, in manipulating state laws and its implementations to enforce exclusion and the cultivation of market niche.

Unlike in South Africa where the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South

Africa is an independent body (Rivers 2006), the NBC is not an independent industry regulator; the laws undergirding its activities are deliberately framed to favour those in power and their cohorts. However, the laws alone do not determine or guarantee how the media environment functions; cultural yearnings and aspirations often create the driving impetus for the establishment of a specific media culture. The role religious media play within faith communities and within the larger communities is an important element that needs to be reflected in the framing of media laws and culture in Nigeria. Broadcast media laws as they exist in Nigeria do not take cognisance of this point. The doctrine of “prior restraint” as a guiding principle in the exclusion of religious organisations in media ownership fails to account for ethno-religiously motivated crises in Nigeria even in the presence of these restraints (see Akinwomi, Fwatschak and Okpeh 2007). As argued above, in the framing and implementation of media laws and policies in Nigeria, competition within a market for loyalties is, in the words of Monroe Price (1995:60) “a closer approximation of reality”.

Perhaps allowing religious organisations to own and operate broadcast media within the parameters of laid-down rules and regulation, stringently monitored and implemented by an independent industry agency designed after the South African model, could provide better-informed religious communities and stem incessant religious violence usually attributed to the miseducation and manipulation of believers. Above all, there is a need for a revision of media laws in Nigeria which would take into cognisance the needs of religious communities, advances in technology and modes of content delivery which would facilitate a convergence of regulation of broadcast media and telecommunications in the country. Religious organisations are increasingly using mobile communication facilities to distribute religious information, market their programmes and solicit for funds. This practice escapes NBC’s regulation of religious broadcasting. A new convergence of regulations will see how this slippery terrain of religious text messaging is monitored and controlled, and in the spirit of the doctrine of “verifiable miracles”, protect religious consumers from aggressive religious entrepreneurs. There are obvious signs of obsolesce in Nigerian media laws that call for a radical rethinking in line with the wishes of the Nigerian peoples in the 21st century.
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ИЗАГНАНА ЧУДА: ПОЛИТИКА И ПОЛИТИКЕ РЕЛИГИЈСКЕ РАДИОДИФУЗИЈЕ У НИГЕРИЈИ

Резиме

Нигерија је земља веома живог тржишта медија. Поред више од сто наслова дневних таблоида и недељних новина, ту је и свеприсутна радиодифузна индустрија која се састоји од радија, телевизије (земаљских, сателитских, пејпервју и кабловских каналова) и филма. Од дерегулације радиодифузне индустрије 1992. године, са издавањем лиценци за емитовање појединцима и групама, земља је сведок пораста њиховог настајања, тако да је почетком 2008. у Нигерији било 284 радиодифузне станице. Од тада је одобрено и издато још лиценци, што указује на даљу експанзију у овој индустрији. Фокусирајући се на праксу и политику Националне радиодифузне комисије (НБЦ), визави религијске радиодифузије у мултирелигијском друштву, овај рад истражује политике и процесе уређивања дерегулација у оквиру индустрије у којој су се у последње време јавили извесни спорови, посебно сА освртом на оно што НБЦ назива „непровереним чудима“.

Кључне речи: радиодифузија, телевизија, пентакосталци, политика, чуда, дерегулација.
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TELEVANGELISM AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF PENTECOSTALS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS: A KAP SURVEY

Abstract

This study was borne out of the need to ascertain the extent to which televangelists in Port Harcourt deploy media content towards issues that border on socio-political development. The primary objective was to empirically determine if a correspondence exists between advocacy by televangelists and compliance by Pentecostals as manifested in Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP). The study necessitated triangulation with the Weighted Mean Score (WMS) as the basis for quantitative analysis. Findings revealed televangelism to revolve around the pastor (p), message (m) and church (c). Though an association link was found between ideologies expressed by televangelists and adoption by Pentecostals, this link only found expression in the concepts of secularism and fundamentalism. Survey also revealed a dismal rating of televangelism as regards socio-political mobilization. The chi-square test showed the $\chi^2$ computed to be greater than the $\chi^2$ critical thus showing a disconnect between knowledge on the potential benefits of televangelism and the deployment of such benefits towards socio-economic mobilization by televangelists. It was therefore recommended that televangelism should not be used for self aggrandizement and church growth but should complement the socio-political mobilization process. It was further recommended that a policy framework should be put in place to ensure compliance by televangelists.

Key words: Mobilization, Pentecostal, Socio-Political, Televangelism, Televangelist.

Overview

Television has been found by gospel preachers the world over to be a sure and reliable way of getting messages across to millions of people with a view to propagating the gospel in line with the great commission of evangelism.

Televangelism in this context is the practice of taking gospel messages to homes via television. In other instances, the word is used to make reference to preachers whose pulpits have become the television. Televangelism in Nigeria has become to a large extent synonymous with “Pentecostalism” bearing in mind the fact that many or-
orthodox churches in Nigeria sparsely make appearances on television. A distillation of television programming in Nigeria, particularly the southern part, shows that religious programmes, as pioneered by televangelists, have most certainly become a force to reckon with. The overriding imputation is its corresponding influence on followership and membership. Therefore, there is no gain saying that churches like Believers Love Word aka Christ Embassy, the Living Faith aka Winners Chapel, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Synagogue etc are rated as mega churches/ministries because of their domineering presence on air via television. More unfortunately so for these religious bodies, the provisions of Section 10 of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree 38 of 1992\(^2\) has at the moment made it impossible for religious communities to be granted broadcast license.

It is perhaps based on the above that many gospel preachers take their messages to commercial broadcast stations and in the process dominate the airwaves with religious programmes that are often laced with persuasive intent and content. The premise for socio-political mobilization of Pentecostals is preconceived on the seeming potential of religious bodies to transform the dynamics of their immediate environment.

Socio-political mobilization, in this context, presupposes a mainstreaming of people to discard stereotype and embrace novel and innovative patterns of doing things. It must however be noted that social mobilization and political mobilization go hand in glove since the former serves as a prior condition to the later which manifests in the consequent manifestation and demonstration of zeal in the entire political process of a nation.

Global concerns, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, are however shifting to ways people may be mobilized for given programmes or the resolution of problems that impinge on development. This in other words implies that for development to be truly enduring the people for whom development is meant need not only be consulted but encouraged to sustain and participate in the programmes that engender development.

Egunyomi and Olatumile (2010, p.107) have noted that ‘working more intensively through such institutions as traditional and religious leaders, can provide veritable means of socio-political mobilization’. In this dispensation of mega churches as orchestrated by televangelism, the socio-political mobilization of the faithful could become a veritable way to sustainable and all embracing development.

In the United States of America, it is not in doubt that televangelism has provided a platform for forays into national politics. It will be recalled that televangelists in America were credited to have mobilized Christian conservative vote in 1980 and 1984 which helped facilitate Ronald Reagan’s victories. According to Becker and Churchill (2008, p.440) “televangelist, Jerry Falwell, formed the ‘Moral Majority’ and mobilized the evangelical vote to a degree previously unseen in American politics. In 1988, Pat Robertson utilized his base and network to make credible effort to capture the presidential nomination of the Republican Party.”

Televangelists in Nigeria wield strong influences over their members but how much of this influence is channeled to socio-political mobilization is a major concern of this study. In other words, the thrust of this study is to ascertain the degree to which

televangelists engender, in their members/followers, favourable dispositions towards socio-political issues in their immediate environment using Port Harcourt metropolis as a focal point.

**The Problem**

Since Christian programmes account for a considerable segment of television programming in the southern part of Nigeria, it is not in doubt that they command strong viewership which inadvertently translates into a population potentially ready to be exploited to complement the change process and thus bring about sustainable development.

Development paradigms as espoused by UN agencies and other development partners have shown that sustainable development can be attained through a nexus of intermingling variables. The strategy has always been to target people of demonstrable influence such as traditional rulers and religious leaders with behaviour change messages who in turn will relay such messages to members of their community and denomination respectively with considerable persuasion and influence.

The strategy described above was further espoused as plausible during the AU-Inter Faith Dialogue Forum, held on the 7th of July 2010. The Forum affirmed the role religious leaders and religious communities can and should play in accelerating the pace of development in Nigeria and by extension Africa. Furthermore, the Forum acknowledged the power of religious leaders and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) to harness the collective will of their people for positive societal transformation.

The dire need for socio-political mobilization has also been heightened by the dismal rating of Nigeria as regards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to NDHS\(^3\) (2008) report, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in Nigeria, that is death before attaining age one year, is 75 per 1,000 live births and Child Mortality Rate (CMR) that is death likely to occur before the fifth birthday is 88 deaths per 1,000 live births. Invariably, Nigeria has 1% of the world’s population but contributes 10% of the world’s U-5 mortality. The report further shows that only 23% of Nigerian children are fully immunized against vaccine-preventable childhood diseases through routine immunization. More unfortunately so, only 13 out of every 100 children in Nigerian are given exclusive breast milk during the first six months of life. Herein lies the need for socio-political mobilization. No doubt, televangelism provides a veritable platform for socio-political mobilization and also raises concern over how much of this air time is properly channeled towards the attainment of MDGs and the active participation of faithful in the political process.

In other words, do televangelists, in Port Harcourt metropolis, through their televangelism, point out the need for Pentecostals to uphold and embrace safe practices that engender social development? Do they in their messages discourage political apathy with a view to mainstreaming political consciousness? These and more are the concerns of this study.

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3 National Demographic and Health Survey.
Study Objectives

1. To ascertain how much of televangelism content is devoted to ideologies on complementary practices that engender socio-political mobilization in Nigeria.
2. To find out if televangelists in Port Harcourt metropolis are aware of their complementary role as change agents in the socio-political schema.
3. To further ascertain if there exists a correspondence between ideologies expressed by televangelists and adoption by Pentecostals as manifested in attitude and disposition.

Hypotheses

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between knowledge of complementary roles as change agents and the practice of such roles by televangelists in Port Harcourt.
Ho2 There is no significant relationship between ideologies expressed by televangelists and adoption by Pentecostals.

Literature Review

Televangelism as a term was first used by Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann as pointed out by Land (1993, p.87). According to him, it was used to describe a new form of religious broadcasting combining television and evangelism. Wilson and Wilson (1998, p.280) point to a popular reference to it as the electric church by Armstrong (1979) and serves to encompass all religious broadcasters with an evangelical Christian message. Gifford (1988, p.101) notes in his “Analysis of Religious Media Use in Southern Africa” that in contrast to the Pentecostal churches, the historical, mainline churches, do not even bother to compete in televangelism. They spend their money in other areas (medicine, education and development) but not on the mass media. In corroboration, Hadden (1993, p.114) notes that from the beginning of broadcasting, Pentecostals have expressed greater enthusiasm for utilizing the airwaves than have the so called mainline or liberal protestant traditions.

No doubt, the landscape of religious broadcasting the world over is dominated by Pentecostals. Ihejirika (2006, p.227) notes that there seems to be a general agreement among scholars that the Pentecostal/ charismatic strand of Christianity has taken a commanding position in the mass media. Describing the African scenario, Maxwell (1998) notes that what is new about African Pentecostalism is its “recent growth, enormous vitality and its appropriation of the electronic media to the point that it has almost become a part of Pentecostal self definition”. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005,p.340) in this regard posits that for Pentecostal churches, the mass media are seen as constituting an important means for their religious self definition. For Ihejirika (2005,p.40),religious broadcasting in Nigeria has become synonymous with Pentecostalism. Walton (2009, p.3) deductively sees televangelism as a ‘growing and predominantly Pentecostal phenomenon’.

Nigeria, according to Fakoya (2008), is experiencing the fastest growth in Christianity in Africa with Pentecostal churches playing a very key role in this development.
Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation and the location of one of the most vibrant Christian communities in world Christianity. In defining Pentecostalism, within the African context, Asamoah-Gyadu (2004) notes two characteristics: first, they are historically younger and second, they are autochthonous founder-led congregations and the personal charisma and psychology of the leader continues to shape their orientation.

Nigerian Pentecostals have also exerted significant influences upon Pentecostals in other regions of Africa thus lending credence to the claim that some of the largest congregations across Africa have been planted by Nigerian denominations. Kamate (2009, p.149) has observed that the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria remains an important reference point for the Revival Churches in Congo. According to him, Pentecostal pastors come from Nigeria for campaigns of evangelization and Kinshasa is flooded with Pentecostal videos produced in Nigeria. It has also been observed by scholars that due to missionary ambitions and migratory habits of Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria, Nigerian Pentecostalism has spread around the world.

Some of the mega Pentecostal churches that command remarkable presence in many major cities in Nigeria include the Deeper Life Bible Church, the Living Faith Church aka Winners Chapel, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Embassy, The Redeemed Evangelical Mission, the Synagogue and lots more. In terms of structural dynamics, Ayegboyin (2005, p.36) identifies three broad categories among Nigerian Pentecostal churches. According to him, these are “Holiness movements”, “Prosperity organizations” and “Deliverance ministries”. In practice, however, these three always overlap.

Burgess (2008, p.187) notes of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria that;

The opinion of the General Overseer or local pastor is rarely challenged publicly, presumably in recognition of their status and role as power brokers. This is reflected in the choruses of “amen and hallelujahs” that follow their declarations from the platform during church services and conferences.

In contemporary times, Pentecostals have adopted the use of modern media technologies in their religious practices. Scholars have demonstrated how such contemporary media uses in the field of religion connect to processes of national and religious communities while providing important insights on how religious media become part of public spheres in which they blend. According to Diekema (1991, p.143) speculations abound as regards the potential social and political impact of televangelism with many televangelists frequently making forays into the political sphere. Morgan (2008, p.5) notes that the creation of the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture in London focuses on how audiences of televangelists were creating cultural meanings in their use of the media or whether religious broadcasters were influential in fostering a new political culture.

Describing the American scenario, Fore (2006) opined that what is obtainable in the American electronic church today is a phenomenon that has gained immense power almost entirely through the use of radio and television. He further observed that televangelists in America have used this power to join forces with the political right in order to bring about a nation in conformity with what its adherents believe to be the demands of Christianity.
Walton (2009) in his study on T.D. Jakes, Eddie Long and Creflo Dollar, explored the extent to which televangelism serves as a role model for African Americans and whether it reinforces cultural myths and anaesthetizes viewers against the need for structural change. The findings of the study demonstrated the need for further study into televangelism’s social and cultural impact.

By inference, therefore, some televangelists in America have used their television generated popularity to influence their social and political milieu while others have been socio-politically reticent. Libeman and Wuthnow (1983,p.41) note that Rex Hubbard’s programme consisted of popular and personalized religious programmes; any personal attacks on social institutions or social morality were either non specific or not politically directed. Harrel (1985,p.442) observed that Oral Roberts avoided involvement with the moral majority movement, eschewing the mixing of politics and religion unlike Jerry Falwell who through his Moral Majority Movement addressed political issues. John Hagee and Pat Robertson are also notable examples of televangelists whose ministrations have made forays into the socio-political dynamics of their immediate environment. Since the Nigerian scenario offers a somewhat similar landscape there is need to streamline the socio-political reverberations of televangelism in Nigeria bearing in mind the socio-political dynamics of religion and society.

Meyer (2002) notes that the massive presence of the Pentecostal churches in the mass media has impacted so much on the social structure leading to the creation of *pentecostalite culture*. DeWitte (2005) refers to this culture as the “pentecolisation of the public sphere”. Ihejirika (2006, p.234) notes that by projecting themselves as a major religious force to reckon with in Nigeria, they (Pentecostals) have acquired a big bargaining chip in the national public arena. According to him,” they can now influence media and social policies and even make important inputs in the ongoing efforts towards creating a new Nigeria”. Ihejirika (2009) notes again that televangelists have become suppliers of symbols that people could use to define their own personal identities in this new socio-cultural context.

Frankl (1987) as well as Hadden and Shupe(1988) believe that televangelists are part of a new social movement with mass media especially television used as a critical resource to mobilize financial and political support for conservative politics. Green (1992,p.137) observes that televangelists in America have been at the forefront of the advocacy for school prayer and have also been some of the most vocal opponents of traditional social taboos, notably in their campaigns against the right of women to an abortion and towards greater public intolerance of homosexual relationships. Maxwell (1998) in a study on Pentecostalism’s relations with modernity showed how Zimbabwean Pentecostals have fashioned their own version of the prosperity gospel to help them make the best of rapid social change.

Swatos (1998) notes that televangelists are independent, entrepreneurial evangelists who use television marketing to build their ministries. According to him three beliefs are shared by these evangelicals – bible inerrancy, acceptance of the Holy Spirit and personal born again redemption. The specific form and content of televangelists’ ministries are grounded in their own personal interpretation of their calling.

The relative prominence accorded Pentecostalism and televangelism in Nigeria today can to a reasonable extent be traced to the pioneering strides of Benson Andrew Idahosa (1938-1998). Idohosa, affectionately called “Papa” by his followers, was a Pen-
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Pentecostal preacher and founder of Church of God Mission International with headquarters in Benin City, Nigeria. He was the first Pentecostal Archbishop in Nigeria. He was instrumental to the strong wave of revival among Pentecostal churches and was the founding president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). Many prominent Pentecostal Pastors like Ayo Oritsejafor, David Oyedepo, Chris Oyakhilome, Fred Addo among others were his protégés.

Study Design and Justification

The peculiarities of this study necessitated triangulation. Triangulation according to Wimmer and Dominick (2003, p.48) “refers to the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to fully understand the nature of a research problem”. The justification for this approach is hinged on the fact that accuracy is sought by using multiple data collection and interpretation methods.

Content analysis was used to study the manifest content of televangelism as broadcast on TV stations in Port Harcourt with a view to ascertaining if gospel telecasts are laced with messages that potentially border on socio-political issues. Content analysis of programme schedules was also used to ascertain how much air time was given to televangelism by television stations in Port Harcourt metropolis in contradistinction to other programmes.

Survey on the other hand was used to streamline the opinion of Pentecostals, and by extension audience members, on perception, disposition and proclivity towards televangelism and its underlying theme on character formation and behaviour change.

The choice of Port Harcourt as the universe was premeditated by the fact that Port Harcourt enjoys the status of an oil city and this has attracted the presence of oil and allied companies which have inadvertently translated into the influx of people from all walks of life. This reasoning has been further reinforced by the fact that Port Harcourt is the largest and most economically viable city in the South-South region of Nigeria with Christianity as the dominant religion. Figures from the National population commission, based on the 2006 Census, show the population of Port Harcourt to stand at about one million, five hundred. The area referred to as “Port Harcourt metropolis” is made up of the city itself and parts of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council.

Port Harcourt is one of the centres for strong Pentecostal growth in the South-South region and plays host to several large churches. Many mega churches in Nigeria have branches in Port Harcourt with a bouquet of churches also having their headquarters in Port Harcourt. Ministries like Abundant Life Evangel Mission founded by Apostle Eugene Ogu, the Royal House of Grace by Apostle Zilly Aggrey, Salvation Ministries by Pastor David Ibiyomie, Redemption Ministries by Rev. Stephen Akinola and Greater Evangelism World Crusade by Apostle G.D. Numbere were founded in Port Harcourt. These ministries also run programmes on television. These programmes no doubt fall within the purview of televangelism.

The television landscape is marked by pluralism ranging from government to private ownership. The census exercise of 2006 generated a great deal of controversy over whether to count religion and ethnicity during the exercise. The final decision was to leave questions of ethnicity and religion off the census form. To this end, therefore, no precise data was gathered about the relative number of adherents to various

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faiths in the country. This invariably means that the number of Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt could not be ascertained based on this reason.

The distribution of the instrument followed the cluster approach that divided the city into five (5) zones. In this context, Babbie (2001) notes that to help control cluster sampling errors, “it is best to use small areas or clusters, both to decrease the number of elements in each cluster and to maximize the number of clusters selected”. To this end, Zone A comprised Elelenwo, Rumukrushi, Rumuibekwe, Woji and Rumuomasi while Zone B comprised Rumuola, Rumuokoro, Rumuigbo, Mgbuoba and Elioparanwo. For Zone C, the GRA, Oroazi, Mile 4, Waterlines and Presidential estate made up the composition while Zone D comprised D’Line, Diobu, Amadi Flats, Ogbunabali and Trans-Amadi. Zone E was made up of Eastern bye-pass, Moscow road, Aggrey road, Marine Base and Borikiri. One church was selected to represent each zone. The five (5) churches in all so selected were selected based on their massive presence in the media as well as the influence and prominence of their leaders. To this end, RCCG (Jesus House opposite Shell R/A), Christ Embassy (H/Q), Salvation Ministries, Living Faith (H/Q) and Redemption Ministries were selected to represent the five zones respectively. A sample size of seventy-seven (77) was drawn from each of the five zones. The actual respondents were drawn using the simple random sampling technique. Two sets of questionnaire were designed for audience members (Pentecostal faithful) and televangelists primarily as well as other Pentecostal pastors who have used any media form that falls within the frame of the electronic media to propagate the gospel. For the pastors, a sample size of sixty (60) was purposively drawn based on prominence and TV presence. The study recorded a high return rate for the instruments and this stood at 83% for Pentecostals (audience members) and 81% for televangelists.

