MEDIATING THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL IN NIGERIAN PENTECOSTALISM*

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Introduction: Transnationalism, the nation-state, and the media

All world religions are 'transnational,' and have been since long before the idea of nation took on its modern significance as the privileged space for the construction of political identity and a new form of ‘imagined’ community. Christianity in particular, despite its often intimate historical connections with the internal politics of nation-states, its multitude of denominational and institutional forms, has at its core an evangelical message which is to be spread to all peoples, and which seeks to impose a truth which subordinates all other forms of allegiance and identification. However, the transnational character of contemporary pentecostalism takes on a new significance in the context of what is called ‘globalisation’ and which refers to recent and profound changes in the structure of the international scene.¹

I will begin with the definition of transnationalism offered by Badie and Smouts in their study of changes in the international order, Le retourement du monde: Sociologie de la scène internationale.² They define transnationalism as ‘any relation which, deliberately or by its nature, constructs itself within a global space beyond the context of the nation-state, and which escapes, at least partially, the control or mediating action of States.’³ They argue that while transnational flux among organisations has always existed, citing the case of the Roman Catholic church, they take on ‘in the world today, a particular importance and weight which gives them a totally different stature and function than those observed in the past.’⁴ The transnationalism Badie and Smouts refer to takes on its new significance in a context where nation-states and nationalism no longer necessarily constitute the primary physical and ideological contexts in which identity and community are imagined and political

allegiance expressed. They argue convincingly for the fragmentation of the unitary space of the nation-state with the enormous growth of multiple forms of transnational flux, flux which is intimately connected to the sophistication of communications and media networks. Nicolas Garnham likewise associates the ‘crisis’ of the nation-state with the growth of global media systems and an increasingly integrated global market, a growth which ‘appears to be undermining the key locus of democratic power and accountability within the liberal model—namely, the nation-state.’ He links this to ‘the development of “identity politics,” including the recrudescence of ethnic particularism in nationalistic forms and of religious fundamentalism.” Religious identity also takes on a particular significance in Badie and Smouts’ analysis, as the crisis in the old mechanisms of identification ‘gives back to the “sacred realm” an importance and a social function which the construction and diffusion of the state model, as rational and secular, had helped it to lose.’

The theme of a ‘post-national global order’ is taken up by Arjun Appadurai in his book, Global Modernities: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. In this subtle and penetrating analysis of the dynamics of global culture, Appadurai likewise draws attention to the crisis of the nation-state, recognising that while the nation-state is not yet ‘out of business,’ its crisis is related to the emergence of strong alternative forms for organising global traffic in resources, images and people, forms that either contest the nation-state directly, whether invested with ‘nationalist’ ambitions or not, or constitute peaceful alternatives for large-scale political loyalties. At the same time, he notes that the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolise the ‘moral resources of community’ and command political loyalty are being steadily eroded. In his analysis, he privileges the processes of mass mediation and migration, examining the ways in which they affect ‘the imagination as social practice.’ The relationship between the media and the process of ‘imagining’ new communal identities has been demonstrated by Benedict Anderson in his study of nationalism, but as Appadurai argues, ‘the revolution of print capitalism and the cultural affinities and dialogues unleashed by it were only modest precursors to the world we live in now’—a world of a communications explosion which involves ‘an altogether new form of neighborliness, even with those most distant from ourselves’ and yet one which is characterised by media-created communities with ‘no sense of place.” In contrast to the communitarian idealism behind McLuhan’s notion of a ‘global village’ and in rejection of those theorists who express fears of the ‘homogenisation’ or ‘Americanisation’ of global culture, Appadurai stresses the non-isomorphic character of transnational flux. The speed,
scale and volume of flows of money, people, machinery, images and ideas have become so great that 'disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture.' In particular, mass-mediation results in the circulation of images, ideas and symbols which, as they move through global space, break free from their context of production and are appropriated in endless, inventive processes of cultural bricolage.

The importance of global media is not limited to the technological possibilities it offers for the production and dissemination of ideas, images, and narratives. The circulation of these media-produced 'strips of reality' has two important related consequences for the formation of identity in the context of the crisis of the nation-state. Firstly, such images, ideas and narratives provide 'a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) 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. Such imagined communities are not the stuff of wistful longings or fantasies, even given the disjuncture between the flow of images and the flow of goods, finance and technologies which such images evoke. As we shall see in the case of pentecostalism in Nigeria, it is not simply access to globalised media images in general which fuels the imagination of actors, but the ways in which access to mediated images, narratives and ideas produced by specific transnational 'imagined communities,' such as pentecostal Christianity, connect local actors to global networks on the one hand, and on the other, the ways local access to media technology enable the dissemination of local appropriations of these images, and narratives nationally and globally, creating a constant process of circulation between global and local, in which it becomes more and more difficult, even on an analytical level, to separate these two spaces.

