

Christianity, Identity and Social Change

MPhil 2013/2014

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(with Dr Emma Wild-Wood)

This option takes an historical and anthropological approach to African Christianity, examining its complex relations with changing social and political context in Africa and beyond. Emphasis is placed upon Christianity's popular expression rather than formal theology. A number of themes predominate: 1) the relation between Christianity and other world religions, the increase in social and political scale, and the differentiation of power structures that accompanied colonialism; 2) Christianity's enduring concern of the with the search for power, prosperity and fertility; 3) the creation of alternative religious models of liberation achieved through prayer, healing, community-building and personal renewal; 4) Christianity as a source of political legitimacy and means of popular mobilization; 5) religious conversion as a route to modernity, particularly through new forms of knowledge, literacy and schooling; 6) the contribution of religious ideas, practices and texts to the formation of new identities of class, gender, ethnicity, nation and religious communities that extend beyond the nation-state.

The option will be taught by studying shifting debates about religious movements in Africa and beyond. In the 1960s-80s scholars were concerned with the relationship between religion and nationalism. They examined the role of Christian independency in resistance to colonial rule and its involvement in nationalist mobilization. In the 1990s and 2000s, the focus shifted to consider the contribution of Christian groups to the formation of civil society and the rise of a public sphere, examining it as a source of democratization, development and new rights-based discourses. Other scholars have viewed so-called fundamentalist movements, Born-again Christianity / Pentecostalism, as vehicles of conservative American influence, or sought to examine them rather as creative local deployments of trans-regional ideologies that address social problems in post-colonial Africa. Most contemporary commentators have observed the increasing salience of religious idioms and ideas in political discourses as African populations and political leaders seek out new sources of legitimacy.

TERM ONE

Seminar 1: Approaches to the Study of Christianity - Wednesday 16 October 2013 (DM)

J. Bialecki, N. Haynes, & J. Robbins' 'The Anthropology of Christianity', *Religion Compass* 2, 6 (2008)

P. Landau, 'Religion and Christian Conversion in African History: A New Model', *The Journal Of Religious History*, 23, 1 (1999)

D. Lindenfeld, 'Indigenous Encounters with Christian Missions in China and West Africa, 1800-1920', *Journal of World History*, 16, 3, (2005)

T. Ranger, 'Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa', *African Studies Review* (1986)

1) Terence Ranger's 1986 review remains enormously influential. How does he define religious movements? What types of movement does he discuss? Which theoretical and methodological approaches to religion interest him? How has he critiqued his own work in the light of these approaches?

2) Summarize Landau's argument about religion as a Western construct. What are the implications of this argument for the study of Christianity and Islam? Do you agree with Landau's contention?

3) What is 'anthropology of Christianity'? What are the drawbacks to this approach? Why has Christianity not been studied in as comparative a manner as Islam until recently?

4) What are the similarities and differences between Lindenfeld's comparative model of religious encounter and the anthropology of Christianity?

Seminar 2: Debates about Conversion in Africa: Indigenous vs Alien Faiths - Wednesday 23 October 2013 (JC)

J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Volumes I and II (Chicago, 1991 and 1997), selected extracts.

N. Etherington, "Outward and Visible Signs of Conversion in Nineteenth-Century Kwazulu-Natal", *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, 4 (2000): 422-439.

R. Horton, "African Conversion", *Africa*, 41 (1971): 85-108.

P. Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom* (London, 1995), selected extracts.

J.D.Y. Peel, "Conversion and Tradition in Two African Societies: Ijebu and Buganda." *Past and Present* 77 (1977): 108-141.

JDY Peel, "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 3 (1995): 581-607.

D. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival* (Cambridge, 2012), esp. 'Introduction'.

- 1) How does Robin Horton's theory of conversion Christianity and Islam account for the enduring importance of non-monotheistic religions?
- 2) Describe how the Comaroffs have described Tswana conversion to Christianity as a 'long conversation'. Refer to specific passages in either Volume I or II.
- 3) What is the substance of John Peel's critique of the Comaroffs? What are the potential drawbacks of an approach to African conversion to Christianity that focuses upon narrative and language?
- 4) What are the theoretical links and points of divergence between this older anthropological literature on conversion and the new body of scholarship in the area of 'the anthropology of Christianity'?