Television stations for the content analysis were purposively selected. At present, there are about six television stations in Portharcourt – AIT, CTL, CMTV, NTA, RSTV and Silverbird TV. Based on this, NTA, RSTV and Silverbird were selected on the grounds of the huge patronage they enjoy from Pentecostal churches in terms of sponsored religious programmes. The study period was the Third Quarter (Q3) of 2010 based on availability of records.

Data on the frequency of religious programmes on TV were adapted from programme schedules of the stations studied while data on the content of religious programme on TV particularly televangelism were analysed contextually using “thematic appreciation”. The “thematic appreciation” is a projective technique that makes assessments based on laid down message indices. Analysis of data on the views and opinion of televangelists was done using simple percentage while data for Pentecostals were analysed using Weighted Mean Score (WMS) based on a five-point Likert scale.

The formula is $WMS = \frac{\Sigma fx}{\Sigma f}$

Where

- $\Sigma$ = Summation
- $F_x$ = Frequency x score

In analyzing data from the five-point-Likert scale questions in the instrument, re-
responses to the items were weighted as follows:
Strongly Agree (SA) = 5 points
Agree (A) = 4 points
Undecided (U) = 3 points
Disagree (D) = 2 points
Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point
From these, the WMS is 3.00 (ie-5+4+3+2+1 ÷5).

The score of 3.00 was used as the criterion for decision on the responses to each item. Any mean response which is equal to or more than 3.00 is positive while any mean response less than 3.00 is negative.

More so, the chi-square method was used to test the hypotheses.
The formula is:
\[ X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} \]
Where
O = Observed frequency
E = Expected frequency
\( \Sigma \) = Summation
All decisions were based on 0.05 level of significance.

Findings on the relative airtime devoted to religious programmes (televangelist) by the stations studied are shown on Tables 1a, 1b and 1c.

**Table 1a**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>TOTAL TRANSMISSION TIME BY STATION</th>
<th>TOTAL AIR TIME GIVEN TO RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>(1,125mins) 18hrs.45mins</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>(1,050mins) 17hrs.30mins</td>
<td>1 hr.30mins</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>(1,050mins) 17hrs.30 mins</td>
<td>1hr.30mins</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>(1,050mins) 17 hrs.30mins</td>
<td>2 hrs.30mins</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>(1,050mins) 17hrs.30min</td>
<td>1 hr.30min</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>(1,050min) 17hrs.30mins</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>(1,155mins) 17hrs.15mins</td>
<td>6hrs.30mins</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(7,530mins) 125hrs.30mins</td>
<td>(1,110mins) 18hrs.30mins</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: RSTV programme schedule for third quarter, 2010.*

Religious programmes enjoyed fifteen percent of the weekly viewing time and all these were sponsored programmes from Pentecostal churches and ministries.
TABLE 1B
RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES ON NTA, PH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>TOTAL TRANSMISSION TIME BY STATION</th>
<th>TOTAL AIR TIME GIVEN TO RELIGIOUS PROGRAMME</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 3 hrs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 2hrs.</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 4hrs.30mins</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 1 hr.30mins</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 2 hrs.30mins</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 3 hrs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 3 hrs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(10,080mins) 168hrs 17hrs.30mins</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NTA, PH programme schedule for third quarter, 2010.

Ten percent of the weekly viewing time was devoted to religious programmes. Out of this, less than one percent was on programmes from other faith like Islam as well as non Pentecostal denominations like God’s Kingdom Society (GKS). This shows that the bulk of religious programmes on NTA was from Pentecostal churches.

TABLE 1C
RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES ON SILVER BIRD TV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>TOTAL TRANSMISSION TIME BY STATION</th>
<th>TOTAL AIR TIME GIVEN TO RELIGIOUS PROGRAMME</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 2 hrs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 1hr.30mins</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 1hr.30mins</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 2 hrs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 3 hrs.30mins</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 3 hrs</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>(1,440mins) 24hrs 5 hrs.30mins</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(10,080mins) 168hrs 18hrs.30mins</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STV, PH programme schedule for third quarter, 2010.

Eleven percent of viewing time was devoted to religious programmes. Of this, less than one percent was a programme from a non Pentecostal faith.

The inference from Tables 1a, 1b and 1c is that religious programmes enjoyed not less than 15% of air time on TV with the Pentecostal churches/ministries accounting for about 99% of this airtime.

Findings on the content of these programmes in the light of ideologies geared towards socio-political mobilization revealed thus:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>PROGRAMME STRUCTURE</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>KEY STATEMENTS</th>
<th>ADVOCACY ON SOCIOPOLITICAL ISSUES</th>
<th>MINISTER/MINISTRIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism (Voice of Deliverance)</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* opening and introduction * testimonies of how the pastor has carried out deliverance in communities * Brief message * Altar call * General prayers for the sick and oppressed</td>
<td>* Replay of recorded deliverance exercises in communities visited * promo on the ministry pointing out service period and programmes of the ministry</td>
<td>* Change the foundations of communities * The blessings of Abraham. (Gen 12:13).</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Bishop Chinasa Nwosu (The Royal Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism (Defended Hour Telecast)</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* promo on the church * introduction * message/sermon * Altar call</td>
<td>* Promo on church activities</td>
<td>* Life is full of battles * If God is for you, who can be against you? Prov.4:16 Isaiah 54:15</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Rev. Dr. Godfrey Abana (Living Bible Church World Wide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk programme (You and Your Health)</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* Highlights on the agonies of childless marriages * How to balance religion with medicine * Advocacy on sound practices by religious leaders</td>
<td>* Explanations on the anatomy of the reproductive system * Difference between impotence and sterility</td>
<td>* We have tried it * I can do anything</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Dr. Richard Okoye (Doctors Save a Life Foundation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism (Hour of Salvation)</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* Promo on the church * Message/sermon * Altar call * Promo on the programme and activities of the church</td>
<td>* Montage *(LS) on church auditorium</td>
<td>* Big dreams come from God * A life without Christ is full of crisis Gen 12:2 Gen 13:15 Isaiah 54:2-3</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Pastor David Ibiyeomie (Salvation Ministry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism (Moment of Decision)</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* Choir * Word ministration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Bishop Dike Mikyejesus (God's Grace Ministries Inc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 2B
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES ON THREE TV STATIONS N PORT HARCOURT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>PROGRAMME STRUCTURE</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>KEY STATEMENTS</th>
<th>ADVOCACY ON SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES</th>
<th>MINISTER/ MINISTRIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* Promo*</td>
<td>Interlude for intensive promo on the ministry</td>
<td>* Extra-ordinary assistance</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Rev. Chris Oarhe (Hiltop International Christian center)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(New Experience)</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Sermon*</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Jesus is called the tree of life Deuteronomy 28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Altar Call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>* Exposition*</td>
<td>Replay of previous crusades and testimonies</td>
<td>You can learn to love</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Pastor Chris Ojugbani (Marriage seminar series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(married and singles)</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Counseling*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Testimonies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Promo on programmes and activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televangelism</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>* Motivational*</td>
<td></td>
<td>God created you for a purpose</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Rev. Chris Ugoh (Kings Assembly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Living With Purpose)</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Teaching*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Altar call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Prayers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 2A and 2B tend to thematically present televangelism content. Drawing from the tables, the content of televangelism was found to be completely devoid of socio-political issues. The programme structure followed a uniform pattern. When subjected to further analysis, this pattern was found to be three dimensional in the sense that it starts with an introduction of the pastor and the ministry (church), the sermon (message) then a promo on the church and its activities. The deduction therefore is that the underlying purpose of televangelism in Nigeria is subsumed under church growth and membership without any seeming concern for public service, social service and community service.
The perception of Pentecostals, as regards televangelism is favourable. In descriptive terms, therefore, televangelism holds gratifications for them in the sense that it helps in the formation of Christian faith habits. This seems to substantiate findings by Kamate (2009,p.146). According to him, Pentecostalism has emphasized a variety of forms of direct control over one’s religious experience including the encouragement to read the bible and have direct experience of the personal inspirations relevant to one’s personal life at the moment. The justification for eliciting responses on this matter from Pentecostals is hinged on Ihejirika (2006, p.186). His findings revealed that the use of televangelism is an integral part of the Pentecostal culture. According to him, the more committed a person is in the Pentecostal church, the greater the use of these religious programmes.

The table also shows the believability ranking of televangelists by Pentecostals concerning issues of prophecies and words of knowledge as being inspired by God. This analysis has become necessary because often times, many televangelists are given to comments like “God told me”, “the Lord spoke to me concerning….” etc. The question however is; even when they say these, do Pentecostals wholeheartedly believe? Obviously, messages from televangelists were not wholeheartedly perceived by the respondents as being inspired by God. The implication however is that Pentecostals in Port Harcourt metropolis do not expose themselves to televangelism with a sense of total belief concerning words from the televangelist. In other words, the deduction from the table shows that some of these prophecies and words of knowledge by televangelists may really not be from God as many of them (televangelists) claim.

### Table 3
**Perception of Televangelism by Pentecostals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Response</th>
<th>Responses in Mean Scores</th>
<th>WMS</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 5: Televangelism helps in the formation of Christian faith habits</td>
<td>90 210 30 0 0</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9: Every instruction from the televangelist is of God</td>
<td>30 60 30 30 180</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Televangelists no doubt are aware of the role expected of them as change agents in the change process drawing from the presentation on Table 4. By approximation, 90% responded in the affirmative concerning the subject matter. This role finds expression within the dynamics of interpersonal and group communication bearing in
mind the catalytic role pastors play as opinion leaders.

**TABLE 5**
**CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MESSAGE CONTENT (TELEVANGELISM) AND THE DISPOSITION OF PENTECOSTALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF RESPONSE</th>
<th>RESPONSES IN MEAN SCORES</th>
<th>WMS</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 11:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows a high degree of correspondence between opinion as projected by televangelists and beliefs as held by Pentecostals. This no doubt falls within the precincts of mentorship and therefore holds potentials for the demonstration of the postulations of the two-step flow theory.

**TABLE 6**
**CONGRUENCE BETWEEN IDEOLOGIES EXPRESSED BY TELEVANGELISTS AND ADOPTION BY PENTECOSTALS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF RESPONSE</th>
<th>RESPONSES IN MEAN SCORES</th>
<th>WMS</th>
<th>DECISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 12:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There however seems to be an association link between ideologies expressed by televangelists over a wide range of issues and the adoption of these ideologies by Pentecostals as shown on Table 6.

**Testing the Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested.

\[ \text{Ho}_1 \] There is no significant relationship between knowledge of complementary roles as change agents and the practice of such roles by televangelists in Port Harcourt.

**TABLE 7**
**COMPUTATION OF VALUES FOR \( \chi^2 \) TEST.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>(O-E)</th>
<th>(O-E)^2</th>
<th>(O-E)^2 / 2</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )-Cal</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )-Crit</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>Hypothesis accepted ( \chi^2 ) ≤ calc ( \chi^2 ) Crit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Godwin Okon, TELEVANGELISM AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF PENTECOSTALS IN PORT HARCOURT
METROPOLIS: A KAP SURVEY • (pp 61-80)

X² 0.05, 1 = 3.84
X² Cal = 0.7
X² cal < X² crit.

Decision rule
Accept the null if X² < X² critical

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between ideologies expressed by televangelists and adoption by Pentecostals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8</th>
<th>COMPUTATION OF VALUES FOR X² TEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² 0.05, 1 = 3.84
X² Cal = 108.8
X² Cal > X² crit.

Decision rule
Reject the null if X² calculated > X² critical

Discussion
Religious programmes have become a constant feature in television programming across the Nigerian State. They account for about 15% of the programme content of TV stations in Port Harcourt metropolis. Of this, Pentecostal churches account for almost 99% thus demonstrating dominance in terms of religious broadcasting via television. Invariably, a significant segment of the population in Portharcourt is exposed to one form of religious programme on a weekly basis with far reaching implications for behaviour change.

Content analysis revealed televangelism in Nigeria to be more or less a replay of recordings of church services. In other words, the average televangelist pastors a church and in most instances the General Overseer of that ministry. Programme content ranged from a perfunctory introduction of the televangelist followed by his message and often times rounded off with a promo of the church and its activities. This however seems to fall in line with findings by Ukah (2008, p.115). In his article “Roadside Pentecostalism: Religious Advertising in Nigeria and the Marketing of Charisma”, he noted that self promotion is clearly important for prosperity Pentecostalism.

Televangelism content as revealed in this study was completely devoid of socio-economic as well as socio-political issues geared towards public service, social service and community service. This trend in televangelism has been described in this study as the “PMC triangle” which epitomizes a scenario where the programme focuses on the pastor (p), the message (m) and the church (c). This trend, no doubt, seems to envelop Pentecostals in a cocoon that makes them filter events against the backdrop of
the “PMC triangle” thus classifying events that fall outside this triangle as secular while making Pentecostals appear rigid and fundamental.

There however seems to be a yawning gap between Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) as revealed in the survey on televangelists. The survey showed a high degree of awareness and knowledge, on the part of televangelists, concerning their expected role as change agents. The awareness level stood at 90% which by all consideration is overwhelming. When viewed against the backdrop of programme (televangelism) content, it becomes glaring that televangelists seem to pay only lip service to their role as change agents thus upholding the hypothesis that ‘there is no significant relationship between the knowledge of complementary roles as change agents and the practice of such roles by televangelists in Port Harcourt.’

In many communities in Nigeria, immunization programmes have met with stiff resistance with religious leaders being called upon to assist in message delivery. More so, adoption of key household practices like the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs), Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF), Safe Motherhood Practices and HIV are burning issues that should attract compliance if religious leaders lend their support. Politics with its unwholesome perception, by many religious bodies, as secular has not fared better. Voter apathy among Pentecostals is high. Deductively, televangelists are aware of their complementary role in bringing about socio-political development but have failed in the discharge of that role. The reason for this may not be far fetched drawing from their observed preoccupation with materialistic and capitalist tendencies subsumed in the quest to build financial empires for their ministries.

This however brings to fore the observations of Hank Hanegraaff concerning televangelists. In streamlining typical responses from people on what they think about televangelists, Hank Hanegraaff (2009) observed that such responses included “being dishonest, greedy, materialistic, wasteful and scandalous.” According to him, “the sight of televangelists wearing overly expensive clothing and jewelry, living in ridiculously expensive homes and driving the most luxurious of cars has caused many people to turn away from the faith”.

Survey on Pentecostals on the other hand revealed a great deal of propensity and favourable disposition towards ideologies expressed by televangelists. Survey further revealed that, to a large extent, the perception of socio-political issues by Pentecostals could be shaped by the ideology of televangelists thus rejecting the hypothesis that ‘there is no significant relationship between advocacy by televangelists and compliance by Pentecostals.’

The Irony however is that the propulsion for socio-political mobilization has not been forth coming from televangelists. The overriding inference from the study is that televangelism in Nigeria has not been deployed maximally to further the cause of national aspiration and egalitarianism. It has been observed in this study that, within the Nigerian context, televangelism seems to be all about self promotion and advertisement without any attention to public service and community service. Ironically, even manufacturers and industrialists who engage in intensive advertising sometimes devote some of their airtime to Public Service Announcements (PSAs) with a view to building up the society. Televangelism holds great potentials for this and needs to be properly routed with attendant benefits in the socio-political milieu. Televangelism can be properly routed to align with the ideals of a developing nation like Nigeria.
through the following ways;

There should be a wholesome realization by televangelists that televangelism is not for self aggrandizement and church growth but should rather be used to further the ideals of a nation on the march to greatness. This will no doubt accord televangelism the attribute of social responsibility.

Since Nigerian democracy is too nascent to allow for the expression of radical views, there should be a policy framework by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to prescribe programme content for televangelism and ensure that televangelists discharge their complementary role as change agents in the society.

Televangelists in Nigeria need not deploy televangelism in a manner that is capable of making Pentecostals operate a closed system as well as propagate issues of secularism and fundamentalism but should rather use televangelism to accommodate emphasis on those issues that bind the peoples of Nigeria together rather than their differences with a view to entrenching sustainable peace and unity.
References


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Research on media, religion and culture in Africa: Current trends and debates,


Годвин Окон

ТЕЛЕЕВАНЂЕЛИЗАМ И ДРУШТВЕНО-ПОЛИТИЧКА МОБИЛИЗАЦИЈА ПЕНТЕКОСТАЛАЦА У ПОРТ ХАРКУРТУ: ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ КАП-А

Резиме

Ова студија настала је из потребе утврђивања у којој мери телееванђелисти у Порт Харкуру користе медије у вези с питањима која се тичу друштвено-политичког развоја. Њен примарни циљ био је да емпиријски утврди да ли постоји веза између онога што пропагирају телееванђелисти и онога исказаног у Знане, став, пракса (КАП) од стране пентекосталаца. Она је захтевала триангулацију са WMS-ом, као основном квантитативне анализе. Резултати откривају да се телееванђелизам креће у оквиру свештеник (п)-порука (м)-црква (ц). Иако је уочена веза између идеологија које испољавају телееванђелисти и које усвајају пентекосталци, иста је дошла до израђања само у концептима секуларизма и фундаментализма. Истраживање је, такође, показало слаб рејтинг телееванђелизма у погледу друштвено-политичке мобилизације. Стога се телееванђелизам не пропоручује за самоувећање и раст цркве, али би требало да допуњује процес друштвено-политичке мобилизације. Даље се препоручује стављање политичког оквира у позицију да обезбеди сагласност телееванђелиста.

Кључне речи: мобилизација, пентекосталци, друштвено-политички, телееванђелизам, телееванђелиста.
THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE IN NIGERIA POPULAR FILMS

Abstract

One of the ways by which religious rituals communicate in African society is by maintaining cohesion in the culture. They connect participants to richer meanings and larger forces of their community. Even in representational models, rituals create solidarity in the form of subjective experiences of sharing the same meaningful world which is attained by participants through the condensed nature of symbols used therein. Traditional religion is one ritual that despite the influence of westernization and scientific developments in Africa, still holds meaningful implications in people’s everyday life. Thus, from day break to evening, people have religious rituals with which they communicate with their God or gods, deities and ancestors. Also from weeks to seasons, months to years, there are festivals and rituals both in private and in public situations which the African still celebrate in connection with the ‘living dead’ or those in the ‘spirit world’. This paper by means of nuanced textual analysis of some Nigerian home based films: Things Fall Apart (1986), Igodo: The Land of the Living Dead (1999), Sango, (1998), Festival of Fire, (1999), Bless Me, (2005) traces religion to the root paradigm of African cultures as a channel to the construction of African identity.

Key words: Nollywood, Religion, Representation and Culture.

Introduction

Like the practice of philosophy in Africa, Nollywood has significantly become involved in the process of Africa’s self reflection and identity construction by means of its cultural representations. Scholars like Kunzler, 2007, Onuzulike: 2007, Akpabio: 2007, Oluyinka: 2008, Osakwe: 2009, to mention but a few, by their findings attest to this fact and call for more nuanced analysis of Nollywood texts to explore the issue further. Thus, the use of films as a meta-narrative in exploring the religious identity of Africans is something of a revelatory process towards understanding not only the religious culture of the people but communalism in general as practiced in Africa. Again, it is aimed at decoding the aesthetics-pattern of the industry’s representational brand as against other mainstream film industries’ model of story-telling. In this paper therefore, the
objective is to look at some culture-centered films in Nollywood and discuss the significant presence of the indicators of African traditional religion by means of rigorous textual analysis. First, let us look at the phenomenon of Nollywood.

**Nollywood: Emergence and brief history**

Nollywood by popular acclamation refers to the Nigerian national film industry. Even though the name has an uncertain origin and was derived from acronyms such as Hollywood and Bollywood; Haynes highlights that it apparently appeared for the first time in print in an article by Matt Steinglass in *New York Times* in 2002 (Haynes, 2005). It has other competing name like ‘Naijwood’ which has actually not taken root as ‘Nollywood’ among film audiences.