Added to this circulation of images and narratives is the movement of people in connection with these transnational communities. In the case of pentecostalism, evangelists from Korea, Brazil, Nigeria preach at conferences in Manila, Atlanta and Accra; indigenous Nigerian pentecostal 'missions' or 'ministries' (as their transnationally ambitious leaders now call them, invariably adding 'International' to the name, even if the mission comprises only a handful of members) open branches not only in the heart of Nigeria's Muslim hinterland and just next door in Benin, Liberia or Ghana, but as far afield as London, Manchester, New York and Toronto, their congregations peopled by an ever-growing diaspora. Rijk Van Dijk's examination of exchanges between Ghanaian
pentecostal communities in Ghana and Holland provides evidence for his claim that 'Pentecostalism is historically a transnational phenomenon, which in its modern forms is reproduced in its local diversity through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people. The new charismatic type of Pentecostalism creates a moral and physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow.\textsuperscript{13} This 'deterritorialisation' of culture via mediation and migration leads us to the second consequence for identity formation, insofar as it facilitates the delocalisation of identity and community formation, resulting in, as Appadurai argues, a disjuncture between the production and reproduction of 'locality as a property of social life,' and its realisation in the form of 'neighbourhoods as social formations' made up of 'local subjects, actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends and enemies.' In this 'battle between the imaginaries of the nation-state, of unsettled communities, and of global electronic media [...] the production of locality—always [...] a fragile and difficult achievement—is more than ever shot through with contradiction, destabilised by human motion and displaced by the formation of new kinds of virtual neighbourhoods.'\textsuperscript{14} One of the questions to be taken up in this paper is the extent to which the current wave of pentecostalism sweeping urban Nigeria provides an example of the creation of 'delocalised' subjects, or at least, of subjects whose individual and collective identities seem to have been formed in terms of a new type of negotiation between local and global, one in which the media has a privileged role.

The second issue that will be addressed is the way pentecostalism positions itself vis-à-vis the Nigerian nation-state. As mentioned above, transnationalism offers possibilities for identification and political allegiance that may allow groups to bypass or confront the nation-state, and erode its attempts to monopolise such identification and allegiance. As Appadurai argues, 'electronic mass mediation and transnational mobilization have broken the monopoly of autonomous nation-states over the project of modernization. The transformation of everyday subjectivities through electronic mediation and the work of the imagination is not only a cultural fact. It is deeply connected to politics, through the new ways in which individual attachments, interests and aspirations increasingly crosscut those of the nation-state.'\textsuperscript{15} The 'demise' of the nation-state and its consequences discussed by Badie and Smouts relies largely on evidence from the industrialised West, yet one can argue that the failure of nationalism and the 'devel-
velopmentalist’ state in post-colonial countries to provide a stable reference for the construction of identity likewise opens the ground for this ‘explosion’ of multiple identities. Those identities which are part of transnational movements have a particularly important and powerful position within these societies, not simply because of their access to what Bayart calls ‘resources of externality,’16 that is, important material and symbolic connections with global networks which enable them to erode the state’s historical monopoly on such resources, but also because the access to these resources enables them to provide an alternative vision of ‘modernity,’ and the means by which individuals and communities may inscribe themselves within it. In the Nigerian context, pentecostalism and new Islamic movements present a challenge to the state’s monopoly over the public sphere, and pose one of the greatest threats ever to its goal of national unity and ideologies of development. Pentecostalism is attempting to colonise the national public space and reconceptualise the structure and normative basis of the nation, and is doing this largely not through the institutionalisation of churches, but through the production and dissemination of a multitude of discourses via the media; discourses which are not in general denominationally based, nor designed solely for the consumption of converts, but rather target the public more generally, and demonstrate not only the scope of pentecostal ambitions on a national scale but also reveal their important transnational affiliations.