Seminar 3: Mission Archives online: Word and Image - Wednesday 30 October 2013 (DM)

University of Southern California Mission Photography Archive
<http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/imp/>

'Go to browse this section'

The Mundus Gateway to mission archives & resources
<http://www.mundus.ac.uk/links.html#uk>

General questions on the online archives:

- 1) What are the opportunities and drawbacks of digital searches?

Using the online archives:

- 1) Find an image, which you think was used for missionary propaganda for metropolitan supporters of mission. Print it and come prepared to discuss it.
- 2) Find an image, which you think tells us about an African response to mission. Print it and come prepared to discuss it.
- 3) Look at the missionary periodicals data base at Yale. What missions are under represented? What kinds of data can you find in missionary periodicals?
- 4) Look at the Dictionary of African Christian Biography. Print out biographies of Jacob Coker and Solomon Zuze and come prepared to discuss them.

Photographic Sources

D. Maxwell, 2011. 'Photography and the Religious Encounter: Ambiguity and Aesthetics in Missionary Representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 53. 1

C. Geary, 1991. "Missionary Photography: Private and Public Readings," *African Arts* 24, 4

P. Jenkins, 1993. "The Earliest Generation of Missionary Photographs in West Africa and the Portrayal of Indigenous People and Culture," *History in Africa* 20

C. Pinney, 2003. "Introduction," in C. Pinney and N. Peterson, (eds.) *Photography's other Histories*

Issues to consider:

- 1) To what extent did missionaries 'call the shots' in picture taking?
- 2) What can we learn about the missionary encounter from missionary images?
- 3) What can we learn about African societies from missionary images?

Written and Printed Sources

A. Johnston, 2003. *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860*

J. and J. L. Comaroff, 1992 *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol I

J.D.Y Peel, 1996. 'Problems and Opportunities in an Anthropologist's Use of a Missionary Archive' in R. Bickers & R Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*

J.D.Y Peel, 2000. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*

J. Scott & G Griffiths (eds.) *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality and Missions*

Issues to consider:

- 1) Are missionary printed sources just discourses about missionaries (A. Johnstone)?
- 2) What are the most popular tropes used in missionary writing?
- 2) Outline the variety of missionary sources.
- 3) What ways does J.D.Y. Peel advance for reading missionary sources?

Seminar 4: SOAS Archives: Official Missionary Archives - Wednesday 13 November 2013 (JC)

D. Arnold and C. Shackleton (eds.), *SOAS since the Sixties* (London, 2003), Chapter 7 on the SOAS archives (by Keith Webster and Rosemary Seton)

Karin Barber, 'Introduction: Hidden Innovators in Africa' in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday History and Making the Self* (Bloomington, 2006)

Antoinette Burton, *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham, 2005)

Carolyn Hamilton, *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town, 2002)

C. Northcott, *Glorious Company: one hundred and fifty years in the life and work of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1945)

D. Peterson and G. Macola, 'Introduction: Homespun Historiography and the Academic Profession' in *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, 2009)

A. Stoler, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense* (Princeton, 2010)

Luise White (ed.), *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington, 2002)

- 1) How is it possible to use official missionary society records and at the same time, read them 'against the archival grain' (Stoler)? What might this mean in very practical ways?
- 2) What is the value of informal or non-traditional archives in the study of World Christianities? How are these available to the researcher? What challenges are presented by using them?
- 3) How are missionary archives linked to larger institutional histories? Reflect in particular on the changing location and nomenclature of the 'London Missionary Society/Council for World Mission' records at SOAS.

Seminar 5: Debates about Religious Authenticity - Mission Christians Vs. Independents - Wednesday 20 November 2013 (JC)

H.J. Becken (ed.), *Our Approach to the Independent Church Movement in South Africa* (Missiological Institute, Mapumulo, Natal, 1996).