The argument whether Nollywood can be acclaimed the Nigerian film industry has been open ended on both camps of the divide. While some say the representations showcase an industry that has come of age; others pick on the technical flaws in the films to say they have a long way to becoming an industry. But even before the emergence of Nollywood in its present form today, the debate on whether a film industry exists in Nigeria or not, had already been going on. In 1974, for instance, Ola Balogun, called for establishing a national cinema in an article entitled ‘Nigeria Deserves a Film Industry’, published in a Nigerian Newspaper, *Daily Times* (Haynes, 1995). In 1995, three years after Nollywood has begun productions, Haynes also wrote that “the reasons a national cinema does not exist correlate with the political failures of the Nigerian nation”. Among these reasons he include: “...disinterest, ideological bankruptcy, incompetence and misconceived projects; unwillingness of the national bourgeoisie to invest in film production, failure to establish a strong national center in cultural projects, and the nation still remaining supine in the face of neo-colonialism whereby cinema screens are filled with foreign productions” (Haynes, 1995: 115). Even in his edited work, *Nigerian Video Films* (2000), there is the reluctance to address Nollywood as a national cinema, hence authors used terms like ‘Nigerian video films’, ‘Nollywood phenomenon’ among others.

While not discarding the logic of those who do not see Nollywood as the name of Nigeria’s popular film industry currently, the understanding here is to signal the significance of these popular films produced in Nigeria by Nigerians in the culture industry. The use of the concept ‘Nollywood’ indicates the understanding that these films are vehicles of encoded messages with themes and languages that re(present) the life patterns of proximate Nigerian consumers in particular and Africans in general to whom they explore their social issues and cultural concerns. Again, that the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1993 set up a regulatory agency, the *National Film and Video Censors Board*, to censor the activities of the industry implies that it is officially regarded as the ‘national cinema’ industry of the country.

The Nollywood films according to Kunzler, is “an industry that [has] developed out of a context related to domestic and international cultural, economic, and political environments [...]. It is heterogeneous in nature and can roughly be divided into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo video films which designate their production centers in the South-West, North and South-East of Nigeria respectively” (Kunzler, 2007: 1). Thus, like any other national cinema, such as the Irish Cinema for instance, which “sustains and chal-
Innocent Ebere Uwah THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE IN NIGERIA POPULAR FILMS • (pp 81-102)

challenges the myths of a country’s nationhood” (Hill and Rocket, 2004: 10), or as Williams argues, “functions as an economic weapon in the competitive arena of world capitalism, promoting national values” (Williams, 2002: 6), Nollywood uses languages and themes that resonate with Nigerians to tell their stories. Even though, the filmmakers make films ‘essentially’ to make money as Akomfrah argues, they are systematically being ‘guided by the tenets of African nationalism and cultural identity which help them address local concerns’ (2006: 282). It exists “almost entirely outside pan-African institutions and international circuits that shaped most of the politicized African Cinemas”1 (Haynes, 2000: 5) and “borrows from state media and the transnational flows of Indian and American films and Nigerian folklores” (Dul, 2000: 238).


How Nollywood translated from localized stage productions to a film industry in Nigeria is a journey that an article like this cannot ignore to highlight. Initially there were the economic factors that hit Nigeria so hard in the 1980s and made it difficult for the first generation of celluloid filmmakers to sustain their market. These were a group of Nigerian filmmakers who carried out film production practice by themselves between 1960s and 1980s and due to the high cost of production had to give it up. For many years then, Nigeria remained without film productions and people resorted to stage dramas.

There was also the technological dimension that aided the transition which was the use of ‘ordinary’ video cameras to make cheap films in order to cut cost against the economic burdens of the celluloid productions. Added to these is the fact that when the Nollywood practice came, it was rooted in the television industry. By this is meant that since people were already watching local soap operas and theatres following the 1972 indigenization act, 2 it was easier to watch Nollywood in the same way on the same television screen with less inconvenience and cost.

Essentially it can also be argued that another fundamental factor that gave inspiration to Nollywood’s cinematic practices to succeed is ‘citizen journalism’. This refers to the individual zeal of some Nigerians to empower themselves in order to make their voices heard by the general public. It arguably could be seen as what Okome identifies when he states that “the history of the emergence of popular video-film is connected to the deep-seated desire by [this group of] Nollywood consumers [and producers] to have a voice in the social and cultural debates of the time” (2007: 17), because in
their (re)presentations Nollywood producers and directors are creating parallel commentaries on the social issues concerning the people. It is this type of self representation that has marked the usefulness of ‘you tube’ and other participatory channels in the internet where ordinary citizens tell their stories on issues of concern. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria, when military rulers were at the helm of affairs, and when the “political tensions evident in society could not be directly addressed on mainstream television” (Oluyinka, 2008), because of fear of the rulers, most Nigerians began encoding messages that related their views and fears on the political and social issues of the day.

The success of this industry also comes from what Nwachukwu identifies as the drive for ‘commercial viability’ (2003: 127). This is because while the new video film industry places a high premium on entertainment, it also seeks the pleasure of viewers in order to recoup expenses from their sales by encoding what audiences desire to see. On this, Haynes states that “the new video films, on the basis of sheer commercial vitality can claim to be the major contemporary Nigerian art form” (2000: XV).

Nollywood’s historical emergence according to Adesokan, hinges on “the neo-liberal deregulations of many economies in Africa that brought changes in the use of technology, especially of the digital kind, which is open to reformatting in quite imaginative ways. When you live at the mercy of poor economic and political calculations,” he said, “you tend to be inventive, keen to improvise, bend tools to serve your purposes. The Nigerian films came out of that context” (Adesokan, 2006).

Nollywood’s productions reflect the lived-in situations of Nigerians and represent many issues that both Nigerians and other African citizens can relate with. As Kunzler argues, “they affect Africans more than other foreign films” (Kunzler, ibid: 10). They emerge from what Richard Mofe Damijo3 calls “real genuine stories about the cultural experience of the people, exemplified by Elechi Amadi’s book that is translated into film, The Concubine (2006), and Achebe’s novel, Things Fall Apart (1958) also adapted into film” (Damijo, 2007).

Particularly in Nigeria, the film industry has significantly illustrated the ability of marshalling familiar symbolic religious rituals which help create nostalgia and resonance in the viewers. They reveal familiar stories, problems and values of Nigerians and Africans in general. Here, major universal questions of values and meanings of life are explored. Oluyinka in his findings on the industry, asserts that, “the issue of identity, preservation of cultural heritage and resistance of dominant western influence are clear factors contributing to the success of the [Nollywood] industry” (2008).

**Delineating the Concept of Culture**

Culture particularly has variedly been defined over the years and across continents. It is as Taylor (1832 – 1917) argues “a complex whole, including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other habits acquired by people as members of a society” (cited in Luzbetak, 2002: 134). It is for Ang “the objectified set of ideas, beliefs, and behaviours of peoples” (1996: 133) and for Hall, concerned with “the production and exchange of meaning – between members of a society or groups” (Hall, 1997a, cited in Gillian Rose, 2001: 6). Hence, culture is all about living and the manner of doing things in the society.
Hall’s view of culture in particular, which is “identity, history, agency and practice, according to Rojek cannot be taken as fixed entities but parts of a system of representation which is permanently in a process” (Rojek, 2003: 2). This means that culture is in a flux and brings about new formations with time. “The concept remains a complex one [...] a site of convergent interests” (Hall, 1997: 33), he argues. Thus, following this viewpoint, Nollywood can be said to combine significant features of culture which are “overwhelmingly rich and varied in [their] manifestations” (Hannerz, 1997: 12) to represent people’s way of life in Nollywood films.

To undertake the study of cultures in this way, especially that of religion, “through its narrative address” as Bhabha argues, “does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; but also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself, where its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with its national life” (Bhabha, 1990: 3). In this light, particularly African religious life and culture are presented from the perspective of nuanced visual and textual analyses as shall be shown later.

Since filmic representations consist essentially of media language and conventions (Lacey, 1998: 131), Bobo introduces the concept of ‘discourse’ to describe the moment of encounter between texts and audiences. Within this space of an inter-discourse, she explains that ‘cultural competencies come into play’. Thus, “the viewers’ position in the social structure determines in part what sets of discourse or interpretive strategies they bring to their encounter with the texts” (Bobo, 2003: 312). By bringing in this concept, Bobo subscribes to Bourdieu whose original idea it is. Thus, for him, ‘one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless “culture” in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back in the anthropological sense’ (1994: 444).

Bourdieu’s ‘cultural competencies’ is needed in a study like this which interprets filmic representations from their indigenous cultural roots. Unless one is equipped with the local knowledge of what is encoded, meanings of realities will be difficult to make. For this reason Anderson is of the view that cultural competencies can be called cultural power or cultural capital. In this instance, the currency of transaction is one’s knowledge of culture. Thus, he defines cultural competency or cultural capital as “the amount of cultural power possessed by an individual or social group in terms of language, skills, and other cultural acquisitions” (Anderson, 1997: 191).

Generally, I have found Turner’s (1974, 1982) explanation of the pleasures of theatre, film and television as a ritual process to be particularly helpful in understanding the place of Nollywood’s cultural films among Africans who resonate with their themes and storylines to explore meanings in the society. Certainly, there are many useful explanatory theories of this phenomenon, but the ritual process is very illuminating because traditional African practices in particular can be described as a continuous series of rituals which express cogently the belief system and thought pattern of the African and Nigerian people that does aid the construction of their cultural identity.

**Victor Turner’s Ritual Process and Nollywood Practice**

The theory of ritual process comes principally from the contributions of Victor Turner who did a study of the ritual of passage among the Ndembe people of North Western Zambia. People express in their communalistic rituals what moves them most,
and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of
the group that are revealed (Uzukwu, 1997: 41).

Ritual per se is a place where people integrate short-term pragmatic goals and the
longer-range mythic values of a culture, where they can replace personal alienation
with an affirmation of personal identity. In Turner’s view, every society’s attempt to
mobilize itself to solve its broader societal problems leads to an emphasis on authori-
tarian institutions, creation of status differentiation, justification of the concentration
of power and inequality, reward of individual ambition, technical knowledge and oth-
er forms of ‘structure’ (1969-1995: 106-107). Structure may be necessary, but it also gen-
erally produces conflict, alienation and oppression. Hence, Turner argues that most
cultures balance the over-emphasis on structure with a periodic deep experience of
community which emphasizes social leveling, concern for the needs of others in the
community and personal identity formations.

The purpose of the rites of passage among the Ndembe, in his view, is to impress
young people with their duties to the community and recall to those assuming posi-
tions of chieftaincy that they should not use their power for their own interests but
to serve the whole community. In his interpretation, there are three moments in the
ritual process: leaving the realm of structure, entering into a symbolic experience of
community which is deeply emotional and pleasurable and then returning to the con-
text of structure with a sense of social values. Turner characterizes this experience of
community as ‘liminal’ (from the Latin limen or threshold of a door), that is, as an expe-
rience that is on the threshold between utopian communal happiness and the practi-
calities of structure in everyday life. Ritual is, as Real observes, celebratory, consuma-
tory, (an end in itself) and decorative rather than utilitarian in aim and often requires
some element of ‘performance’ for communication to be realized (1996: 48).

Certainly, Nigerians experience in everyday life communal mutuality in village fes-
tivals, traditional dancing tunes and steps, religious worships and socio-cultural co-
operations in works. For this reason, rituals (whether in real life situations or in Nol-
lywood filmic representations) have two references to what they achieve: backward
to convention, habit, agreement and established order, and forward to indicate the
immediate and soon-to-be realized social significance of an underlying order (Roth-
enbuhler, 1998: 14). In this context, by moving backwards, the notion of memorability
and nostalgia are evoked in terms of what used to be in the days of the ancestors;
while in going forward, there is the reference to the communal aspirations of the peo-
ple towards reaching a goal with their ruling elders and leaders guiding the journey
in the present.

One impressive aspect of Nollywood in all of these is in the representation of re-
ligio-cultural rituals as a major aspect of communalism. This illustrates the ability of
film producers and directors to marshall familiar symbolic language of these cultures
into their productions, especially to provide the experience of communal liminality
(Animalu,1990: 46), cultural integration and nostalgic egalitarianism among proximate
audiences – who are mainly Nigerians and Africans. But suffice to say that using the
women’s cult particularly in his Ndembe studies as an example of what ritual participa-
tion does for community members, Turner graphically states that:

Women’s cults have the tripartite diachronic structure made familiar to us by the
work of Van Gennep. The first phase, called *Ilembi* separates the candidate from the profane world; the second, called *kunkunka* (literally “in the grass hut”) partially excludes her “from secular life”; while the third, called *ku-tumbka*, is a festive dance celebrating the removal of the shade’s interdiction and the candidate’s return to normal life (Turner, 1974: 47).

Thus, Turner’s structure therefore refers to social movements from where one is at a moment, to where he or she receives training, then to a higher level that is where he or she started and now returns, but with a higher vision and new knowledge. While the first stage is the normal human society, where there is power, struggles, achievements and subordinations (ordinary everyday society), the second stage is the symbolic environment that creates the learning process – ‘the *communitas*’ (ritual environment). In it, all participants are equal and submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders, (which can be likened to watching a film in a room, or participating in a cultural symbolic (ritual) ceremony, or even in a religious worship). Thus, in this second stage, the participants undergo the initiation rite, which implies that they identify with the actions they have witnessed and feel ennobled by it. Here, some kind of cultural myths are played for the group and wisdom, no matter how esoteric, is imparted to them for higher tasks ahead. By this is meant that the encoded stories of the people’s journey as a group, are retold and handed down to them (Abanuka, 1991: 9) like the experience of watching films which often creates new knowledge impression in audiences. By this is implied as well that the act of viewing is in itself a process of initiation into the represented ‘reality’ which informs the knowledge economy of viewers and positions them to make meaning of the subject matter represented for them.

The essences of these [represented] rituals according to Onwubiko are: “that they embody the values of the people, they document the traditional education of the people, the songs, symbols, signs, proverbs and riddles, and works of arts” (1990: XI). Resonating with this idea is the insight of Real on what he termed ‘mythic rituals’. These according to him “connect us with our historical past and our physical environment. They establish order and define roles. They restructure time and space for our era and celebrate the central [. . .] values in culture” (1996: 48). The ritual of belief is one aspect that strongly forms and continuously re-creates the identity of the African.

**Faith and Religion in Africa**

Religion as part and parcel of life is a major tenet of communalism in African traditional life (Mbiti, 1969, 1990; Uzukwu, 1997; Okere, 1995; Dipio, 2007). Every person is guided by a personal god, called *chi* in Igbo language [where this writer comes from] similar to the ‘guardian angel’ in Christian theology. As an aspect of communalism, Mbiti states that “religion is the way of life of Africans” (1969: 29). These are apparent communications between the living and the dead guided by the hierarchical ordering of things in African communalism. Humanity first is created by the supreme God who is called *Chukwu* or *Chineke* [...] the God that creates (*Yahweh elohim*). This is where African traditional religion shares boundary with Christian theology that defines the triune God as “the being which nothing greater than can be conceived (non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit) but greater than all that can be conceived (quiddam maius

The concept of God in African communalism is revealed by the names given to Him in African languages. Following the principle of ‘agere sequitor esse’ (acting according to being), God is conceived as an unfathomable being, a force that creates all others and beyond whom there is no other. Mbti emphasizes this point by arguing that “God is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is older than the Zamani period. He is outside creation and beyond creation. On the other hand, he is personally involved in his creations, so that it is not outside of his reach. God is thus simultaneously transcendent and immanent” (Mbti, 1969: 29). This image of a being that is involved in the totality of African life is a force that recreates everything. Obiego, using the Igbo experience of religious faith to buttress this same point remarks that, “the profundity of their ideas and belief in Chukwu (God) is immortalized in their personal names (born mostly out of their experience in the struggle for life) as well as in Chukwu’s praise titles or epithets. Some of these speak of Chukwu’s existence in the emphatic way, as if to convince someone” (Obiego, 1981: 57).

Some of the epithets as outlined by Mbti in some African languages which describe Africa’s religious concept of God include the many definitions of his name:

‘He who is of himself’ (Zulu), ‘the first who has always been in existence and would never die’ (Bambuti), ‘who has no father and is not a man’ (Herero), ‘the greatest of the great’ (Ndebele), ‘the great spirit’ (Shona), ‘the fatherless spirit’ (Ashanti), ‘marvel of marvels’ (Bacongo), ‘the unexplainable’ (Ngombe), ‘the unknown’ (Massai), ‘the “He” of the suns’ (Ila/Baluba), ‘mighty immovable rock that never dies’ (Yoruba) (Mbti, 1969: 25).

These concepts come about due to the general understanding of the ‘person’ of God as the last end of all things or what this writer calls the Dum of existence. Dum is an Igbo word referring to the ‘totality’ of all things. It discusses God as ‘totality’ since He is pre-eminently immanent in nature. He is the ‘All’ of all things, the final summit and last apogee of existence who, even though, permeates all beings, is substantially unfathomable in being (Uwah, 2000: 26). For Adedeji, “God reveals Himself to Africans as a kingly Father who is dependable and a caretaker of the family, a friend who is trust-worthy for companionship, as a creator and life-giver who sustains and upholds the universe. For these reasons, Africans and Nigerians, particularly, see God as somebody who is good, merciful, holy, powerful, all knowing, omnipresent, a spirit, unchangeable, and unknowable. The Yorubas express these qualities when they say Olurun mimo (Holy God), Atererekariaye (omnipresent), Oba awaramaridi (unknowable), Apata-ayeraye (Rock of Ages), Oba aiku (Eternity), Kabiesi (Unquestionable)” (Adedeji, 2000: 41).

In the Igbo speaking area of Nigeria, more of these epithets describe the people’s understanding of God (Chineke) as one of them who is involved in their affairs more like the ancestors communalistically. He is called Amama amacha amacha – ‘the unfathomable being’, Eccheta obi esie ike – ‘one who, when remembered infuses confidence’, Ogbara nkiti okwu biri n’onu – ‘the silent being that holds the last speech’, Ogba aka eje agha – ‘the warrior who wins battles without weapons’ etc.
In their communiqué at the end of a meeting in Accra-Ghana in December 1977, the pan-African conference of Third World Theologians state that “African theology must be understood in the context of African life and culture” (Appiah, 1977: 193). Ideologically therefore, God is pre-eminently a force in Africa, spiritual, but totally immanent. Everything revolves around him as the supreme force. Onwubiko arguing this states that “one’s entire action is reflective of one’s religious concepts and practices as seen in the ordering of society. This is because social morality is dependent on religion” (Onwubiko, 1991: 31).

The ritual of faith and religion in African traditional worship is seen among Africans in almost every religio-social rituals. It enhances their identity as a people and offer clues to understanding their cosmological framework and thought patterns. Since people believe that God is a higher spiritual force that is involved in their affairs as a community and individuals, they reach out to him through a pantheon of other gods and minor deities like Ala or Ani, the earth goddess, Amadioha, the god of thunder; Ajoku the yam god and other clan deities. On the personal level, there is always a personal chi called Ikenga in Igbo land, which is considered to wade off evil and bring good luck to individuals. Thus, this understanding frequently gets represented in Nollywood films especially in rituals and symbolically conveys the notion of faith in God and the gods, not only in the traditional settings, but also in modern day African society.

**Religious Beliefs in Nollywood Films**

Africans traditionally believe that “man is a product of a universe in which all energy and everything is interconnected, born out of a “primal force” which has spread a little of itself into all it has generated” (Barlet, 1996: 84/85). By this is meant that Africans believe in a world that is unified between all beings, whether material, spiritual or metaphysical. Thus, for Onwubiko, “the world of Africans is one of inanimate, animate, and spiritual beings and there is the influence of each category of these beings in the universe in which they inhabit” (1991: 3). This inhabited universe according to Nwoga is a ‘space’ which is a field of action and not just a location made up of discrete physical distances and separate physical spaces. Ala mmuo (spirit world) and ala mmadu (human world) according to him, are the plains of spirit action and of human action, and these need not be physically separated. It is “the non-separation of these entities in physical terms that makes interaction between the various worlds possible so that spirits and their activities impinge on realities that are seen in the human and the physical” (Nwoga, 1984: 36). It is this view of ‘non-separability’ of the two worlds that is expressed in films like *Things Fall Apart* (1986) and many other African and Nollywood films where there is the constant tendency to consult the oracles (spirits) before taking up communal obligations which is part of African ontology.