Conversion and Agency: Negotiating ‘Local Pasts’ and ‘Global Modernities’

The wave of conversions to pentecostalism which has swept across urban Nigeria in the past decade or so has brought a number of changes in doctrine, membership, organisation and transnational affiliation to the already existing pentecostal churches which expanded or were established in the earlier revival of the seventies. Unlike these older churches, typically denominational, emphasising a doctrine of ‘holiness’ and anti-materialism, expressed in the eschewal of fancy clothes, expensive commodities, modern media such as television, and peopled by relatively disadvantaged social groups, these new organisations place themselves firmly in the ‘world.’ Typically young, upwardly mobile, relatively well-educated leaders privilege international contacts and experiences, incorporating, as Van Dijk notes of their Ghanaian counterparts, this international image in the operation and symbolism of their organisations. The gospel of prosperity offers a doctrine of morally-controlled materialism, in which personal wealth and success is interpreted as the
evidence of God's blessing on those who lead a 'true life in Christ.' Membership involves largely young members of the now struggling middle classes, even if most organisations boast at least a few conspicuous elites. The media, both print and electronic, play a central role in this 'new wave.' While older churches used literature and taped messages for purposes of evangelism, such production and dissemination was largely used to consolidate the congregation and distinguish it from others. While ministries or missions continue to publish their own material, tape and video their services and messages, new interdenominational media production has grown up, and with it the growth of interministry revivals and rallies which are invariably mediated—by posters, handbills, tapes and videos—as well as media production from interdenominational organisations. The growth of 'televangelism,' bringing revenues to struggling local television stations, as well as access via satellite to international pentecostal broadcasts, and the existence of a growing number of video rental outfits with locally and globally produced pentecostal movies, plays and religious broadcasts testifies to the centrality of the media to this new wave of pentecostalism. More will be said on this below. The structure of organisation of these new missions and ministries tends to be less denominational; despite the need for leaders to create a solid clientele, there is perpetual movement from one group to another on the part of the converted, and the formation of a multitude of interdenominational groups ranging from intimate 'house' or 'prayer' fellowships to larger professional, gender-based, educational or political organisations. This tendency for movement among converts is related in part to doctrine, which stresses the importance of the individual conversion experience over the experience of belonging to a given institution as the marker of identity; but, as we shall see below, it is also closely linked to the transnational character and mediation of the pentecostal message.

Forms of community have grown up in the urban centres which respond to and help resolve the anxiety and uncertainty which have come to mark social relations over the past decades. With increasing economic hardship and zero-sum struggles for survival, great strain is put on the extended family as the basic domestic unit. Relatively successful family members often resent the pressure put on them by a variety of near and distant relatives. Pentecostalism's stress on the nuclear family and its exhortations to break with unbelievers accord young people striving for upward mobility not only a certain amount of freedom from such pressures, but also protection from resentment and jealousy in the form of witchcraft, most feared and dangerous in the hands of
blood relatives. The anxiety created by the continued influx of 'dangerous strangers' to urban centres as a result of increased rural-urban migration, the extreme instrumentalisation of social relations, as well as the break-down of many patron-client networks during the past decade have introduced a kind of urban paranoia about 'evil doers' who are out to cheat, deceive, rob and kill. A kind of Hobbesian sense of 'all against all' prevails; the old forms of community—ethnic, kinship, professional, hometown, neighbourhood—have proved unreliable sources of support.

Pentecostalism provides new networks, both spiritual and material, which extend beyond local, ethnic, regional and even class considerations. At the local or national level, these networks not only provide an overarching sense of belonging and common purpose, but also provide material benefits such as employment opportunities, exchanges of goods and services, and even access to officialdom without the usual costly red tape and inevitable 'dash.' Networks extend beyond the national to the global, and even if the particular mission or ministry to which a believer belongs is small, it carries with it the sense of belonging to a global movement and access, if not immediately to financial or technological support, to resources such as literature and ideas. While the actual amount of material resources any given church or ministry receives from abroad is difficult to estimate, I would argue that most revenues are generated locally. The importance of international ties may be largely symbolic, but they certainly have real material consequences in mobilising local wealth and creating vital connections via the media, and in certain cases through international travel, with millions of other pentecostal Christians the world over.