N. Dirks, 'Colonialism and Culture' in *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1992)

J. Fernandez, "African Religious Movements." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (1978): 196-234.

A. Hastings, "From Agbebi to Diangienda, Independency and Prophetism" in Hastings, *The Church in Africa* (1996).

B. Jules-Rosette, "At the Threshold of the Millennium: Prophetic Movements and Independent Churches in Central and Southern Africa." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 42, 99 (1997): 153-167.

P. Makhuba, *Who are the Independent Churches?* (Johannesburg, 1988)

D. Maxwell, "Historicizing Christian Independency: The Southern African Pentecostal Movement." *Journal of African History* 40, 3 (1999): 243-264.

B. Meyer, "Christianity in Africa: From African-Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 447-474.

V.L. Rafael, 'Confession, Conversion and Reciprocity in Early Tagalog Colonial Society' in *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1992)

B. Sundkler, 'The Rise of the Independent Church Movement' in B. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London, 1948).

H. Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1, 1 (1967): 1-32.

- 1) How did the context of decolonization shape scholarship on and perceptions of independent Christianity?
- 2) In what ways were independent or spirit churches considered more 'authentic' than mission

churches? What are the limitations/problems of this interpretation?

3) How did the turn to an anthropology and history of colonialism (e.g. Dirks and Rafael) shape subsequent scholarship that focused upon missionary history in Africa? In other words, how to account for the decline in interest in independent churches, and the rise in attention paid to missionary history? Cross-refer to the Comaroffs' two-volume *Of Revelation and Revolution* to answer this.

Seminar 6: Henry Martyn Centre Archives –Personal Missionary Papers – Wednesday 27 November 2013 (EWW)

Terry Barringer, 'Recordings of the Work of the Holy Spirit,' (ch14) in Kevin Ward and Emma Wild-Wood, *The East African Revival: History and Legacies* (Surrey, 2012).

Kevin Ward, 'Introduction' in Kevin Ward and Emma Wild-Wood, *The East African Revival: History and Legacies* (Surrey, 2012).

Joe Church, 'Forward' in *Quest for the Highest: An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival* (Exeter, 1981).

<http://www.johncarverministries.org> particularly the pages

<http://www.johncarverministries.org/archives/index.cfm> and

<http://www.johncarverministries.org/about/references/AboutUs.pdf> in which the collection of archives is included in his faith testimony.

- 1) Who keeps their own personal papers and what might be their reasons for doing so?
- 2) How might different reasons for compiling an archive influence the use of the holdings?
- 3) What is the value of informal archives in the study of World Christianities? How are these available to the researcher? What challenges are presented by using them?

TERM TWO

Seminar 1: Christianity and Resistance Politics in Africa - Wednesday 29 January 2014 (JC)

J. Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985), Chapter Six.

J. Iliffe, "The Organization of the Maji Maji Rebellion", *The Journal of African History*, 8, 3 (1967): 495-512.

D. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977* (Athens, 2010)

T. Ranger, "Connexions Between Primary Resistance Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa, Part I", *Journal of African History*, 9, 3 (1968): 437-453.

T. Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa", *African Studies Review*, 29, 2 (1986): 1-69

M. Schoffeleers, "Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of the Zionist Churches in South Africa", *Africa*, 60, 1 (1991): 1-25.

G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (London, 1958), selected extracts.

K. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa* (1985), selected extracts.

R. Edgar, "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Background to the Bulhoek Massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15, 3 (1982): 401-422.

- 1) What is Ranger's argument regarding Christianity and nationalism in modern Africa?
- 2) Can healing be said to be a political act? Describe the case for this thesis (Comaroff) and the case against it (Schoffeleers).
- 3) Many of the authors of the above texts draw a distinction between implicit religious resistance (e.g. healing rituals) and explicit resistance (e.g. political activism) that is fuelled by religious beliefs. What are the possible drawbacks of this binary approach?