The spirit world is seen as part of the human world and the mediators between these worlds are culturally called the chief priests [Dibia in Igbo language] and [Balawo in Yoruba]. Significantly in both literature and film adaptation of *Things Fall Apart*, the reality of this worldview is concretely represented. In the description of who the earth goddess [Ani/Ala] is, and what role she plays in the life of people as a local deity in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe writes: “Ani played a greater part in the life of the people
than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what is more, she was in close communication with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth” (Achebe, 1958: 221).

In the adapted film of this novel, the elders often meet in consultation with communal deities like Ani, the earth goddess and Amadioha, the god of thunder, in order to carry out communal duties. This is the case before the funeral rites of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, for instance, in the film, Things Fall Apart, and in Igodo: The Land of The Living Dead, when the community experienced massive deaths as a consequence of the wrath of the gods. The role of the traditional priest in these village ontologies is therefore significant in every community, since he or she bridges the gap between the real and the supernatural worlds, striving to sustain peace and harmony between all members (Kalu, 1994: 52).

The film Sango (1997) by Femi Lasode particularly dramatizes Yoruba cosmology in its religio-cultural representations. In this film, the story is told of Sango, the traditional king of the old Oyo kingdom with spiritual powers that helped him win battles. Being an epic film equipped with cultural costumes, deep mystical powers of the gods and evocative sound tracks, this film reveals in great depths the idea of African traditional religion and belief in its richness of ritual communications between the human and spirit worlds. Similar to Sango’s deep ecological representations of African ontology are other Nollywood movies like Igodo (1999) and the Festival of Fire (1999), which focus not only on the relationship between the world of humans and the spirits in African worldviews but also emphasize how human activities are guided by the dictates of the gods. Instances of these types of activities in the films and the practical manner of behaviour in Africa makes Moemeka (1998) argue that Africans communicate communally. By this claim he pinpoints the indicators of communalism to include ‘religion as a way of life’ in people’s daily encounters. In both verbal and non-verbal communications, Moemeka asserts that ‘communalistic acts are engaged in to confirm, solidify and promote social order. In such cultures, communication is always a question of attitude towards one’s neighbour […] closely tied to communication rules designed to ensure communal social order’ (1998: 133).

Religion and faith define a strong aspect of Nigeria’s culture both in the traditional and modern day fashions. In his study on The Role of the Mass Media in the Process of Conversion of Catholics to Pentecostal Churches, Ihejirika identifies as one factor that makes people convert to Pentecostal churches, the idea that most believe there is always a contest between good and bad spirit in their lives (2003: 67). This confirms Oha’s findings of the Yorubas too especially in relation to Nollywood’s representations of their traditional religious practices, where the interface between religion and cultures is causing “a form of postcolonial education that means the emergence of cultural and religious hybridity in the society” (2002: 138). For Dipio, the “hybrid nature of this genre takes care of many interests at once. It combines art and commerce, pleasure and morals, reality and fantasy, tradition and modernity, and a form of Christianity that integrates traditional religion” (2007: 80).

However, while Ihejirika’s finding might seem superstitious even though being attested to by both Dipio’s (2007) and Oha’s (2002) textual analysis of filmic representations on the Nigerian audiences, what it does reveal is the tension that characterizes the interface between faith and the apparent failure of being materially wealthy in
Nigeria. Oha corroborates this by highlighting further that “many Christian narratives foreground the conflict between God’s forces and Satan’s in the affairs of human beings. Secular human experiences are seen as reflections as well as consequences of spiritual warfare” (2000: 192). Conflict here is in the struggle of overcoming poverty which most people tend to think is caused by the Devil attacking them or ‘tying down’ their progress and wealth and therefore needs to be fought against by all means.

In Festival of Fire (1999) directed by Chico Ejiro, another edifice of religious rituals is depicted in the tension surrounding the early missionary encounter of the Catholic Church with the traditional beliefs of the people of Eastern Nigeria. Shot in a typical pre-colonial location, reminiscent of Chinua Achebe’s Umuofia village before the advent of Christianity in Things Fall Apart, this movie pays great tribute to the heroic pioneering spirit of the early female missionaries while presenting the tenacity of a people’s love and defense of their traditional religion and culture. The establishing shot, filmed from a wide angle perspective, gives at a glance, the romantic exotic nature of the rural African village Amani, in 1885, where people were deeply engrossed with the killing of twin babies for fear of upsetting the decorum of the land, purportedly guided by the local deity, Amadioha, who prohibits the bearing of twins as an evil omen.

The film tells the story of a certain man, who to avert the killing of his twin babies as custom demands, separates them by handing them over to different women of two different villages to bring them up in their own houses outside Amani. The twins, Ike (male) and Mary (female), were given identical tattoos on their bodies, in case they survive and come to learn of their background. As believed by Amani tradition, the family of Ike happens to be a priestly clan and therefore is privileged with serving the communal deity at the level of chief-priests, referred to as Eze mmuo. Of course the primary priestly function here includes the killing of twin babies as well as offering of sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the people. Twenty five years after the birth of Ike and his sister, Ike grows to be chosen as the Eze mmuo. This is also the time when the early missionary nuns decide to come to Amani for evangelization for the first time. Mary, the twin sister of Ike is one of them, and became the leader of the group soon after their European leader was killed while rescuing a woman being stoned to death by a mob for giving birth to twins.

In their fight to combat this tradition, Mary and other nuns had to battle to rescue some abandoned twins as well as offer medical assistance to the villagers. But Ike, as one of the custodians of Amani traditions would not tolerate the women’s new religion. He turns the entire community against the nuns. While some got killed and buried, Mary is brutally flogged and disrobed by a mob led by Amaeshi, the prince of the land and his guards. Just at the point of getting ready to kill Mary, in sacrifice to appease Amadioha, the god of the land, a twist occurs. Ike saw the tattoo on Mary’s chest which symbolically reminds him of the warning of the deity who once told him: ‘you can’t destroy your own! You cannot kill yourself! Ike withdraws his sword from the day’s task of sacrifice in order to consult his aged father, who once again, narrated the story of his birth to him, reminding him in clear terms: ‘the woman with the tattoo on her chest is your sister’. At this point, like the spell of a bad dream, the screen zoomed slowly to a flash-back that relocates the audience into the distant past when Ike and his sister were born and rescued by separating
them. Thus, like a privileged revelation, the audience is here reminded that Ike too is a twin, and might after all, be encountering his sister unknowingly, who herself also is not aware of this fact either.

Bewildered by these hidden revelations of his father, Ike approaches Mary in her secluded cave and sorts out their identity and family background by asking family questions that revealed them as siblings. *Festival of Fire* does not only tell about the history of the 1885 missionary journey of the Catholic Church to the old Eastern region of Nigeria, but also showcases how the church was able to outwit the ferocious old traditions and the acceptance of new faith by the people. At the end, the king of Amani eventually was baptized and most of the people got converted to the new religion.

These films couched in symbolic proverbial words and ritualized actions depict the elasticity of tension that arises in the correlation of an old communalistic system with a new one, and therefore help appreciate the fact that Nollywood builds on village rituals to solicit audiences’ resonance with the films. The issue of religion and worship among others is so strong that both in the traditional pattern and modern day bible based traditions, they are recurrently represented. Many films are encoded with representations of ritual worships and belief systems. Thus, engaging in the textual analysis of these texts justifies among other things, the basic assumption of this long essay that Nollywood’s representations come from the people’s everyday life contexts and significantly from their communal rituals.

*Igodo* (1999) is another Nollywood film that showcases the ritual of in Africa traditional religion by means of consultations and sacrifices to a clan deity to safeguard a community. As a religious film, the belief in the judgment of the gods is made supremely explicit and the consultations of oracles as a sure way of knowing the mind of the gods. It is the story of a man whose wonderful love for tradition and victory at a traditional wrestling made him the envy of other ruthless communal elders. He becomes a hero because of the fame he has brought to his village; but since a group of elders were not happy with him, they plotted and framed him up to be killed. However, since the earth goddess does not approve of his death as a god of justice, strange things started happening in the land and people began dying mysteriously starting with the elders. Upon consulting with his council of elders and oracle, the ruling king was asked to deploy six young men to go and fetch a cutlass from an the ‘land of the dead’ for cutting down a tree growing on the warrior’s grave to placate the gods in their anger. In the film, terror is unleashed on the clan for an abomination and can only be calmed by appeasing the gods by means of communal sacrifices.

*Bless Me* (2005) is one other Nollywood film that depicts the religious–didactic genre of the Nollywood industry in a more modern fashion. Typically, it is Pentecostal or Charismatic in both content and outlook and evokes the sense of religion as a way of life by most people in the country. It systematically uses family hardships to moralize faith in the consciousness of viewers who more or less, might be engaged in it to see a reflection of their society and perhaps, their own life-stories.

Directed by Ernest Obi, this movie suggests a reading founded on the philosophy of evangelization by means of media outreach programmes and technologies. It uses the screen as a pulpit to preach faith and the steadfastness to God in the midst of difficult challenges. Again, it is a practical film that confronts once again the reality and problem of evil in the world created by an all good, a God. The bottom line theme of its
narrative is the age long philosophical question: ‘why does the innocent suffer while the guilty prospers?’

Using Festus (Mike Ezuruonye) as the protagonist of this movie, the producers question the ‘why’ of the presence of evil in human existence. The irony which even Festus could not comprehend, even as he helps viewers identify with the narrative flow of his sufferings, is why should he, a devout Christian and worshipper of God, be left in abject poverty and squalor, while his neighbours of ‘double-dealing’ businesses succeed in all their transactions. Like the biblical saintly Job, he asks the ‘why me’ questions.

The opening scene of Bless Me begins with a wide angle shot of sun rays shining softly on the houses of the rural Onitsha area of the South-East of Nigeria, as family members are seen getting up from sleep. Swiftly panning the camera round the old and rusted corrugated iron sheets’ houses in the area, to give a view of the environmental outlook of the place and depict the calmness of the night that was coming to an end with daybreak, the lens technically penetrates a particular bedroom and reveals to audiences a young couple in pyjamas, standing in the middle of their bedroom and singing ‘worship songs’ to God in a morning prayer session.

While the idea of standing and singing hymns to God is not recent in Nigeria, the Pentecostal way of doing it is quite different from those of the traditional churches, indicating the dawn of a new reality in the ritual of religious worship in the country. The screen expresses this point where it offers a representation of the morning prayer of Festus and his wife Amaka (Rita Dominic). Like devout ‘born again’ Christians, this young couple lift high their bibles, with eyes tightly closed and speak multitude of words ‘to God’ in a frenzied manner. This scene, while not particularly suggesting a reversal of the traditional film aesthetics of the Nollywood industry, where elders of families lead in traditional religious prayers by pouring libations to personal and family gods, as seen in Things Fall Apart, Festival of Fire etc, highlights the Pentecostal modern way of worship among most Nigerian families. Significantly it depicts the underlying argument that people in communalistic society see religion as their primary way of life. This family therefore, can be read as displaying the typical nature of faith in marriages among most elites in Nigeria, where gender equality also has become an accepted issue, and respect and honour are shared equally between husband and wife unlike the traditionally patriarchal settings where women had no voice of their own in the families.

Even though one might think that this film is Nollywood’s attempt to adapt to market demands and conform to the religious inclinations of the Nigerian audience, still, it is a way of addressing the people on their problems at the level they can understand them. Bless Me is a desperate call to God for redemption out of poverty and stupor. The songs in it also, not only in the prayers but as film’s music score reveal a desire of a couple burning for material upliftment, far more than spiritual successes. Or put in another way, they manifest the devout faith of a young family wishing all ‘blessings’ to turn situations around at the behest of God whom they serve.

Songs accompany filmic storylines in Nollywood. Most often they introduce the next sequence by using thematic issues in the films to highlight actions and reactions of characters. In this way “songs reveal the utmost depth of the singers’ feelings and desires” (Livtak, 1996: 70). Yet, they demonstrate Nollywood’s style of using them as a very important element of the folktale (film) aesthetics (Ogundele, 2000: 100). As Kun-
zler submits: “with simple words, these theme songs comment on the story or assess its morale” (Kunzler, 2007: 7); while Barlet argues in the context of all African films that “music is never gratuitous. When it comes from a traditional source, it contributes to the film’s aim of perpetuating memory. When the film describes a painful reality; the music plays its part in conjuring away the anxiety and the difficulties” (2000: 185).

Generally in all of the films analyzed therefore, there are some glaring points that come across which justify the original claim of this paper that religion helps to maintain cohesion in African communalistic society and are expressed via rituals. These include the following:

- The usage of rituals by human beings to communicate with the ‘living dead’ and other supernatural beings including God and other minor deities in the community.
- The belief in a kind of power communication [vital force] between the ‘spirit world’ and the ‘human world’, whereby activities in one realm affects those in the other realm.
- The use of sacrifice by human beings as homage to the supernatural powers or even to obtain something from them or appease them in their anger against the people or their community.

7. Conclusion

The culture-centred nature of most Nollywood films can be argued to depict the industry as grounded on indigenous cultures like any other folk media, produced and consumed by members of the group. In this case, they reinforce the values of the people and are the visible features by which social identities and worldviews are maintained and defined (Eilers, 1992: 127). Thus, the general question of root paradigms in Nollywood films is ritualistic, ecological, sacred, cosmological and therefore strongly cultural in most cases. Understanding this role played by oral tradition and rituals in films helps film critics see how the filmmaker transforms his or her tradition into a new technology (Diawara, 1988: 13). It is, in the words of Barber, ‘celebrating the traditional’, which is an affirmation of self worth for the people as well as a demonstration of their progress and modernity (Barber, 1997: 1). It is this fact that this paper has shown by exploring the representation of culture and traditional religion in Nollywood films. Therefore, while religion is not a new phenomenon in textual analysis, the ideological framework behind its presence in most Nollywood films is an indicator of a somewhat revelatory value in the identity construction and cosmology of the African. In them as in real life religion, the transitory and the eternally sacred meet in the dynamics of ritual celebrations and strongly therefore signal oscillations between viewing and using religion in Nollywood as panoply of cultural identity construction.
References


Innocent Ebere Uwah

THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE IN NIGERIA POPULAR FILMS

• (pp 81-102)


Ogundele, W. 2000. ‘From Folk Opera to Soap Opera: Improvisations and Trans-


Uwah, I. 2008. ‘Nollywood Films as a Site For Constructing Contemporary African


**Filmography**

2. *Igodo: The Land of the Living Dead* (1999), Don Pedro Obaseki and Andy Amenechi,
   Nigeria, Nollywood.

**Notes**

1. African cinemas as implied here refer to those films produced mainly by African countries with the help of Western sponsors that are less distributed in Africa but more in Europe and America. For instance, France and Belgium are noted for their sponsorship of most Francophone African films. This is one point that challenges the idea of branding such films ‘African cinemas’. Nwachukwu purports that the West had their reasons for sponsoring and censoring most of these films and distributing them. He argues that ‘exploitation by foreign-owned distribution companies exemplified colonial ideologies. Distribution was entirely controlled by powerful and highly profitable European-owned companies that suppressed the emergence of indigenous African cinema. To them, African cinema would bring competition and a change in audience taste that might challenge their exclusive hold on the African market’ (Nwachukwu, 1994: 62). Paradoxically, what is often spoken about in the West, in relation to cinemas is placed in the singular case (African cinema) but refer only to these films as if all the cinemas of Africa are homogenous. This study considers cinema in Africa in the plural however, hence we have chosen to say African ‘cinemas’ rather than ‘cinema’, because of the view that we respect not only the individual country’s political independence but also their particular film industry’s independence. Barlet corroborates this perspective of addressing cinemas in the plural in Africa. He argues that ‘Africa is plural and so is its cinema. Hence, the reference to African cinemas. There is, however, also a great unity to Black Africa’ (1996: ix). Thus, following Barlet, we underscore the existence of many cinema industries in Africa, but focus mainly on the Nollywood industry, which is one out of the so many others in the continent. For this reason, we will refer to both the individuality of African cinemas as well as to their unity. We imply by this that they all share the Third Cinema ideologies as imbued with African themes and aesthetics, yet in all of these, from particular countries and perspectives.

2. The *indigenization Act* was a decree of the Nigerian military government in 1972 that demanded all cinema halls, formerly owned by foreigners to be handed over to
indigenes to operate. It also challenged media houses to focus on indigenous productions and was aimed at promoting Nigeria’s arts and cultures, against the dominance of foreign films and other media products in the country at the time (See: Aderinokun, 2005).

3 RMD otherwise called Richard Mofe Damijo visited Dublin in the course of Dublin African Film Festival in April, 2007 at Cineworld Cinema, Dublin. I interviewed him at Jury’s Inn Hotel, Parnel Street, Dublin, where he was lodged. He described himself as a Nollywood actor and a lawyer thus: ‘I am a graduate of the University of Benin. I am a lawyer. I am an actor and a business man also’.

4 ‘Zamani Period’ according to Mbiti is a Swahili word meaning ‘the unlimited past’. He used it to signal Africa’s understanding of the existence of God in their view of religion as a way of life. By this he describes God as one who started existing before ever there was any past. ‘God is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is older than the Zamani period’ (Mbiti, 1969: 29) he stated.

5 Things Fall Apart is one of the key literature texts in Nigeria which has been adapted into film. Especially in 1986, the nation’s Television, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) serialized this movie on its channel which was a huge success and until date remains a reference point in discussing the dynamics of Nigerian cultures, especially the Igbo perspective. This is mainly because Achebe did not only capture the typical Igbo [African] cultural scenario before the advent of the Europeans but also illustrates the after effects of colonialism on the Nigerian country, using Umuofia village community to construct this. It is a key text and film that forms part of our discourse here on African cultures because of its resonance to what some aspects of the history and experience of Nigerians as people has been. Although the film is indicatively a pre-Nollywood production, suffice to say that it shares a lot of similarities with other Nollywood filmic productions, which include, being produced on VCD format and not on celluloid, being screened on television like other Nollywood films and using deep ecological aesthetics, characteristic of Nollywood in terms of cultural history and experiences to discuss African and Nigerian ontology and lived-in situations.

6 Amadioha is known in Igbo cosmology to refer to the ‘god of thunder’ believed to be a messenger of the supreme deity, God, for invoking justice and truth in the world. People use the cultural symbol of ofo to invoke this god of thunder for justice. For Nnawuihe, ofo is a great symbol in traditional religion. It has a central position in all major religious, social and even political activities. For instance, titles are conferred with the ofo (Nnawuihe, 2005: 20) and elders mainly are those who carry ofo to adjudicate cases in the land traditionally, hence their work is for the peace of the land and are called ndi Aladimma. Literally aladimma can be translated as ‘peace in the land’. While Ala refers to earth, a locale or a place, di mma means to ‘be well’, to ‘have peace’, or ‘bring about wholesomeness’. Thus, ndi Aladimma refers to those who work to see that there is order in the land. Aladimma is for this reason the highest political and social forum for every Igbo community, where important decisions are taken. It comprises of all adult males and sometimes females of the native community and is led by the elders drawn from the heads of the family units, who act as official representatives of their family groups (Ekennia, 2000: 162).

7 Eze mmuo literally means spiritual-king or a king that has the eyes of the spirits. It is a title for the chief priest in Igbo traditional religion who serves the deities and the
communities by performing sacrifices and consultations with the spirits of the ancestors and the gods. Another name for Eze mmuo is Dibia Afa which implies one who sacrifices and consults the gods. This type of traditional priesthood is significant in African ontology and cosmology because the priest is the spiritual leader of the community and deals with the traditional ruler (Igwe or Eze) who rules by maintaining order and peace after the dictates of the gods as revealed to the Eze mmuo or Dibia Afa. It is a sacred position in the community and can only be filled according to tradition by the choice of a deity or family heritage and requires absolute moral and spiritual codes by those elected to serve. In the Yoruba speaking area of Nigeria, the substitute is the babalawo who consults the Ifa oracle (that is, the Yoruba traditional deity similar to Amadioha in the Igbo speaking area), and gives messages of the gods to the Kabiyesi – the traditional Yoruba king (similar to Igwe in the Igbo part of Nigeria) to deliver to his people and community.

8 Onitsha is a town in Anambra State in the South East region of Nigeria. It has a central place in the production and distribution of Nollywood films. Being an ancient city bursting with market dealings and businesses, the film Bless Me uses it to dramatize market scenes and religious attitudes of young people involved in trading.
Ебере Увах

ПРЕДСТАВЉАЊЕ АФРИЧКЕ ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНЕ РЕЛИГИЈЕ И КУЛТУРЕ У НИГЕРИЈСКИМ ПОПУЛУРНИМ ФИЛМОВИМА

Резиме

Један од метода којима религијски обреди комуницирају у афричком друштву јесте очување кохезије у култури. Они вежу учеснике за богатији смисао и веће снаге њихове заједнице. Чак и у репрезентативним моделима, обреди стварају солидарност у форми субјективног осећања дељења истог израженог света који се од стране учесника постиже кроз сажету природу симбола који се у њима користе. Традиционална религија је један обред који, упркос утицају вестернизације и научног развоја, у Африци још увек има значајне импликације на свакодневни живот људи. Сходно томе, од јутра до вечери, људи имају религијске обреде којима комуницирају са својим Богом или боговима, божанствима и прецима. Такође, још увек постоје фестивали и обреди, и у приватној и у јавној сфери, које Африканци посвећују „живим мртвима“ или онима у „свету духова“. Овај рад, помоћу изнијансираних текстуалних анализа неких домаћих филмова у Нигерији (Things Fall Apart (1986), Igodo: The Land of the Living Dead (1999), Sango, (1998), Festival of Fire, (1999), Bless Me, (2005)) поставља религију на место кључне парадигме афричке културе, као канал ка темељу афричког идентитета.

Кључне речи: Ноливуд, религија, представљање и култура.
THE MEDIA, TERRORISM AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF MUSLIMS IN KENYA

Abstract

Muslims constitute just about 10% of Kenya’s population and their perceived marginalization in the country’s politics since the colonial period has often led them to retreat from the political scene. However, the democratization process that has energized the development of the media as well as the upsurge of terrorism seems to be transforming the participation of Muslims in Kenyan politics. This paper illustrates how the war on terror and the emergence of Muslim media have influenced the increasing visibility of Muslims in the political scene. From the previous peripheral status, they are now entering national political alliances that can protect their interests and in doing so, Muslims are edging towards influencing national politics in Kenya. The paper thus concludes that the war on terror and the liberalization of the media have been a boom for the mobilization of Muslims to participate in national politics in Kenya.

Key words: Kenyan Muslims, Media liberalization, Political marginalization, Access to the Media, Political mobilization, War on Terror.

Introduction

Muslims are a minority in Kenya and have subsequently occupied a peripheral status in the country’s political space. At independence in 1963, the influence of Muslims in politics and administration was minimal or almost negligible. They were not visible in the hierarchy of power. Due to their perceived marginalization by the state, Coastal communities generally, and the Swahili in particular, started the Mwambao (coastal strip) movement. This was a movement by a small group of individuals to maintain the autonomy of the coastal strip, then the domain of the Sultan of Zanzibar, as a separate independent entity with Mombasa as a free port (Jewel, 1976: 14). It was hoped that such autonomy will empower the Muslims to determine their political course. After a while, this so-called “Coastal Strippers” faded from the political scene, but their ideas would resurface in the constitutional review debate from the mid 1990s in the form of

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1 aishuni@yahoo.com; fwanyama@hotmail.com

2 The exact percentage of Kenyan Muslims is a polemic issue, depending on who is is being asked. The Muslims perceive themselves to be about 30%. Some Christians will estimate Muslims to be less than 10%. Recent census place them to be about 10% (Central Intelligence Agency (2009). “Kenya”. The World Factbook. Retrieved 23 January 2010.)
**Majimboism** (a call for federalism). In the meantime, the Muslim remained absent from the national political scene.

By the 1980s, the only Muslim voice at the national level was the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM), while at the local level, the traditional religious leaders commonly known as *Kadhis* (religious judges) and *Imams* (Mosque leaders) spoke on behalf of the communities. However, since the dawn of the new millennium, there has been an improvement in the participation of Muslims in national politics. Today we have a number of national Muslim bodies which include, among others, National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF), Majlis Ulamaa Kenya (MUK), Kenya Council of Imams and Ulamaas (KCIU), and Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK).

NAMLEF is a national umbrella platform of all leaders of Muslim organizations that desire to see Kenya as a just, harmonious, peaceful and a prosperous country based on good governance, constitutionalism and the rule of law, pro-poor policies and enhanced democratic space. The aim of NAMLEF is to see all Kenyans effectively participate in shaping their destiny and the positive uplift of the status and welfare of Muslims in Kenya. It also envisions the correction of historical and structural injustices and marginalization meted on the Muslim through perceived deliberate policies and programmes by the state.

The question that this paper seeks to address is what has led to the sudden change in the mobilization of Muslims to participate in national politics? We attempt to answer this question by paying specific attention to the emergence of Muslim media, thanks to the democratization process that has given way to the liberalization of the media; and the upsurge in the war on terror that has resulted into the suspicion of Muslims as the main perpetrators of terrorism.

**Democratization and Muslim access to the Media in Kenya**

Kenya has seen three presidential regimes, all of which have exhibited authoritarian tendencies that have undermined the freedom of the media as well as people’s access to the media. The climax of such authoritarianism was the 24-year regime of President Arap Moi from 1978 to 2002. A culture of fear, uncertainty and sycophancy characterized the one-party political system. Suspected enemies of the regime, both real and imagined, were detained, tortured, and forced to confess on trumped-up charges of treason and sedition. There was absolutely no freedom of the press. Like in many other African countries, Kenyans had to struggle to bring an end to the single-party system in 1991. Even during Moi’s multiparty era, media houses that published alternative views from those of the state were still harassed and sometimes closed down.

The real change in the freedom of the media in Kenya came with the Kibaki regime from 2003. Having won the elections on the platform of good governance and development, it is instructive that the Kibaki government opened up the political space to facilitate freedom of association, assembly and expression relative to the Kenyatta and Moi eras. Unlike his predecessor who straddled the entire political scene like mighty colossus, President Kibaki adopted a *laissez faire* style of leadership. This resulted also in the freeing of both print and electronic media from excessive State control.

The opening of the political space prompted by this process also led to the rapid expansion and diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) which
the Muslim community was quick to adopt to further their interests. Rapid Internet diffusion has led to a mushrooming of cyber-cafes charging users less than a dollar per hour. These units have become crucial sites of Kenyan Muslims’ engagement with the global Muslim ummah, of enhancing their knowledge of Islam through cyber-literacy, and of networking with and between (cyber)-communities with shared interests.

The introduction of domestic satellite dishes in Muslim homes that broadcast Islamic programs from the Middle East and Asia has also impacted on Kenyan Muslims’ new understanding of Islam and their Islamic identities. It is via this global transnational Islamic networks mediated through the media that most educated Kenyan Muslim activists develop an interest to creatively use media outlets to engage in public discourses about the place of Muslims in Kenyan politics. This trend has enhanced Muslims’ perception of their citizenship and it is steadily improving their political and economic participation within the predominantly non-Muslim nation.

Among the emerging Islamic media that have significantly contributed to the mobilization of Muslims to participate in politics is The Friday Bulletin. This is a weekly publication of just four pages produced in Nairobi by Jamia Mosque Committee. At first it was a publication of a page or two, which was distributed every Friday at the Jamia Mosque in Nairobi. However, Muslim activists associated with Daawa Groups within Nairobi have always circulated copies of this small magazine to other Muslims in Kenya. Since November 2006, this magazine is available as an online publication hosted on www.islamkenya.com. It is available to other Muslims across the globe and Kenyan Muslims in the Diaspora have a chance to be acquainted with Kenyans Muslim issues back home. The Bulletin is also circulated through e-mail as an attachment forwarded by ardent young Muslims utilizing the cyberspace as a forum to discuss Islamic issues. This magazine is normally subjected to text analysis to bring out the issues that have helped to sensitize Kenyan Muslims’ voting preferences.

There is no central theme in this magazine, but it tends to raise issues that affect Kenyan Muslims on a daily basis. Issues discussed include spiritual matters such as prayers, fasting, pilgrimage to Makah, and Alms giving. It also discusses contemporary issues bordering on the welfare of Muslims such as educational matters, politics, social issues that have transpired across the week. In short it serves as a resume of what the editors discern as important events of the week affecting Muslims. As such, diligent Muslims have a chance to glimpse the weekly events. This magazine has become an active instrument for Muslims to engage in political discourse about what is presumed to be injustices meted out by the Kenyan government. The sentiments expressed therein shaped the Kenyan Muslims perception on which side to lean on, in the 2007 general elections.

**The War on Terror and Muslim Political Alliances in Kenya**

The political mobilization of Kenyan Muslims has been shaped by a number of happenings in the Kenyan political scene. The major issue is the war on terror that was seen to be targeting only Muslims. As a result, it shaped the voting patterns in the 2002...
Kenyan general elections, the 2005 Referendum on the Constitution, the 2007 general elections, and even the recent terror attack in Uganda by the Al-Shabbab Militia.

Kenyan Muslims have always conceived themselves as marginalized and alienated from the national politics and in particular the political leadership. The employment sector was seen as closed to many Muslims. As a result of the oil boom in the 1970s and 1980s, many young Muslims went to work as expatriates in Saudi Arabia where the remuneration was good with the minimal education that they had. For almost two decades Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf served as a safe haven for some Kenyan Muslims to work and progress economically. The war that broke out in Somalia in 1991 during the time of Siad Barre, brought another opportunity for mass exodus of another batch of young Kenyan Muslims to migrate to the West posing as refugees. Hence, many found their way to United States of America as well as United Kingdom.

The Gulf War of 1991 brought a draw-back to some Kenyan Muslims as the lucrative jobs in the Arabian peninsular were threatened. The pay went down and it was as well as what some youth could make in the local matatu industry per month. This brought about disillusionment to the Muslim populace. The place they had hitherto turned to for solace was shattered. There was need for mobilization to find their place within their own government. This is part of the genesis for political mobilization and the building of alliances to safeguard their chance to share in the political leadership. However, this ardent desire to be part of Kenyan leadership is being marred by the war on terror.

The first sign that Kenya had entered the terrorist circuit was in December 1980 when terrorists sympathetic to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) bombed part of the world-famous five-star Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi. At least 16 lives were lost and hundred of people were injured. A Jewish family owned the Norfolk Hotel. In August 1998 US Embassy buildings in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed, resulting in at least 250 deaths. The attack was directly linked to Osama bin Laden. In November 2002 suicide bomber terrorists calling themselves ‘Army of Palestine’ attacked, wounded, and killed patrons at another Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. Almost simultaneously, the attackers shot at an Arkia Airline taking off from Mombasa International Airport for Israel. None of the 271 passengers in the plane was injured. Al Qaeda was blamed for the attacks.

A close up of the major titles of some of the articles in the Muslim publication that year 2007, started on a mobilizing note for Muslims. In issue number 194, it begins with a title “Fight for Your Rights or Be Enslaved”. The choice of words in this article rouses the interest of the reader to want to know exactly what are these rights envisaged in it. The article, authored by Farouq Machanje, a coordinator of NAMLEF and a MUHURI (Muslim Human Rights) activist, commences by pointing out that the Kenyan economy had achieved a 5.8% growth. However, that growth has not improved the lives of the Muslims. Several issues were raised that affect the Kenyan Muslims and serve as basis of arguments that can make the Muslims “enslaved”. These issues are

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4 Hassan Muhammad, Oral Interview, 12th July 2008, Mombasa.
5 Matatu is a Nissan 14 seater car used to shuttle both within a town and within different towns in Kenya.
6 Otenyo, Eric E, NEW TERRORISM Toward an explanation of cases in Kenya Published in African Security Review Vol 13 No 3, 2004
instances of arbitrary arrests, torture, holding suspects incommunicado, censure of Muslim based Non-Governmental Organizations, and allowing the United States of America to have bases in Kenya especially in areas considered strategic such as Wajir and Isiolo. The arrested Muslims are subjected to what some Human Rights activists consider inhuman conditions. They are denied medical attention as a result of the torture meted out as well as legal representation. The article appealed to Muslims that 2007 is an electioneering year and hence should exercise their rights to be free.

In the following issue, number 195, it carries yet another title: “Muslims protest over State harassment”. It criticizes the agenda of arbitrary unrests, torture, holding suspects incommunicado and even handing over Kenyan Muslims suspects to other nations for interrogation. These major vices cited are as a result of the 7th August 1998 bombing of the USA embassy in Nairobi as well as a failed attack on an Israel plane and a bombing of Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, Mombasa in November 2002. These two events denote the initial attacks and rounding up of a section of Kenyan Muslims on the charges of colluding with international Muslim terrorists. These two events saw the capture of over 200 Kenyan some of whom were shipped to Guantanamo Bay (Soares & Otayek, 2007, 157-176). Reference is made that for all these injustices to be surmounted, Kenyan Muslims need to consider a change of leadership in the government.

Issue number 196 carries a headline: “Voting Power to avenge state harassment, Muslims resolve”. These were sentiments echoed by Muslim protesters on the 12th of January 2007, after Friday prayers. The protesters vowed to avenge “the years of persecution at the hands of Kibaki regime” by mobilizing Muslims to vote out the government.

The chairman of NAMLEF, Abdillahi Abdi told the protesters, “We are not ready to accept the injustice done to us particularly by this government we helped to put to power. As we voted for it, we will also ensure that it is voted out. We are no longer prepared to be bribed by famine relief to vote for a government which does not have the interests of Muslims”. These sentiments were being expressed at the dawn of election year to alert the government that the Muslim vote might be lost if they do not give a hearing to their grievances.

In the same article, it was expressed that no intimidation from the government will bar the Muslims to be mobilized to vote against the government. The time at which this article went to print was after many Kenyan Muslims had been rounded up in towns bordering Somalia on the charges of being sympathizers of Union of Islamic Courts. The arrested Kenyans were handed over to Ethiopian and American governments. The government was called to take care of other pressing needs of Kenyans like the epidemic of Rift Valley fever which had then infested the North Eastern Province of Kenya instead of chasing “terror mirage”.

The same agenda appeared in the following issue number 197, whereby the anti-Kibaki campaigns were done in Mombasa. In particular Sheikh Khalifa, the chairman of unregistered Islamic Party of Kenya said, “We cannot support a government that is fighting Muslims. If the government has decided to please the Americans by oppressing Muslims, then it is ready to lose our support”.

Hence the voting trend was seen as the only way to oust Kibaki out of govern-
ment and usher in an era of emancipation for the Kenyan Muslims. This will be seen as retaliation against the “oppressive regime of Kibaki”. Muslims went further in their campaigns to seek attention and air their grievances by threatening to disrupt World cross country Championships that were held in Mombasa on 24th March 2007 (Issue No. 200).

They wanted to curtail the event in order to gain audience with the government over the issue of releasing purported terror suspects that were held in jail. These suspects have not had access to legal representation. However, the rally was called off because such an event would have been used by hooligans to disrupt peace and have the blame pinned down on Muslims. The world cross country championships took place amidst tight security. Suspicion of terrorism being associated with Muslims has been seen as volatile act to deepen hatred against Kenyan Muslims and Islam.

These sentiments make Kenyan Muslims’ grievances to be at times associated with what is happening to the Global Muslim Ummah. Conflicts involving Muslims in the Middle East, the Soviet Union, Somalia, and Sudan are viewed by Kenyan Muslims as a world-wide propaganda against the Muslims. These concerns of the Muslim Ummah elsewhere in the world attract sympathy of Kenyan Muslims and hence the notion of worldwide persecution of Muslims. Kenyan Muslims are not left out in their show of solidarity with other Muslims.

In particular; issue number 206 explained that Kenya’s role in Somali renditions was ‘shameful’. This was as expressed in the report of New York-based Human Rights Watch that accused Kenya of playing an active role in the arbitrary detention, expulsion and enforced disappearance of individuals fleeing in the Somali conflicts. These are some of the issues Kenyan Muslims would see resolved if the then government was voted out.

In fact by the end of June 2007, the Chief Kadhi Sheikh Hammad Muhammad Kasim encouraged Muslims to participate in the 2007 elections (Friday Bulletin, Issue No. 219). He urged Kenyan Muslims to register as voters saying, “choose leaders who would champion the interests of the community…Let us vote in leaders who have our interests at heart. This is our inalienable right that no one can take away from us”. The Chief Kadhi was then launching voter education campaign in Mombasa. The aim of this campaign was to clear misconceptions that Muslims are prohibited from participating in the electoral process.

However in his bid to simply inform Kenyan Muslims that they have a right to vote, he went further to pass judgment that the then government was biased against Muslims. This move shows the lengths at which Kenyan Muslim leaders tried to ensure success to vote out “Kibaki’s unjust regime”. These actions by Muslims groups like Muslim Human Rights (MUHURI), NAMLEF, SUPKEM, Majlis Ulamaa and KCIU encouraged Muslims first to register as voters in large numbers.

Secondly as early as June 2007 Muslims were already looking out for favorable political parties to ally themselves with so as to enhance their chances of voting out the anti-Muslim regime. This is because the conduct of the 2005 Referendum on Constitutional Reform, saw Muslims voting overwhelmingly against the Draft Constitution. From that time until July 13th 2006, the Chief Kadhi was sidelined in state functions. In the days leading up to the Referendum, Kenyan Muslim leaders had presented to the government a memorandum of urgent issues affecting their community. President
Mwai Kibaki reassured the Muslims that the raised issues would be taken up by his government. However, there was no positive outcome of this meeting.

As the Election Day approached, the Muslims leaders intensified their vocal campaigns against the Kibaki government. Imams in various parts of the country were called in to take an active part in the political discourse by providing necessary information to the Muslims.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the democratization process has energized the development of the media as well as the upsurge of terrorism has been transforming the participation of Muslims in Kenyan politics. This paper illustrates how the war on terror and the emergence of Muslim media have influenced the increasing visibility of Muslims in the political scene. From the previous peripheral status, they are now entering national political alliances that can protect their interests and in doing so, Muslims are edging towards influencing national politics in Kenya. They still feel that more can be done in trying to de-link Muslims and actions of terrorism in Kenya. Also Muslims want to enjoy full citizenship instead of being seen as second rate citizens. They have began the long walk to political integration in Kenya.
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МЕДИЈИ, ТЕРОРИЗАМ И ПОЛИТИЧКА МОБИЛИЗАЦИЈА МУСЛИМАНА У КЕНИЈИ

Резиме

Муслимани чине само око 10% становништва Кеније и њихова доживљена маргинализација у политици земље од колонијалног доба често их је водила повлачењу с политичке сцене. Међутим, чини се да процес демократизације, који је подстакао развој медија, као и пораст тероризма, трансформише учешће муслимана у кенијској политици. Овај рад илуструје како су рат против тероризма и појава муслиманских медија утицали на повећање видљивости муслимана на политичкој сцени. Након ранијег периферног статуса, они сада ступају у националне политичке савезе који могу штитити њихове интересе и, чинећи то, почињу да утичу на политичке прилике у Кенији. Сходно томе, овај рад, закључује да су рат против тероризма и либерализација медија подстакли мобилизацију муслимана у политичком животу Кеније.

Кључне речи: кенијски муслимани, либерализација медија, политичка маргинализација, приступ медијима, политичка мобилизација, рат против тероризма.
А нализе nalyses
THE INDIGENIZATION AND POLITICIZATION OF AMERICAN ISLAM

Abstract

The increased presence and visibility of Muslims in America in the past century means that Islam is no longer to be characterized as a Middle Eastern or South Asian phenomenon. Given the fact that it is the fastest growing religion in America, Islam is now a very American phenomenon. The face of American Islam has changed dramatically especially after the events of September 11, 2001. This article will examine the impact that recent events have had on the American Muslim community and will focus on increasing political engagement by members of the community. It will examine the political experience of American Muslims and will discuss how community members have come together to try to change the American political landscape.

Key words: indigenization, politicization, CAIR, ISNA.

The twentieth century witnessed a dramatic increase in the migration of Muslims to the American shores. As Muslims migrated here in waves, Islam became an integral part of the American religious landscape and gradually, Muslims became a visible part of the fabric of American society. As newer immigrants held nostalgic views regarding their homeland, the ‘back-home’ phenomenon became intertwined with the ‘myth of return’. As a matter of fact, many Muslim immigrants refused to accept America as their permanent home and hoped to return to their native lands after significant economic gains. While in America, they continued to speak their native languages, refused to integrate in the mainstream American society, and often restricted their interaction to members of their own ethnic or faith groups, establishing, in the process, ethnic islands within America. Many immigrants also imposed a conservative and extraneous expression of Islam and exhibited a general disdain of American culture and norms.

Immigrant Muslims tend to experience Islam through a cultural prism that is highly resistant to change. In their centers, Islam is mediated in a culturally conditioned form. They decide on how the mosques are to be run, what is an acceptable dress code, language, and political behavior. In addition, they have imposed their authority on indigenous Muslims especially as many African Americans had no authoritative spokesman to speak about Islam. Thus, the increase in immigrant Muslims meant that all that was

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alien to immigrants was seen as alien to Islam itself.\(^3\) Before the 1970s, Islam in America was defined and understood through the prism of indigenous Muslims, primarily the Nation of Islam. Increased migration of Muslims meant that the African American community largely lost its interpretive voice.