Seminar 2: Missionary Science and Medicine - Knowledge formation and indigenous interlocutors - Wednesday 5 February 2014 (DM)

J. Cinnamon, 2006. "Missionary Expertise, Social Science, and the Uses of Ethnographic Knowledge in Colonial Gabon," *HIA* 33

P. Forster, 1989. *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*

P. Harries, 2005. 'Anthropology' in N. Etherington (ed.) *Missions and Empire, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series*

P. Harries, 2007. *Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in Southeast Africa*

J.M. Janzen, 1972. 'Laman's Congo Ethnography: Observations on Sources, Methodology, and Theory', *Africa*, 42

D. N. Livingstone, 2005. 'Scientific inquiry and the missionary enterprise' in R. Finnegan (ed.) *Participating in the Knowledge Society: Researchers beyond University Walls*.

J. MacKenzie, 2003. 'Missionaries, Science, and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century Africa' in A. Porter (ed.) *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*

D. Maxwell and P. Harries (eds.) *The Spiritual in the Secular. Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa*

D. Peterson, 1999. 'Translating the Word: Dialogism and Debate in Two Gikuyu Dictionaries', *JRH*, 1

D. Peterson, 2004. *Creative Writing. Translation, Book keeping and the Work of the Imagination in Colonial Kenya*

H. Tilly with R. Gordon (ed.) 2007. *Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism and the Politics of Knowledge*

- 1) Why did missionaries engage in scientific about African societies?
- 2) In what ways did their methods differ from travellers and early secular ethnographers?
- 3) Why were missionary anthropologists marginalized by professional anthropology from the 1930s onwards?

Seminar 3: Literacy and Christianity - Wednesday 12 February 2014 (JC)

K. Barber (ed.), *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington, 2006), especially 'Introduction'.

C. Muller, "Making the Book, Performing the Words of Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha", in Draper (ed), *Orality, Literacy and Colonialism in Southern Africa* (2003): 91-110.

N. Etherington, "Education and Medicine", in N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005), 261-284.

I. Hofmeyr, 'John Bunyan Luthuli: African Mission Elites and The Pilgrim's Progress' in I. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of the Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton, 2004), 113-136.

T. Kirsch, *Spirits and Letters: Reading, Writing and Charisma in African Christianity* (Oxford, 2008)

P. Landau, "Language" in N. Etherington (ed), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005): 194-215.

D. Maxwell, "Sacred History, Social History: Traditions and Texts in the Making of a Southern African Transnational Religious Movement", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43, 3 (2001): 502-524.

J.D.Y. Peel, "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 3 (1995): 581-607.

D. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping and the Work of the Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, N.H, 2004).

- 1) How did/do African Christians use the Bible to articulate new forms of religious subjectivity and selfhood (Peel, Peterson, Muller, Maxwell)?
- 2) In what ways do African Christians challenge the distinction between literacy and orality in their use of sacred texts? (Muller, Kirsch) Do you think that 'performance' is a valid concept to apply to biblical reception and interpretation?
- 3) Account for the impact and influence of missionary education in the affairs of post-colonial African states (Hofmeyr, Etherington)

Seminar 4: Transatlantic Christianities - The Ethiopian movement and African Methodist Episcopal Church - Wednesday 19 February 2014 (DM)

- J. Campbell, *Songs of Zion. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (1995)
- J. Campbell, 'African American Missionaries and the Colonial State: The AME Church in South Africa' in Hansen and Twaddle (eds.), *Christian Missionaries* (2002)
- N. Cook, 'Church and State in Zambia: the case of the African Methodist Episcopal Church' in Fashole-Luke, *Christianity in Independent Africa* (1978)
- N. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa 1835-1880* (1978)
- A. Hastings, 'John Lester Membe' in T. Ranger & J. Weller (eds.), *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa* (1978)
- A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (1994)
- E. Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa. From Antiquity to the Present* (1995)
- J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940 the Impact of the Presbyterian Mission in the Northern Province*
- J. Mutero Chirenje, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883-1916* (1987)
- B. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948. (2nd edn., 1961).
- M. West, 'Ethiopianism and Colonialism: The African Orthodox Church in Zimbabwe' In Hansen and Twaddle (eds.), *Christian Missionaries* (2002)

The first generation of so-called independent churches, known as Ethiopian churches, often looked very much like the mission churches they had broken away from. Others had links with Afro-American missionaries.