Even after their arrival in America, immigrant Muslims were more concerned with addressing foreign rather than domestic issues. The “back-home” mentality meant that American issues like those of affirmative action, racism, joblessness, education, housing, and urban violence were replaced by foreign issues like Palestine, Kashmir, and lately Iraq. This emphasis was compounded by the importation of political ideas through foreign movements whose vision did not enhance Muslim participation in the American political culture. Their vision was focused on topics like the establishment of an Islamic state, implementation of the shari'a, removal of Jahiliyya, abstinence from an infidel culture, etc. Muslim aversion to involvement in American social and political discourse was accentuated by the fact that many Muslims saw America as dar al-kufr, the abode of infidels. Hence, any participation in the American domestic agenda was construed as being involved in an infidel government, one that contravened Islamic jurisprudence. Ironically, Islam became the cause rather than solution to the lack of Muslim political activism.\(^4\) Such a position undermined Muslim ability to assert any influence in the American political culture. Voting, lobbying, and holding political office were all frowned upon, if not proscribed.

The Indigenization of American Islam

In recent times, the American global war on terror and the invasion of Iraq have further revived the stereotypes and suspicions against Muslims, especially those of Middle Eastern origins. Furthermore, the vitriolic attacks on Islam and the Qur'an by some Christian fundamentalists have clearly exacerbated the current conflict in America. They have projected Islam as inherently violent and incompatible with Western values and norms. Such attacks tend to destroy rather than build bridges and engender hatred.

Due to the activities of terrorists, American Muslims have come to the realization that both their Islamic identity and American citizenship are at stake. The Muslim community has acknowledged that the silent majority syndrome has to end simply because Muslim acquiesce has encouraged an extremist expression of Islam. Thus, many Muslims have felt the need to integrate themselves in the mainstream American society so as to make their voices heard. This indigenization of American Islam represents a silent revolution that many Muslims have been engaged in.\(^5\)

Indigenization of American Islam is the process of identifying, understanding, and relating to the culture, heritage, and the history of America. Indigenization also means carving out a space for oneself in American society, being more appreciative of American values while remaining authentic to Islam. An essential element of the indigenization of American Islam is the Muslims’ identification with American culture and

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3 Ibid., 70.
4 Ibid., 73.
values, and their distancing themselves from the back-home mentality. Indigenization also means viewing American secular culture as a challenge to be comprehended and tolerated rather than a threat to be confronted, for the latter approach can breed a culture of negative isolation and fear of the other.

Indigenization of American Islam does not mean the Arabization or Indianization of Islam; rather, it means interpreting its message so that it is suitable to the American Muslim without sacrificing its doctrinal integrity. Thus, it is correct to state that indigenization is an internal process, one that cannot be imposed from abroad. It has to be formulated, articulated, and expressed by those Muslims who are familiar with the American milieu and culture.

Indigenization has also meant that American Muslims have increasingly expressed themselves through a properly articulated intellectual discourse, so that they can be both physically and intellectually visible. Thus, American Muslims have sought to go beyond the history of hostility, caricature, and power struggles that have characterized relations between Christians and Muslims in the past. It is correct to state that the Muslims’ struggle in America has been not only to co-exist with the other, but also to make themselves comprehensible in the American milieu, to de-mythify and de-code Islam and to challenge the negative characterization of Islam.

The process of the indigenization of American Islam is intertwined with the construction of a distinctly American Islamic civic identity. This process has expressed itself in a myriad of forms. Instead of denouncing American society and values, Friday sermons delivered in many mosques have focused on devotional, ethical, and historical topics. The community has also embarked on coalition building with human rights, religious rights, and civil rights groups. Muslim groups have been involved in various social programs like food drives and have sought to help homeless Americans.

Indigenization has also meant that rather than focusing on American foreign policy, Muslims now tend to concentrate more on reconstituting their identity as American Muslims. In all probability, this is because as the second generation of Muslims in America identify with and assimilate in American culture, they develop a sense of patriotism leading to a greater politicization of the community and a sense of American national consciousness. Furthermore, Muslims have realized that unless they become more vocal and American, they could become foreigners in their adopted homeland.

**Muslim Institutions in America**

Since the early immigrants did not intend to stay in America, they did not invest in any religious or socio-political leadership that could offer an intellectual or political vision to the community. Thus, the early Muslim institutions did not engage in political activity. Rather, most of the early Muslim organizations were social, ethnic, or religious in nature. Societies like the Syrian and Lebanese American Federation of the Eastern States and the National Association of Syrian and Lebanese-American Organizations (formed in 1932) and the National Association of Federations were quite indifferent to US foreign or domestic policies. In 1952, under the leadership of Abdullah Ingram,

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immigrants from the Middle East formed the Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States (FIA). This was meant to be an umbrella body that would unite twenty immigrant associations and provide for the social, cultural, and religious needs of the community. However, it did not raise Arab political consciousness. Until the 1960s, there is little evidence to indicate that the majority of Muslims had any awareness of events overseas or the geography of the Middle East.\(^7\)

However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict forced American Muslims to reconsider their apolitical stance. American hostility towards Arabs during the 1967 war and the ignorance of the American public regarding the Middle East conflict led to the formation of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, (AAUG) in 1967. The AAUG was established by graduate students, professionals, university professors, lawyers, doctors, and veterans of the Organization of Arab Students (OAS).\(^8\) Most of the organizations were formed by American-Arabs who sought to establish a platform where the Arab-Muslim voice could be expressed. They also tried to have an input into the shaping of American foreign policy.\(^9\)

In the 1970s, other organizations were founded with the intention of informing and educating the American public about the Arab world. In 1971, Lebanese-Americans organized the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA). The leadership sought to educate Arab Americans about the political process as well as arrange for them to meet with members of Congress to discuss issues that concerned the community. The American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee (ADC) was founded by former Senator James Aburezk and James Zoghby, both of Christian Lebanese origin. The Arab American Institute (AAI) was established in 1984 when James Zoghby split from the ADC. It encourages Arab Americans to participate in the American political system, working to get Arab-Americans to vote and to run for office.\(^10\)

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed increased animosity towards Arabs and Muslims in the United States. In all probability, domestic groups like the conservative wing of the Republican Party, Christian fundamentalist groups, and the pro-Israel lobby were responsible for encouraging the anti-Islamic rhetoric. American hostility toward Islam and Muslims was also precipitated by various events overseas. These included: the six day war in 1967, the Yom Kippur war and oil embargo of 1973, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the hostage crisis in Iran and Lebanon, PLO attacks against Israeli targets, the Rushdie affair of 1989, and the Gulf Wars. Such events precipitated measures that led to the targeting and racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims, along with a growing atmosphere of hostility towards Islam. As a matter of fact, a scheme known as Operation Boulder placed Arab-Americans under FBI surveillance in the early 1970s.\(^11\)

Increased government surveillance and discriminatory policies forced Muslims to

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\(^8\) Haddad, Not Quite American? p. 17.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 20.

\(^10\) Ibid., pp. 49-50.

\(^11\) Ibid., p. 22.

\(^12\) Haddad Yvonne Yazbeck, “American Foreign Policy in the Middle East,” p. 220.
abandon their traditional ambivalent stance toward political intervention. They quickly realized that it was only by participation in the American constitutional order that Muslims could enjoy protection against government agencies that disregard the constitution and violate civil liberties. Political activism could also persuade policymakers to counteract American resentment against Muslims. In addition, the Muslim community perceived the need to bring its members closer, especially as many of them had settled in remote parts of America. These factors led to the establishment of various Islamic institutions.

As Muslims continued to experience intimidation, discrimination, misunderstanding, and even hatred, they saw the need to educate Americans about Islam, correct some of the anti-Islamic stereotypical images portrayed in the media, and protect the interests of the Muslim community. Hence, more Muslims organizations were established in the 1980s and 1990s. Their aim was not confined to educate Americans about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rather, these institutions encouraged Muslims to address political and civil right issues that impacted the rights of the growing community.

In 1988 the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) was established by the multi-ethnic Islamic center of South California in Los Angeles. This political lobby has made important contributions in the last few years. It has established close ties with Hillary Clinton and with officials at the Department of State. Through its efforts, the First Lady hosted two events to celebrate the end of the month of fasting of Ramadan (eid al-fitr) events.

In 1989, the American Muslim Alliance (AMA) was established in Northern California by a political scientist of Pakistani origin. The goal of the American Muslim Alliance (AMA) was to empower Muslims to become politically active by voting and running for office. On the East Coast, the American Muslim Council (AMC) was established in 1990 in Washington, D.C. The AMC has established relations with various branches of the government. It has also sought to have Muslim religious leaders invited to offer an opening prayer before congressional deliberations.

At the national level, the Council for American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which was established in June 1994, has challenged the misrepresentation and defamation of Islam and Muslims in the workplace. Since 1996, CAIR has issued an annual report documenting incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination and violence. CAIR’s 1999 report noted that despite the persistence of discrimination, an increasing number of employees have eased their objection to Muslim women’s hijab.13

Since the events of 9/11, Muslims have had to endure the USA PATRIOT (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act of October 24, 2001. The act sanctions the monitoring of individuals, organizations, and institutions without notification. Its provisions have been protested by American Civil Liberties Union. Several Arab and Muslim organizations have recently sued the American government insisting that the act is unconstitutional. Recent disclosure of secret wire-tapping of suspected terrorists and the federal government’s admission that, in search of a terrorist nuclear bomb, it has run a far-reaching, top secret program to monitor

radiation levels at over a hundred Muslim homes, businesses, and mosques in the capital region and in other areas, have all augmented Muslim concern regarding their civil rights. In numerous cases, the monitoring required investigators to go on to the property under surveillance, although no search warrants or court orders were ever obtained. In December 2005, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), CAIR filed a request to access all government records relating to this program. Due to its efforts to safeguard the interests of the Muslim community, CAIR has emerged, in the eyes of many Muslims, as the Muslim equivalent of the Jewish Defense League.

These Muslim public affairs groups have been able to make the stereotyping of Muslims a matter of public debate and have documented many incidents of harassment, discrimination, and defamation against Muslims. They have also monitored and publicized discriminatory measures by government agencies and civic groups and have highlighted the distortion of Islam in the media.

By convening seminars, publishing articles in magazines and Islamic newsletters, delivering lectures at various conventions and workshops, organizations such as ICNA, ISNA, AMC, CAIR, MSA, and MYNA (Muslim Youth of North America) have altered the way Muslims think about the United States and about themselves. As the back-home mentality gradually faded in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, these organizations shifted Muslim political and civil discourse in America to how Muslims could interact with Americans and yet maintain their own distinctive identity. Muslims also grappled with issues like the scope and nature of Muslim participation in the American public square. The vision was now on repositioning Islam as an element of American national interest and not as a threat to it.

The four leading American Muslim political organizations (AMA, AMC, MPAC, and CAIR) engage in political lobbying and encourage Muslims to run for electoral office. In 1999, these four institutions agreed to coordinate their activities under the umbrella of the American Muslim Political Coordinating Council (AMPCC). Through their various activities, these groups have provided a vision for Muslim engagement with America’s political institutions. In the process, they have had to confront not only a hostile American media and an unsympathetic US government, but also traditional Muslim scholars who decried any involvement in the American public sphere.

### Resistance to Muslim Political Discourse in America

Attempts at making American Muslims a viable and active political force have met with firm resistance from within the Muslim community. As mentioned earlier, certain segments within the community have resisted integration or political discourse with American society, claiming that America is an infidel state that is based on secular values and laws. Those advocating such a perspective include foreign based movements such as the Tablighi Jamat, a group of propagators that started in India and is now a transnational movement. Tablighis try to permeate mainstream Muslim life, using mosques as bases for their activities. Their primary objective is to preach to Muslims, urging them to return to the *sunna* (practices) of the Prophet and early companions.

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15 On the mass movements in Sunni mosques in America see Metcalf Barbara, “New Medinas: The Tablighi Jama'at in America
In their view, only God has the prerogative of framing the law. Hence, obedience to or participation in the policies of a secular state is deemed to be haram (religiously proscribed).  

The Salafis have also tried to sway Muslims to their way of thinking. They emerged from Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East. They see the Western world as moral corruptive, which must be shunned. Their emphasis is on maintaining proper belief and a return to the Islam of the pious ancestors (salaf), i.e., the early Muslim community. The Hizb al-Tahrir, a foreign group that attempts to resurrect the caliphate, claims that registering to vote is tantamount to registering to commit a religiously forbidden act. This is because participating in the American political process is tantamount to implementing man-made laws, which, in their understanding, is prohibited in the Qur’an. During the 2000 elections, their motto was, register to vote, register to commit haram. Thus, many Muslims have eschewed any participation in the American political system as they see America to be a secular state. Any involvement in it would violate the Islamic belief in the interfacing of church and state.

The distinctive views of the various groups have been propagated in the Muslim media, Friday sermons, workshops, and over the internet. In the process, the question of political participation in America has become a battle of rhetorical devices, with Muslims employing Qur’anic hermeneutics and traditions from the Prophet to vindicate their respective points. America has become a battleground for Muslim minds and voices as traditional differences between those who call for political engagement and isolation have resurfaced, engendering further fragmentation of the Muslim community.

**Muslim Engagement in American Politics**

Upto the late 1970s, most of the immigrant Muslims did not organize or mobilize themselves as a political force within the American universe of political lobbies. However, this attitude changed significantly in the second generation of Muslims because of their greater assimilation into American culture and their adoption of an American identity. In addition, the denigration of Islam and hostility toward Muslims in America demanded a more positive Muslim response.

The process of indigenization that I described above meant that there was a definitive shift in Muslim political discourse. With the establishment of Muslim civic and political institutions, Muslims became increasingly aware of the US government’s domestic as opposed to foreign policies, especially those which impacted their daily lives. Muslims also concluded that political power can be only be enhanced by the politics of engagement between American Muslims and the political system. It was to the advantage of Muslims to seek ways of influencing governance, especially with regards to

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16 See Omar Khalidi, “Living as a Muslim in a Pluralistic Society and State: Theory and Experience,” in Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square, ed. Z. Bukhari et. al., pp. 67-68.
17 Bagby Ihsan, “The Mosque and the American Public Square,” in Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square, ed. Z. Bukhari et. al., p. 329.
policy formation. They realized the need to monitor and influence American foreign and domestic policies, and that self-denial of voting power would make Muslims more vulnerable.\(^{18}\)

Muslims also realized that the politics of numbers can benefit the community in a positive manner and that the source of power in America lies in the mobilization and institutionalization of statistical advantage i.e., by the channeling of votes, political lobbying, and influencing the views of Senators and Congressmen. As a matter of fact, Muslims have made significant progress in attaining symbolic recognition, perhaps more so than any other group, in the past few years. Since the middle 1980s, several Political Action Committees (PACs) have been established. The first was the Houston based All American Muslim Political Action Committee (AAMPAC) in 1985. Other PACs were later formed in California and Michigan.\(^{19}\) Even ISNA established an umbrella PAC body called ISNA-PAC.\(^{20}\)

By the mid-1980s, ISNA felt the need to coordinate local political activities and make Muslims a political force. In 1986, a report issued by its planning committee stated:

In order to exert influence on the political decision-making \(\text{sic}\) and legislation in North America, ISNA should launch a campaign to educate Muslim citizens about their voting rights and mobilize them to vote on issues affecting Islam and Muslims. On a longer term basis, ISNA should develop communication with and among politically active Muslims and establish a separate organization in due course.\(^{21}\)

As the Muslim community became more visible and vocal in the 1990s, Senators, Congressmen, and even the White House paid increasing attention to the American Muslim community. Muslims were being recognized as an integral part of American society. In the fall of 1995, Vice President Albert Gore became the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit a mosque.\(^{22}\) President Clinton’s speech on religious freedom on July 12, 1995 acknowledged Muslims several times. African-American Muslim leaders Siraj Wahhaj and Warith al-Deen Muhammad delivered invocations in the House and Senate, respectively. Friday prayers are now held regularly in the U.S. Capitol building for Muslim staffers, federal employees, and other Muslims in the area. Since 1998, a crescent and star is displayed on the White House lawn alongside a menorah and Christmas tree.\(^{23}\)

President George Bush Snr. began a tradition of wishing Muslims a happy holiday on \textit{eid}, which President Clinton expanded upon by holding an \textit{eid} celebration in the White House, usually attended by Ms. Clinton. Despite negative coverage in the me-

\(^{18}\) Mazrui Ali, “Muslims Between the Jewish Example and the Black Experience: American Policy Implications,” in Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square, ed. Z. Bukhari et. al., p. 127.


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
dia, the Clintons opened the White House to Muslims. In the run up to the election in 2000, the struggle between Muslims who advocated for engagement with and those who wanted to isolate from American politics intensified. The isolationists were largely marginalized as Islamic organizations succeeded in mobilizing Muslims to vote in large numbers, making a difference in the crucial state of Florida. Increasingly, American Muslims have realized that political isolation is detrimental to their interests in America.

Muslims have become more assertive and made positive contributions in the political arena. In the 2000 Presidential elections, they sent delegates to Democratic and Republican election conventions, run in various local, state, and congressional district elections, made financial contributions to various campaigns, and voted in large numbers. In its national gathering, the American Muslim Alliance featured the theme “How to Get 2000 Muslim Americans Elected to Public Offices in 2000.” Its focus was to empower Muslims so that they could run for positions in school boards, municipal posts, mayors, and state legislators. These facts indicate a clear paradigm shift in Muslim political consciousness, from complaining about the inequities of American policies to seeking measures to redress them.

During the 2000 Presidential election, at both the Republican and Democratic national conventions, Islamic prayers were offered for the first time, broadening the symbolic boundaries of American religious culture to include Islam. Various Muslim groups endorsed George Bush for Presidency. For example, the Political Action Committee of the American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC-PAC) endorsed Bush due to his outreach to the Muslim community and his stand on the issue of secret evidence. Furthermore, during the presidential debates, Bush questioned the fairness of profiling of Arabs and Muslims. Muslims even sent delegates to the party conventions before 2000 elections, seven to the Republican, twenty six to the Democratic. Both parties featured opening invocations by Muslims.

Increased political activity can be seen from the fact that Muslims have participated in the electoral process as candidates. The website of American Muslim Alliance (AMA), whose main purpose is to promote Muslims seeking public office, lists eleven Muslim candidates running in various local, state, and congressional districts in the 2000 elections. Eric Vickers, a St. Louis Muslim lawyer and member of the board of directors of AMA, received six percent of the vote in his congressional district in the Democratic Party primary on August 8, 2000.

Other Muslim candidates won some electoral seats at the state and local levels. In 1996, Larry Shaw became a state Senator in North Carolina—the first Muslim ever to occupy such a position in any state. Several other Muslims have won city council seats, including Yusuf Abdus-Salaam in Selma, Alabama; Yusuf Abdul-Hakeem in Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Nasif Majid in Charlotte, North Carolina. According to the

25 Khan Muqtedar, “Living on Borderlines: Islam Beyond the Clash and Dialogue of Civilizations,” in Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square, ed. Z. Bukhari et. al., p. 106.
26 Smith Jane, Islam in America, p. 185.
American Muslim Alliance, two dozen Muslims were elected to party conventions at precinct, county, state, and national levels in 1996.\footnote{Ibid.}

Muslims attained prominent positions in other spheres too. In 1991, Charles Bilal, an African-American Muslim, was elected mayor of Kountze, Texas, becoming the first Muslim mayor of an American city. Another Muslim, Adam Shakoor, served as deputy mayor of Detroit, which has a large Muslim community, in the early 1990s.\footnote{Hasan Asma Gull, American Muslims, p. 159.}

Muslims have also made financial contributions to various political campaigns. Many supported the political campaigns of candidates directly, others channeled their contributions through political actions committees (PACs). The Democrats received $357,506 and the Republicans $249,672 in the 1998 and 2000 elections.\footnote{For details of other Muslim financial contributions see Nimer Mohammed, “Muslims in the American Body Politic,” pp. 160-61.}

Muslims are also voting in increasing numbers. Exit polls conducted by the Minaret magazine and MPAC of 400 randomly selected Muslims indicated that sixty-five per cent registered to vote; another survey by the Minaret in 1996 shows seventy-six per cent of the Muslims surveyed voted in the elections.\footnote{Hasan Asma Gull, American Muslims, p. 157.}

The project MAPS that was initiated under the auspices of Georgetown University also conducted a survey in 2000. It indicated that seventy-nine per cent of the Muslims registered to vote; forty per cent voted for Democrats, twenty-three per cent Republicans and twenty-eight per cent independents. According to Karen Leonard, African Americans are more likely to vote for Democrats, Pakistanis are more inclined towards the Republicans and Arabs are evenly divided.\footnote{Leonard Karen, Muslims in the United States, p. 101.}

In January 2006, CAIR launched an \textit{eid} voter registration drive, in which it urged American Muslims to register at \textit{eid al-Adha} events. The \textit{eid} voter registration drive was part of a major non-partisan Muslim political mobilization effort to be conducted during the 2006 election cycle. The effort was to include in-person and online voter registration drives, candidate forums, production of voter guides, get-out-the-vote campaigns, conducting research on and surveys of American Muslim voters, and other grass-roots activities. CAIR also stated that it would be calling on Muslim students to volunteer in political campaigns.\footnote{See Press released issued by CAIR over the internet on January 5, 2006.}

Even allowing for some exaggerations, the figures quoted above indicate enhanced Muslim political awareness and participation. They also reflect how Muslim institutions like CAIR, AMC, and MPAC have mobilized the community to exert political pressure on lawmakers and legislators in America. The various figures quoted above also testify to the growing Muslims awareness that, to be a political force, they must reposition their focus from mosque construction and community projects to political mobilization and interest articulation.
Shi’i Political Discourse

Unlike the Sunni community, the American Shi’i community has not been politically active. Lack of Shi’i involvement in the American political process can be attributed to the relatively young age of the centers. Most Shi’i centers in America have been established since 1985. Thus, Shi’is have used their limited financial resources to build and consolidate their centers rather than to engage in political activity or make financial contributions to campaigns.\(^{35}\) Shi’i political inactivity is also explained by the fact that the Shi’is have yet to form nationwide institutions like CAIR, AMC or AMA. Hence, there is no institution that can unite the Shi’i community or address issues that are of political concern. It is only in the past three years that the United Muslim Association of America (UMAA) has been established. However, this nascent organization has yet to formulate any definitive direction for the Shi’i community, nor has it been able to bridge the chasm that has divided different ethnic entities within the community.

In a few isolated cases, some Shi’is have nominated themselves to run for Congress by seeking votes from local Shi’i and Sunni communities. However, most of these candidates run independently and are not directly supported by any Shi’i institution. In some areas of America, Shi’i political activity has taken the form of establishing eclectic bodies that transcend sectarian boundaries, cooperating with Sunnis to create a unified and effective challenge for local posts. Shi’i institutions like al-Khu’i Foundation in New York have persuaded their members that their votes and involvement in the political process can make a difference to their lives in America. Thus, some Shi’is cooperate with Sunnis to provide Muslim candidates for school boards, municipal posts, working for the election of Muslim mayors and state legislators. The intent is to get Shi’is to vote for fellow Muslim candidates, planning for an eventual Muslim presence in Congress or the Senate.\(^{36}\)

Lack of Shi’i political involvement is further discerned from the fact that during the elections in 2000, there was little discussion within the Shi’i centers on any involvement in the Muslim election campaign. Another striking point is that the Shi’is are not represented even within the Muslim organizations that participate in American civic society. Thus, there are no Shi’i representatives in the American Muslim Council, the Council of American Islamic Relations, or in the Islamic Society of North America. For Muslims to collectively make a significant impact in the American political process, they will have to set aside their ethnic, sectarian and nationalistic differences.

Conclusion

Relaxation of immigration laws in 1964 meant that new waves of Muslims from overseas were dominated by students and professionals who established new institutions in America. Changes in the Muslim population occurred due to the immigration of a large number of highly educated Muslims from various parts of the Muslim world, specifically from the Middle East and South East Asia. These migrants built new institu-


\(^{36}\) Ibid.
tions that have effectively shaped Muslim political consciousness. Thus, it is correct to state that in recent decades, Muslims have sought to indigenize Islam, and to foster a distinctly American Muslim identity.

The struggle among American Muslims for the definition of the self, to give meaning to their new identity as American Muslims, and to the new socio-political context of their existence is manifesting itself in tensions between the intellectual and conservative, indigenous and immigrant, young and old and between Sunni and Shi’i Muslims. Conflicts have arisen due to an immigrant community having to come to terms with an alien culture. The American Muslim Community is split between those who are willing to engage the larger American society and those unwilling to do so. In the last three decades, through the efforts of Muslim activists and various organizations, Muslim focus has shifted from battling the West to building bridges with it. In the battle for American Islam, Muslims have gradually marginalized their co-religionists who advocated for resistance to and disengagement from American public sphere. Paradoxically, the very institutions that are supposed to unite Muslims (the mosque and institutions) have become a catalyst for the perpetuation of a distinctive ethnic ethos.
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ИНДИГЕНИЗАЦИЈА И ПОЛИТИЗАЦИЈА АМЕРИЧКОГ ИСЛАМА

Резиме

Повећано присуство и видљивост муслимана у Америци у прошлом веку значи да се ислам више не може одређивати као блискоисточни или јужноазијски феномен. С обзиром на чињеницу да је најбрже растућа религија у Америци, ислам је сада и амерички феномен. Лице америчког ислама драматично се променило нарочито после 11. септембра 2001. године. Овај чланак испитује утицај који су недавни догађаји имали на америчку исламску заједницу и фокусира се на пораст политичког ангажовања чланова исте. Испитује политичко искуство америчких муслимана и говори о томе како се припадници заједнице окупљају у покушавају да промене америчку политичку сцену.

Кључне речи: индигенизација, политизација, CAIR, ISNA.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ELITE IN CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIAN SOCIETY

Abstract

In contrast to the political parties which are a relatively new social phenomenon, the religiosity is a universal social one which has been incorporated in almost every significant civilization and was established on the grounds of a certain religious component. Regarding the Christianity, this act has been directly bounded to the recognition of the Christianity as an official religion of the Roman Empire which led to an impermissible relationship between the church and the state. The Church began to neglect its holy duties more frequently by turning to secular ones. It was no longer a Church that served the people but, rather, it became a Church aspiring towards power and dominion.

The focus of this paper will be the influence of the political elite on the religious situation in the Macedonian post-communist society. We will do our best to determine both the genesis and the reasons that led to such a firm link between the political parties of the Macedonian provenience and the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as well as the possible negative impact of this “matrimony” between the holy and the secular over the Macedonian multi-cultural, multi-ethnical and multi-confessional society especially in the post-conflict period.

Key Words: political elite, religiosity, religious elite, religious tolerance.

The period of Communism, that was essentially a totalitarian political system, based on authority of the party and lining itself on rough collectivism, had strong repercussion on the religious situation in the Macedonian society. The Communism ideology was created in accordance to a reliable antireligious attitude and was directed towards certain radically, new pattern that in its essence had to precede a global identification of all society members. On the other hand, the newly formed social community had to destroy the classical religion integrity that in the previous period was subject of social identification of the society members and somehow it had to erase all differences among the particular social groups.

In the dogmatic Marxist’s ideology the religion was interpreted as a delusion and illusion that, step by step, will disappear parallel to the penetration of the scientific knowledge into people’s conscience. With the establishment of the new political system, after the Second World War, the process of secularization started i.e. politics’
throwing away from the religion (church). This process was accompanied by certain sanctions that were used by the political elite against anyone that took part in any form of religious practice, especially in the first twenty years after the establishment of the new political regime. As a result of that, declination of certain elements of the religious practice, such as Sunday and holiday liturgies, fast and the pray was pretty evident. The process of secularization of the Macedonian society decreased the number of convinced believers, and the number of traditional believers to a degree, especially in the frames of the Orthodox confession.  

But, when Macedonia reached its independency and when the Communism ideology crashed, crises with the individuals’ identity in the Macedonian society occurred. The members of different ethnic groups in Republic of Macedonia, simply, felt a necessity for identity that would make them different from the others. Religion and nation are the main elements in the creation of the culture and personality. The religion as identity “provider” was observed from different points of view, depending on the tradition and developing context. But, there is no doubt that in the course of this long period, religious identity was either key element for ethnic identity determination or became a primary identity through suppressing the rest of the elements.  

The transition period that had caused deep structural changes of the Macedonian society revitalization the religion. In that period, the individuals satisfied their necessity of belonging to certain group and identifying themselves with it, in the frames of the church and religion. It resulted with weakening of the process of secularization in the Republic of Macedonia and revitalization of the religion.  

In this paper I would present part of the results of the research implemented on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Based on the rich empirical material gained from the survey (comprising 552 accidentally chosen examinees, but not neglecting their age, sex and educational structure) and interview (the sample covered 30 professionals, Doctors of Sciences in the area of Sociology, Philosophy and representatives of religious elite) we can present the general conclusions related to the key elements that compose the complex religion phenomena.  

Even, most of the examinees stated themselves to be believers (97, 7%); only for certain part of them we can say that they have religious point of view on the world. This primarily refers to the believers who do not accept part of the basic Christian dogma as they are presented in the myth about the world and human being creation, the initial text of the Holy Scriptures, as well as not accepting the idea of life after death, which is the essence of the complete Christian thought. Examinees share high dosage of suspicion towards the attitude that God created the human being (21, 8). The fact that with the increase of the level of education the doubt toward this attitude also increases is very interesting, The examinees who are not educated support this attitude mostly (100%), 83% of those who didn’t complete primary education consider that God created the human being, from those with completed primary education 74,1% share the same attitude. Out of the examinees with completed secondary school 50% believe that God created the human being, while 34% of the examinees who completed higher education support this attitude.

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Consequently, it is evident that part of the examinees have critical attitude towards the Christian dogma. The believer interprets and accepts the religious message by himself and observes and understands it through the prism of his own point of view that is composed of numerous factors of a social nature. It’s a fact that the meaning of God’s word is changed by the social conditions in which it is read or listened. It changes depending on listener’s or reader’s mood but also depending on the theoretical frame of the listener’s or reader’s knowledge. Great deal of the polled individuals are mostly suspicious about the idea of life after death (32.2% of them consider that, in fact, death is the end of the life) and in their conscience there is not place for understanding that death presents beginning of new, eternal life.

Very interesting is the opinion of the believers who, on one hand believe that God exists (97% of the total number of polled individuals), while on the other hand great number of them consider that there isn’t life after death.

Survey results show that in the modern circumstances the composition of religious beliefs is destroyed. The Orthodox Christian population religiosity in the Republic of Macedonia involves more rationalism and suspicion, what’s pretty different from the Islamic confession followers who are more linked to their own religion requirements. Modern believers don’t believe in the complete dogmatic content, but they accept or don’t accept certain beliefs. However, the modern circumstances compared to the religious beliefs do not characterize only the suspicious or lack of belief in certain dogma, but also suspicious and lack of belief in number of basic dogma such as belief that God created the human being, that life after death exists, belief in Paradise and Hell, award and punishment in the transcendental world.

This situation was greatly influenced by the indifferent attitude of the Orthodox Church regarding theological education of its congregation in the period of Socialism.

Differently from the other confessions, which in their sacral objects organized religious instruction: (the Catholic church, for children in the age of 7 and the Islamic faith community also organized religious instruction for children who are more then 7), the Orthodox religion showed high level of loyalty towards antireligious power.

But, here we have to emphasize that religion depends a lot, also, on the process of socialization (especially in the frames of the family), because without it religious beliefs can not be acquired. The religiosity is not aboriginal, but it is created and developed in the environment in which the individual lives, but the main influence is done by the family. If the person lives in a religious family, s/he will be educated in that spirit and it is normal that s/he will have open attitude towards accepting Christian dogmas. We have completely different situation in the atheistic families. Educated in this direction the individual will become atheist, or influenced by the environment (if we talk about rural environment with high percentage of religiosity of the population) where s/he lives, most probably s/he will accept only certain part of the Christian dogma. Particularly negative effect on the Christian religion in Republic of Macedonia had the fact that in the period of communism, in the frames of the family, as well as in the frames of the system of education, teaching about the faith was marginalized.

With the religion revitalization, after Macedonia gained independency, having in mind the facts that were already explained, it is very difficult to expect the believers to accept all dogmas. It appeared mostly because of the fact that limited number of
people succeeded to acquire certain fundamental information about the religious beliefs and it left a large space, beliefs and dogmas to be explained in different manners. Moreover, to this point are attached a number of paganisms and superstition (belief in spells and fortune-tellers, belief in faith, belief that God can punish the acts of this world that are not in accordance to the Christian ethic principles, etc.) for which the Macedonian Orthodox Church, hasn’t found a way to destroy them. Survey results referring to religious practice show that compared to the small discrepancies related to Christian dogma, acceptance or non-acceptance, in religious practice (fast and confession) believers point out even lower level of consistence.

Survey results show that only 10% of the examinees fast on every date that is marked on the religious calendar, while most of them, 51,3% fast only during the week before Christmas, Easter. On the other hand, fast is believer’s preparation to take the sacrament Eucharist. In fact, through the Eucharist with bread and wine that symbolize Jesus’ body and blood, believers unite themselves with the Savior. But, according to the Orthodox Church, besides the fast, the believer has to confess in order to take the Eucharist. The results of the analysis show that we have a high percentage of individuals who hasn’t confessed at all (59,8%) while the number of examinees who understand the lecture of the Christian church, correctly and confess themselves regularly is the lowest (5,7%). The church tries to pay attention that confession which is regret for the sins is an important instrument for humans’ soul saving. But, the believers who don’t know enough about the Christian dogma explain that they do not need confession because they have never made a mistake. By doing it they make one more sin because it seems like identifying with God who is a synonym of moral perfection.

An important part of the religious practice is, certainly the participation in the Sunday and holiday liturgies. A bigger percentage of the examinees go to church only on Easter and Christmas (44,1%), while least of them visit the liturgies (15,3%). But compared to 1995 when only 7,44% of the examinees visited liturgies regularly; we have to conclude that nowadays church visits are more frequent. The fact that all of the examinees, even those who declared themselves as atheists, visit sacral objects is pretty interesting. Compared to the results of the researching done in 1970, when 40,7% of the polled Christian population answered that they never to church, this is big step forward.

According to it, we can make a general conclusion that even after Communism fall believers are actually related to the faith - their relation is still weak and religious behavior is not continuous. In fact, in most of the cases we talk about believers who nominally identify them with the church, but still they haven’t acquired the faith in the true sense of the word. This type of believers practice the rituals from time to time (prayers, going to church, light candles), due to practical reasons (if something bad happens or if somebody is ill, only in these moments they remind themselves of God and ask him for help). Theologists share the opinion that believers who confess regularly show the real picture of the part of the Christian population that entered in the sense of their faith and also practice all rituals and ceremonies only due to “purely” religious reasons.

But, if a number of believers who practice religious rituals decreases, it doesn’t mean that they stop believing. Religious rituals realization is not an evidence for belief in faith, ‘cause somebody can practice religious rituals and not to believe. Somebody
Holly killed the society, but not the individual’s private significance. If there are fewer believers in the church, then, there are more in their own homes: if they don’t pray or confess themselves in public, then, they do it privately. It might be that also, half-century antireligious orientation of the political elite that relies on their communist ideology had negative influence on the ritual i.e. its position. This ideology classified the religion as a conscience that is remainder of the old, already overcome forms of cultural orientation and it put the believer in the position, the rest of the population to qualify him/her as lagging person, not in fit with the new society ratio and as a result of that in a position to prefer limiting of its own ritual on practices that are exclusively in the sphere of the family, even personal intimate.

The issue regarding the type of believers in Republic of Macedonia, their beliefs, their involvement in the religious practice expressed through rituals, as well as the level of their knowledge about the Bible and eschatology, was a topic of discussion with the Macedonian experts in these fields. In this phase of my research I had applied an interview. Here, I would present part of their opinions and thoughts, regarding this issue. All of the examinees (experts in Sociology, Philosophy, Theology) agree that in Macedonia, most of all, there is presence of traditional believers who posses very low level of competence about Bible’s dogmatic attitudes and also about the rest of the religious texts. Here we talk about believers who nominally belong to the church, while in the religious practice they are involved only in the part that is directly related to the Macedonian values, ceremonies and tradition. Sociologists try to find the root of these circumstances in the weak organization of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and its focusing towards the saint, at the same time neglecting its own primary role.

The representatives of religious elites consider that the actual problem can’t be observed from one point of view, because it is complex, and multidimensional. Lack of serious gospel in our space, in the period of St. Clement of Ohrid is one of the problems that theologists mention. In the period of Turkish occupation, due to number of repressions by the Turks, the church hardly survived. Also, the period of Communism left deep marks on individuals’ spiritual life and therefore most of the theolog are convinced that, even nowadays, our intellectuals is greatly influenced by that political ideology. According to the religious elite, after Macedonia gained independency on its territory appeared fashionable religion. The period of this euphoria finished and persons who visit the church today, approach themselves the spiritual life much more seriously, these comments are based on individuals’ necessity and requirements for introducing liturgy culture. In their opinion the number of believers who visit churches due to religious reasons increases, what’s different from the previous period when going to church was due to personal reasons?

Also, survey results show that most of the polled individuals are traditional believers. Here we have to point out that the term convinced believer presents a high level of religious that means unconditional acceptance of all of the Christian dogma, but also a high rate of participation in the religious rituals and ceremonies. According to our research 20, 2% of the examinees can be qualified as convinced believers. Compared to the previous period (researches carried out in 1970) when examinees with

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higher education stated themselves to be atheists, today the picture is quite different. High 14, 4 individuals with higher education do accept all Christian dogma and also high number of them participate in the religious practice. Therefore, it is correct to call them convinced believers.

Anyway, religion lies on different mental matrix and not on the rational world. So, each attack on the religion, containing rational arguments is pretty incomprehensible for the convinced believers and therefore, as a rule it is unsuccessful. The thing that makes the convinced believer religious is the faith in the holly and the belief in all dogma summoned by the Christian religion. Education and acquired knowledge remain to be the shadow of the religion. It is indisputable that, today the level of education has its influence on Christian dogma acceptance, but that influence is not as strong as it was in the past. Maybe this phenomenon arises because of the fact that rapid medicine development can make us healthier, but not immortal. Perfectly implemented economy can make us reach, but always deprived of eternal life values. The religion is one and only that offers this possibility (eternal life) through life after death. Due to it, no matter how irrational it sounds, for the believers this option is, psychologically, more acceptable.

Some authors like the Greek sociologist Georgie Mandzaridis, think that as much as the security in the Earth Kingdom decreases, which to the Christians offered certain security in the World, the seeking for transcendental kingdom increased. Ottoman conqueror of Istanbul (1453) formally meant a beginning of a new period for the Orthodox Church. Political crash and slavery of the Orthodox people resulted with the development of introversion and self-gathering, but at the same time influenced the development of the patience and eschatological expectations that made the suffering nation stronger during the long period of slavery.

In the context of Mandzaridis thinking about the Orthodox Christianity we can note that the revitalization of certain beliefs of the Christian dogma are, above all, of eschatological nature turbulences that happened in the Macedonian modern society in the period of transition, helped a lot. Individual’s everyday life, faced with the sense of existence fear, sense of continuous uncertainty, lack of perspective, but also fear of death which is result of war psychoses related to political and ethnical conflicts in the area of ex-Yugoslav republics, as well as the conflict in Macedonia in 2001. All of that contributed the individuals to search for their saving in the frames of religion and eschatology. The unstable political and social situation increased the belief in life after death and it gives us the hope for a more attractive life in the transcendental world. It can be interpreted as a protection mechanism of the individuals or as a cross-load against all frustrations that Macedonian population meets in the post communism society.

The Macedonian society was faced with a string of other difficulties. The number of deviant occurrences increased rapidly, especially among the youth (alcoholisms, drug addiction, prostitution, crime, murders, suicides etc). Simultaneous, crises in the basic family relations and crises in the educational system, as two leading socialization insti-
tutions, resulted with crash of the moral rules and values, especially among the young population. It was followed by the sense of lack of perspectives that resulted with exportation of “young brains” in west European countries and abroad. As a result of the social and cultural cloth pre-conditioned by the social changes stated above appeared the idea that maybe religious education will help the society to come out of the crises in which it penetrated deeply.

Almost all of the religious representatives respected, publicly the following thesis: Religious education can, only help in improving moral situation in the society. Through it “moral panic” that became one of the basic characteristics of citizens’ conscience will be ceased. Religious education has to fill in the moral vacuum that appeared in the period of transition, by canceling the values, characteristic of the socialistic moral and slow establishment of the moral values. These ideas were supported by the governing political elite especially by VMRO-DPMNE (wich has a demo-Christian orientation and it resulted with reaching “political agreement” between the church and the state for the interdiction of religious education.