- 1) Why did they secede?
- 2) To what extent were they 'independent'?
- 3) In what sense were they political?
- 4) Why were their African leaders continually frustrated?
- 5) Why were Ethiopian Churches feared by colonial states?
- 6) What was the significance of links with the US in terms of material and cultural resources and in terms of the African imagination?

Seminar 5: Church and Decolonization in Africa - Wednesday 26 February 2014 (JC)

- P. Boobbyer, "Moral Rearmament in Africa in the era of Decolonization" in B. Stanley (ed), *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire* (Eerdmans, 2006): 212-236.
- D. Gaitskell, "Apartheid, Mission and Independent Africa: From Pretoria to Kampala with Hannah Stanton" in B. Stanley (ed.), *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire* (Eerdmans, 2006): 237-249.

A. Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (Cambridge, 1979): 184-257.
 A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford, 1995), Chapter 11.
 P. Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London, 1998), selected extracts.
 O. Kalu, "Passive Revolution and its Saboteurs: African Christian Initiative in the Era of Decolonization, 1955-1975" in B. Stanley, *Missions, Nationalism etc* 250-277.
 D. Maxwell, "Decolonization" in N. Etherington (ed), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005): 285-306.
 D. Maxwell, "Postcolonial Christianity in Africa" in H. McLeod (ed), *Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 9: World Christianities, c. 1914-2000* (Cambridge, 2006)
 J. Stuart, "Speaking for the Unloved? British Missionaries and Aspects of African Nationalism", in B. Stanley (ed) *Missions, Nationalism etc*, 183-193.
 K. Ward, 'Archbishop Janani Luwum: The Dilemmas of Loyalty, Opposition and Witness in Amin's Uganda' in D. Maxwell and I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African Imagination* (Leiden, 2002)

- 1) What was the involvement of missionaries in African nationalist struggles?
- 2) How did churches reposition themselves as well, as redefine their roles, in the aftermath of political independence across the continent?
- 3) Explain how 'independent churches' – ie those churches without links to traditional mission societies negotiated the transfer to independence across sub-Saharan Africa (Hastings)

Seminar 6: Civil Society, Citizenship, Global Christianity in post-Colonial Africa - Wednesday 5 March 2014 (DM)

D. Birmingham, & P. Martin (eds.). *History of Central Africa. The Contemporary Years since 1960* (1998)
 P. Gifford, *The New Crusaders. Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa* (1991)
 P. Gifford, 'Some Recent Developments in African Christianity'. *African Affairs*. 93, 373 (1994)
 Essays in P. Gifford, (ed.) *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (1995)
 P. Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (1998)
 P. Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity. Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (2004)
 D. Maxwell, 'Post-colonial Christianity in Africa', in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, vol.9, World Christianities, C.1914-C.2000* (2006)
 D. Maxwell *African Gifts of the Spirit. Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (2006)
 Essays in T. Ranger, T. (ed.) *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa* (2007)

It is often asserted that mission churches did not figure very highly in nationalist struggles but that they were central to the Democratic Revolution that occurred at the end of the 1980s.

Explain the growing prominence of the Church in post-colonial African societies?

- 1) In what ways did the churches contribute to processes of democratisation?

- 2) In what ways did they impede regime change?
- 3) How useful is it to think about African churches in terms of globalization or transnationalism?

Essay Questions

1. 'Christianity was an important resource for Africans seeking to resist colonial rule'. Discuss.
2. How and why have African Christians drawn upon their faith to imagine themselves members of both national and transnational communities?
3. What role has Christianity played in knowledge formation in modern Africa?
4. Why did African mission elites found their own Independent Churches?
5. Why were African churches so influential in the transition to democracy at the end of the 1980s?
6. 'Missionary sources tell us a great deal about the mentalities of missionaries but are of little value for reconstructing the social and cultural history of African societies'. Discuss.
7. In what ways have missionaries and African Christians contributed to the formation of African ethnicities?
8. 'Christian belief flourished only where it worked with the grain of social change in Africa itself.' Discuss.