According to a number of authors the link between religion and moral make the individual control his behavior and try to behave in accordance to the basic religious rules that religion presents as an expression of God’s will. In fact when the believer identifies himself with the “saint”, he accepts all of the rules that the saint imposes to him as personal rules and values. The transcendental of these rules and values gives strength and excuse, while the individual identifies with them maximally. In that case the transcendental becomes immanent i.e. the saint becomes internal, human. In this way social community alters the mechanisms for external control with mechanisms for internal control – conscience. The individual that accepts the religious pattern as its own sustains it with his behavior, not only due to the sanctions that may come from outside, but also due to his own conscience, imposed on him as internal factor. If he step aside the rules that his religion imposes, he will enter in collision with the holly.

On this point is the issue: if religion impacts individual’s behavior and in what degree? This is directly linked to the convince of the political elite (especially the actual government VMRO-DPMNE and DPA) that introducing theological education in the world’s schools will greatly decrease youth’s deviant behavior.

But the issue about the type of theological education that will be introduced in the frames of Earth’s education systems is still open. At the moment two opposite attitudes are present. Religious and governing political elite (VMRO-DPMNE) consider that the education has to be of purely theological character and that it should be conducted by trained theologists. In the frames of this approach, the individuals belonging to different confessions will follow lectures that are only about their own faith. The attitude of the science elite is based on the fact that it should be a subject that will teach students about the history of the religion, Anthropology of the religion, Sociology of the religion, Psychology the religion and Philosophy of the religion, but the intention of it is not to make the students convinced believers, but to make them acquire basic culture that would be incomplete without knowledge about these sciences of religion. Apart from the questions connected to the salvation of the youth from moral decadency, to which the political and religious elite, as one of the alternatives, imposed the need of introducing religious education, their co-operation continued in relation to a
The interweaving of the political and religious began much earlier than the emerging of the political parties on the historic scene. In Christianity, this act has been directly connected to the proclamation of the Christianity as an official religion of the Roman Empire which led towards a close relation between the church and the state. The Church began to neglect more and more of its holy duties in favour of the secular ones. It was no longer a Church that serves but, rather a Church that strives towards power and dominion.

This union between the secular and holy has been entered in order to preserve the social order. However, in the contemporary states in addition to the dominant religion i.e. the religion of the majority, there are also other religions of the smaller ethnical groups. Moreover, a large number of political parties have been established in the Republic of Macedonia at the beginning of the last decade of the last century. Therefore, the mutual forbearance and tolerance are of a significant importance as to enable the different religions and political streams to exist one by another by a mutual harmonizing and restraining.

This strong link between religion and politics i.e. the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian State began to intensify during the worsening of the relations between the Macedonian Orthodox church (MPC) and the Serbian orthodox church (SPC). From the moment when the Republic of Macedonia became an independent state, there was a political consensus for the first time. All of the political parties supported the position that the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church had to be defended since it was denied by the SOC. This process is still going on regarding both the governmental issues, such as the dispute for the name, and some religious issues (the denationalisation of the Church property, implementation of the religious education in the state schools).

The Macedonian Orthodox Church and the state elite work together in the sphere of reaching a high level of quantity of Christian sacral building and in the field of underlying the Christian religious symbols. After the proclamation of the independence of the State (1991) and especially after the ethnic conflict (2001) the Cross, as the most significant symbol of Christianity, was built widely on various locations in the Republic of Macedonia. Beginning with the Millennium Cross on the mountain of Vodno, today there is hardly any inhabited place where there is not a cross dominating over it. The State also invests in building of Christian sacral buildings even on those locations where it has not been planned by the urban city planning. This link between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the state authorities plays double role. Firstly, the actual political elite (VMRO-DPMNE) in this way tries to keep the authority in their hands by means of directly courting to the believers whose number increases gradually a year after year. Secondly, this link has been tightly related to the complex social political context in the Republic of Macedonia and to the disputes with the neighbouring countries, while the final goal is strengthening of the national feelings of the Macedonian population. This primarily refers to the dispute with Serbia regarding the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the dispute with Greece regarding the name.

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The aim of stirring certain draught of nationalism, by means of linking the religious and national, is to encourage the Macedonian population to direct all their forces towards defending of their national identity. The religion can help in resolving certain political issues by directing the people towards the common values, but this refers only for those societies where there does not exist any religious heterogeneity. However, this phenomenon of supporting only one religion by the official authorities, in the Macedonian multi-cultural and multi-confessional society, can intensify the ethnic and religious tensions, and the religious tolerance may be seriously endangered. All above mentioned leads towards a religious particularism and, at the same time, creates fertile grounds for intensifying of the ethno-centralism and emerging of the religious fundamentalism. Such situation may lead towards mobilisation of the social groups, which find themselves to be marginalised in the Macedonian society, to realise certain power and influence. Therefore, the state authorities have to be focused on the religious universality where all of the religious communities would be treated equally and they should also pint out the similarities between the different religious teachings.\(^8\)

In addition, while at the level of the religious teachings some common features can be found as well as a similar scale of values regarding the human life (peace among people, respect towards the family and the property) as the basis to postulate rules for coexistence of people belonging to different religions (if they follow the teaching of their religion), one can easily notice the sources of conflicts at the level of the religious organisations that follow the logics of their interests. The religious organisations have their own secular interests and striving towards power especially with regards to the other groups i.e. religions.\(^9\) By observing these interests and goals, they also estimate the position of their own group with regards to the others. In accordance with such estimations and interests in preserving the identity as well as to get the power or share in the government, sometimes even the religious teachings, and quite often even the preaching and the acts of the preachers, encourage and stir the aggression and the conflicts regarding the secular interests. Consequently, the official Church persons in the Republic of Macedonia should effort for the genuine original religion and religiosity and to prevent it to become an ideology and to get dirty with these worldly interests. By no means and above all, should it be insisted on those characteristics of the religion that are in a positive correlation with the principles of tolerance, pluralism and multi-culturism?


References

Душка Матевска

ОДНОС ИЗМЕЂУ ПОЛИТИЧКЕ И ВЕРСКЕ ЕЛИТЕ У САВРЕМЕНОМ МАКЕДОНСКОМ ДРУШТВУ

Резиме

За разлику од политичких партија које су релативно нов друштвени феномен, религиозност је универзалан друштвени феномен, укључен у готово сваку значајну цивилизацију, а који је настао на бази одређене религијске компоненте. Што се хришћанства тиче, овај поступак био је директно повезан с његовим прихватањем за званичну религију Римског царства, што је довело до недопустиве везе цркве и државе. Црква је почела да занемарује своје духовне и све чешће се окреће световним дужностима. Више то није била црква која служи народу, већ црква која је тежила моћи и доминацији. Овај рад фокусира се на утицај политичке елите на религијску ситуацију у посткомунистичком македонском друштву. Учинили смо све да утврдимо и генезу и узроке тако чврсте везе политичких партија македонске провенијенције и Македонске православне цркве, као и могући негативан утицај овог „браكا“ на духовно и световно у македонском мултикултурном, мултиетничком и мултиконфесионалном друштву, нарочито у постконфликтном периоду.

Кључне речи: политичка елита, религиозност, религијска елита, религијска толеранција.
ПРИКАЗИ, НАУЧНА КРИТИКА И ПОЛЕМИКА

REVIEWS, CRITICAL VIEWS AND POLEMICS
The publication of the book under review and its potentially important role for the future development of state-church relations in Slovakia must be understood in the pertinent historical, social, and political context. Ever since the fall of the communist totalitarian regime in 1989, the single most vexing question concerning state and church relations in Slovakia relates to identifying and successfully implementing a new model for financing churches and religious societies. The majority of scholars exploring state and church relations in Slovakia, numerous political representatives, and also a fairly large portion of the general public view the present system of financing churches and religious societies to be anachronistic and inadequate. While the reasons for such an assessment vary, as do opinions on how churches and religious societies should be economically supported in the future, there seems to be relatively little disagreement that the existing model of direct state funding of registered religious groups, which has been only slightly modified since 1949 (subsequent to the forced nationalization of church property), is no longer satisfactory.

Presently, there are eighteen registered churches and religious societies in Slovakia. Thirteen of these are, due to complex historical, political, and religious factors, economically dependent on the state budget to provide especially wages for the clergy and operational support for the denominational headquarters. Access to generous economic benefits, which are currently limited to registered churches and religious societies, is arguably the primary reason for the restrictive registration law that effectively precludes any new religious group from gaining legal status. Despite the fact that religious freedom and the social status of registered churches and religious societies were fully restored after 1989—Slovakia has served as a respectable example of an amicable and cooperative relationship between the state and church in post-communist Eastern Europe—any new religious group is required to obtain the realistically unachievable threshold of 20,000 members before it can acquire legal status. This policy has been a subject of repeated criticism, especially by individuals and organizations from outside Slovakia. It is important to note that smaller religious communities are still allowed to attain legal status and freely practice their faith; however, they can only do so by problematically registering as civic associations or foundations, with no substantial social or economic benefits.

In order to seriously address the complex and compelling question of financing re-
religious groups, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and the Institute for State-Church Relations organized a three-day international conference in October 2009 on the theme of “Financing Churches and Religious Societies in the 21st Century.” Some fifty eminent scholars, government officials, and religious leaders from more than 20 countries presented their papers at this important gathering. The first part of the conference was held in Bratislava (14-15 October) and the papers presented were compiled and edited by Michaela Moravčíková, Director of the Institute for State-Church Relations and her colleague Eleonóra Valová into the presently discussed volume.

The book opens with a foreword by Michaela Moravčíková and an address from Marek Maďarič, the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic, who states that, in light of the gradual increase of state budget expenditures for economic support of churches and religious societies and of recent surveys revealing growing public discontent with the present model of financing religious groups, “it is necessary for the state to assume initiative and to start preparation of a complex legislative regulation of the financing and state support of churches and religious societies according to the new model and consensual agreement” (p. 10). Thirty-seven dense and meticulously researched essays presented by experts from 21 countries follow, offering erudite comparative perspectives on the central theme of the conference. The vast majority of these astute essays represent a significantly expanded version of individual conference presentations. Due to space constraints, it is impossible to elaborate on each of the individual essays, but, due to the remarkable group of contributors, it is fitting to at least enumerate the authors and mention the titles of their essays, grouping them into three distinct categories according to the context they address: post-communist European countries, European countries unaffected by communist totalitarianism, and non-European countries.


As is evident from the aforementioned titles, these essays cover a lot of ground, but attentive readers should be able to easily identify the key issues, make important connections and comparisons, and draw relevant conclusions as they trail the terrain of the book. The book introduces various models of funding religious groups (e.g. offerings and donations, tax assignation, church tax, direct state subsidies) and compels the reader to evaluate them, considers the reasons why government support of churches and religious societies may be well justified, and asks whether receiving funds from the state interferes with the autonomy of religious groups or in some ways compromises their raison d’être. While perusing these essays, the reader will rapidly realize that every model of economic provision for religious groups presupposes a particular view of the relationship between the altar (God) and the throne (Caesar) and that the foundational questions of the optimal distance between the two entities needs to be addressed before one can judiciously discuss the issue of financing religious groups.

The most cogent and comprehensive analysis of financing religious groups in their
respective countries comes from Slovak and Spain experts; indeed, their contributions encompass more than one-third of the book. While Slovak readers may find the most informative and rewarding essays written by foreign experts, an English–speaking audience may view as the most valuable essays to be those by experts from the host country, especially considering the paucity of Slovak scholarly writings on the subject available in English.

It would be difficult to find any serious shortcomings of this splendid collection of essays, but there are two elements that would make the book even more enriching and useful. Regardless of which model of financing religious groups will eventually prevail in Slovakia, the most adversely affected groups will likely be minority religious groups with under 5,000 members that presently draw a sizable portion of their economic support from the state budget (the majority of registered churches and religious societies in Slovakia). Thus it is surprising that none of its representatives actively participated at the conference and, as a result, their voices are missing in this conversation. Another minor limitation of this book is the absence of any concluding remarks from the conference; it would certainly be beneficial to include them in the second edition of the book.

In conclusion, Financing Churches and Religious Societies in the 21st Century constitutes a valuable contribution to the literature dealing with the multifarious aspects of the economic dimension of state-church relations and it deserves careful attention from scholars and practitioners, especially those interested in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. The book is recommended to all research university libraries, as well as to those institutions dealing with state-church relations. The Slovak edition of the book excellently supplements several other works available in the Slovak language on the topic of financing of churches and religious societies, but is unparalleled in its scope and rich diversity of perspectives. This book is also very timely, considering that the new Slovak government has made an explicit commitment in its Government Statement of Policy of the Slovak Republic for 2010-2014 “to open an all-society dialogue on the problematic issues of funding the churches.” Thoughtfully engaging, the material contained in this book will maximize the chances of this dialogue being informed, civil, and constructive.

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CAPABILITIES AND RANGES OF SOCIAL TEACHING OF ORTHODOXY AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.¹


A Review

Whenever one thinks, speaks or writes about Christianity, chances are small that he or she might have its Eastern version in their minds. The fact that the Catholic Church has come forward to be the prototypical one for many different reasons leaves all other denominations in a strange position. Whereas the Protestant Church still has the opportunity to enter everyday thought and mainstream science, the Orthodox Church seems to have been pushed aside in almost all types of conventional writing. Capabilities and Ranges of Social Teaching of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church is a collection of papers edited by Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Miloš Jovanović which tries to change this trend and shed new light on the issues involving the social elements of the Eastern mode of Christian thought. In the process, the editors managed to compile and integrate numerous dissimilar approaches, so as to address as many emergent problems as possible.

In the comprehensive introductory article entitled Sociology of Orthodoxy: Foundations, Tasks, and Perspectives, Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Miloš Jovanović present the reader with the state of the art by summing up the previous efforts to approach the topic from various perspectives and by stressing the problems and possibilities for further investigation. The introduction serves as a good basis for the rest of the book and all the opinions that follow. Dragoljub B. Đorđević’s File of Sociology of Orthodoxy includes seven papers which recapitulate his pioneering work in the field which started almost twenty years ago and stress the importance of creating a balance between the West and the East in the studies of Christianity. What follows is the paper named Max Weber and The Orthodox Church in which Demosthenes Savramis shows that Max Weber’s ideas and methodologies could be more than useful in the future studies of Orthodoxy, as they proved to be efficient in the analysis of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. In Sociology of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition Andreas Buss investigates the position of an individual in Byzantine and Russian Orthodox traditions. The Problems of Establishing a Sociology of Orthodoxy by Vladan Stanković stresses the

¹ Prepared as a part of the project Sustainability of the Identity of Serbs and National Minorities in the Border Municipalities of Eastern and Southeastern Serbia (179013), conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and supported by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.
importance of the development of the newly founded discipline due to all the uniqueness of “Orthodox societies.” In Sociology and Eastern Orthodoxy, Peter McMylor and Maria Vorozhishcheva also recognize the obvious lack of papers involving a sociological approach to the Orthodox branch of Christianity and see the issue as a possibility for progress. This paper concludes what we can label the theoretical section of the book. In the following papers, we can encounter a number of particular approaches to the problem.

The next paper in the collection is titled Orthodox Sociology or Sociology of Orthodoxy: On the Possibilities of a Confessional Sociology. Its author, Larissa S. Astahova, explores the perspectives for studying Christianity and Orthodoxy from a Russian perspective, given the political and social framework stemming from the previous century. Sociology and Orthodoxy: A Remarkable Example from Albania by Alexios Panagopoulos summarizes the historical and social reasons for all the peculiarities related to the Orthodox Church of Albania and discusses its operational modes in the given context. The ninth paper is named Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments? In the paper, Miklós Tomka first notes the growing interests in the study of religion in Eastern and Central Europe and then contrasts the conceptualization of the East and the West and their religious traditions. Inspired by Tomka’s studies, Sergej Flere explores the ways in which Orthodoxy can be studied in the paper entitled Questioning the Need for a Special Methodology for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy. Alexander Agadjanian’s Breakthrough to Modernity, Apologia for Traditionalism: The Russian Orthodox View of Society and Culture in a Comparative Perspective explores the views of Russian Christianity on the modern world and its own place within it, and tries to integrate these views into Western thought. The paper Religious Dynamics Among the Citizens of Russia From 1989 to 2006, authored by Yulia Sinelina, tracks the changes in religiousness induced by various changes in socio-political and economic systems in the Russian Federation, followed by Thomas Bremer’s Religiosity in Contemporary Russia. Examination of a Recent Sociological Research, in which he similarly analyzes the changes triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the events which led to it.

In the next paper, Religion in Belarus, Larissa Titarenko summarizes the historical events related to the formation of religious groups and institutions in Belarus, as well as modern tendencies linked to religious practices. Mirko Blagojević’s approach in Attachment To Eastern Orthodoxy in Terms of Statistics: Sociological Measurement of Churchism is empirical in the sense that he explores statistical possibilities of measurement of churchism in everyday life. In Going to Church, James R. Payton Jr. shows that the Eastern approach to Christianity largely differs from the Western one mainly due to a higher degree of integration into the dominant religious group. In the following article, Orthodoxy and Global Pluralism, Peter L. Berger tries to describe the encounter between Orthodoxy and religious pluralism, which is frequently linked with neotraditionalism. Elizabeth Prodromou’s The Ambivalent Orthodox explores the connections between Orthodoxy and democracy (along with the processes that accompany it). The topic of Radovan Bigović’s The Orthodox Church And European Integrations is self-explanatory, as the author is trying to present some of the challenges that the Orthodox church is facing on the road to EU membership. In The Orthodoxy and Serbian Society, Vesna Trifunović investigates the position and the role of Orthodoxy in the stages
of the development of Serbian society. The article titled Charitable Work of the Serbian Orthodox Church by Maja Vranić-Mitrić and Dragomir Janković examines the history and the current needs for humanitarian activity of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

What follows is Nina Dimitrova’s analysis of the social and religious circumstances in Russia in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Social-Orthodox Utopianism of the Russian Silver Age. After this, Žikica Simić relates Serbian Orthodoxy to a number of ethical elements from the Old Testament in the paper named The Old Testament, Legal, Moralistic, and Pharisaic Spirit in Serbian Orthodoxy. Simić’s paper is followed by Vasilios N. Makridis’s Orthodox Christianity and Economic Development: The Case of Greece, in which he uses religious practices in Greece as a case study for relating Orthodoxy to various aspects of economic development. In Orthodoxy, Weber and the New Russian Capitalism, Valentina Gavriloivna Fedotovna and Sharyl Cross set a comparison between Weber’s views on the Protestant influence on the development of capitalism and the economic principles of the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian Religious Rejections of Money and Homo Economicus: The Self-Identifications of the ‘Pioneers of a Money Economy’ in Post-Soviet Russia by Natalia Dinello firstly compares the concepts of ‘Homo Orthodox’ and ‘Homo Economicus’ and then analyzes them in the context of Post-Soviet Russia. The paper entitled Historia magistra vitae est – a Proposal of a Theological Revaluation of the Secularization Process by Zoran Krstić uses a historical approach to compose a new evaluation of the process of secularization on a rather global level. The collection closes with Ivica Živković’s The Orthodox Discussion with the Closest Ones “between” Theology and Sociology, in which we encounter a revision of religious relations, with a special emphasis on the role of the Christ.

Equipped with author biographies and a name registry, this book is more than likely to serve as a perfect starting point for any future studies of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church. The diversity and comprehensiveness of all the approaches it offers is outstanding, while the number of possibilities it offers seems to be inexhaustible. The fact that the authors come not only from the Eastern world, but also from a number of Western countries gives us hope that the study of Orthodoxy might find new ways of expansion.

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УПУТСТВО АУТОРИМА

Политикологија религије је научни часопис који објављује текстове теоријског карактера који се базе односима религије и политике. Осим тога објављује приказе књига из политикологије религије и сродних дисциплина, научну критику и полемику. Редакција прима текстове искључиво у електронској форми на следећу адресу politikologijareligije@yahoo.com. Сви радови подлежу анонимној рецензији најмање два рецензента. Рецензентски процес траје од 2 до 4 месеца. Редакција даје апсолутну предност текстовима на енглеском језику. Да би текст био узет у разматрање за евентуално објављивање мора бити написан у следећем облику:

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Полугодишње. – Друго издање на другом медијуму: Политикологија религије (Online) = ISSN 1820-659X
ISSN 1820-6581 = Политикологија религије
COBISS.SR-ID 145620236
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