Conversion does not necessarily imply a rejection of other identities, but involves their assimilation within a complex of discourses and practices governing all aspects of social, cultural, economic and political life which enable them to be mediated through and subsumed within a collective system of representations. One is always a born-again first, and this implies of course that being born again is simply incompatible with certain other forms of identification, most obviously religious. But one can learn how to be a born-again woman, Yoruba, businessman, politician, southerner, husband, rich or poor man, youth or elder. The success of pentecostalism in converting massive numbers is clearly related in part to the opportunity it provides for the mediation of conflicting and often unmanageable situations of multiple identification. Issues which are addressed in pentecostal discourses also form the locus for the creation of interdenominational groups which address problems relating to other modes of social identification—women's groups, pro-
fessional or business groups, lawyers, doctors, journalists, students, businessmen, singles, neighbourhoods—enabling people to articulate practices which address the particular demands of a given social identity within the strictures of pentecostal doctrine.

Conversion to pentecostalism expresses a model for the construction of identity. The notion of being 'born again' encapsulates a particular attitude towards agency and social change, in which the individual is exorted to make an absolute break with his personal as well as collective past. Upon ‘giving his life to Christ,’ he re-enters the world as a ‘new creature,’ as a sort of ‘blank slate’ upon which the new identity will gradually be written, following a model of spiritual growth from Christian ‘babyhood,’ into full ‘adulthood.’ Conversion is less an event than an ongoing process whose underlying structure is linear and teleological. Conduct is closely monitored to ensure that the break with the past is complete and the process of linear growth towards salvation proceeds uninterrupted. And yet the convert is constantly in danger of losing his salvation through breaches of conduct and moral lapses, hence while the model of progress is linear, almost developmentalist, its realisation depends on human action. Unlike the idea of ‘election,’ conversion and salvation are choices, depicted as a personal battle between spiritual forces of good and evil. These forces are seen as external agents, which, through his practice and discourse, a convert incites to act upon him. To guarantee his salvation and continued membership in the community of the saved, the convert must ensure, through his thoughts and deeds, that he is a fitting vessel for the ‘infilling’ of the Holy Spirit, which will provide him with the strength and protection to ward off the multitude of evil forces which seek to possess him. Christ must be invited ‘in.’ But at the same time, the evil spirits who wait in the wings for any chance to seize their victims are also depicted as being ‘invited in’ by the subject—there are no sins of ‘omission.’ The fruits of a successful conversion and Christian life are as much material as spiritual; apart from a guaranteed place among the saints, pentecostals are promised health, wealth, success, happy family lives, and the social, economic and political conditions in which to enjoy them.

The model of agency implicit in the born-again conversion depicts a lone individual struggling to achieve selfhood in a world full of evil forces which seek his undoing at every turn. True conversion means cutting the links with one’s personal past; not simply the ungodly habits and sinful pastimes, but also friends and family members who are not born-again. Such individuals provide the greatest threats to a ‘new life in Christ,’ precisely because of the power in ties of blood and amity.
If they cannot be brought to give their lives to Christ, they must be cut surgically from the lives of the new convert. Friends, family and neighbours become ‘dangerous strangers,’ and strangers become new friends. The social grounds for creating bonds—blood, common pasts, neighbourhood ties, language—are forsworn for the new bond of the brother or sister in Christ. Unlike the first wave of pentecostal revival in Nigeria in the seventies and early eighties, conversion in the late eighties and nineties is preceded by the existence of a dizzying multitude of churches, interdenominational groups, missions and ministries among which converts move, creating new social ties on the basis of regular attendance in a given church or ministry, through professional contacts, from acquaintances made during retreats, rallies and revivals, and of course old friendships or networks which have been renewed through a common conversion experience, or indeed a combination of these, in which the intimacy of neighbours, family and friends is recreated in small ‘house fellowships’ among people who may have neither locality, language nor shared pasts in common.

Birgit Meyer has argued that conversion to pentecostalism entails a kind of conversion to modernity, insofar as the process of breaking with individual and collective pasts enables converts to become ‘autonomous selves,’ free individuals in possession of their subjectivity. She notes that pentecostalism in Ghana is self-consciously ‘global,’ connecting believers with a global community of born-again Christians, and offering a scope for identification which goes far beyond local culture. Pentecostalism is presented as the only way people can be connected to the modern world of commodities, media and financial flows without being overrun by it. While the conversion experience and the modes in which social intimacy are created among pentecostals seem to fit nicely into theories of individualisation and modernization, I am wary of making too much of the consequences conversion has for individualisation. Firstly, because this position seems tacitly to assume some sort of primordial ‘communalism’ against which new, ‘modern’ individuals emerge, a position which I consider untenable both historically and theoretically. Secondly, although conversion is experienced as a choice, as an ongoing act of will, it by no means implies the creation of the autonomous secular subject of ‘modernity.’ Freed from the past, from the grip of evil forces that this past represents, the convert is consecrated to a higher power; he has given his life to Christ—as one writer puts it ‘we must crucify self and allow the Spirit of God to possess and control us’—and thus cannot pretend to be the master of his destiny and subjectivity.
It is not simply the past life of the convert which is seen as a potential avenue through which evil forces will attempt to reclaim him, but also the communal past in whose shadow he lives. Even a born-again Christian is not free from such evil influences, as this writer on 'Demonology' attests:

The spirit of sin from the ancestors can enter subsequent generations. Worshipping of traditional idols, masquerades (sic.), family shrines and other family traditions can be passed down to other generations. Ancestral sinful practices of blood covenant with evil spirits may tie their children's children to that spirit. Generations can be affected with the curses and sin of their forefathers unless there is true and genuine repentance and turning to God for forgiveness.¹⁷

The 'sins of the fathers'²⁰ are often represented in terms of 'traditional' religious practices—shrines, masquerades, covenants—but it is not simply the fact that this religious 'otherness' represents a danger to pentecostalism which projects itself as the only 'true' religion. Religious 'Others,' in particular Muslims, are typically demonised in pentecostal discourse; however, this demonisation of the past is less about the contemporary threat that traditional religion poses in terms of religious competition (unlike Islam) and more about its connection with a cultural past that failed to provide the moral grounding for a 'good' society in the present. Another preacher makes this clear below. He begins by speaking about various rites, such as naming ceremonies, puberty rites, circumcision, going on to explain how such rites are specified by the spirits of the land, with the purpose of bringing people under control. These 'territorial spirits' affect the minds of the people living in the land:

There are certain people who are prone to violence, there are certain that love money a lot; if you want to check up if a man is dead, you could just chuck money round his ears and if he doesn't wake up, then he's dead. And there are certain people, they are never straightforward, you could never rely on them, if you relied on them, you would break and pierce your heart. And then there are some others who manipulate everything. [...] There are others that are violent, if there is an argument, it ends with blows. Then there are those that, by this hour, they are drunk. There are certain parts of this country that if you went now, the men would be gathered in places just lounging around and drinking, the women would be in the farms. The women would come back and pound the yams and the men would have the audacity to eat. It affects people, this is the way territorial spirits operate. [...] Now you look at certain parts of the country, people have a disposition to lie, and I mean they lie by the second. Now if you had them on a church committee, whenever there's going to be a scandal, notice they will be at the end of it. They will trade gossips between these ones and the other ones, they are the people who know who and who, what is doing what. Now you know, there are certain types of deliverances that may not, I'm using the word may, that may not come through, unless you deal with the thing that is on the land, the particular powers that hold the people.²¹
What the convert must be delivered from is the history that makes these anti-social practices commonplace. It is not so much the missionary view of the evils of ‘paganism’ that pentecostals are echoing here, but the idea that all moral orders have their spiritual counterparts, that there is no real distinction to be made between the natural and supernatural. Clearly if things have come to such a pass, it is because the wrong sort of spiritual-moral order has held sway. The same theme is taken up again below, this time in more ‘secular’ language:

‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’

(Gal. 6:7) What is it that we sow that could be responsible for the unfavourable conditions that prevail in this country presently? Why is the truth relegated to the background or completely obliterated while unrighteousness, ungodliness, and injustice reign supreme? Why do we advertise or publicize mediocrity at the expense of excellence? Why do we rejoice at spiritual elimination? Why should anyone hinder the spread of the Gospel and ban early morning devotion at schools? What is basically wrong with us as a people? Why do we massacre in cold blood our defenceless [sic.] students at the slightest excuse? Why do we have such a large number of juvenile delinquents? Why is armed robbery a very ‘profitable’ profession in our midst? Why do we have instability in government to the extent that anybody in uniform can occupy the ‘hot’ seat and pronounce himself Head of State even when he has nothing to offer? Why do Christians obey man rather than God when we know that Isa. 10:1 says ‘Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees and that write grievousness which they have prescribed.’

This poignant questioning is followed by a response expressing the pentecostal conviction that it is not simply present day individual sin which has led to this state of things, but the ‘sins of the fathers.’ Pentecostal discourses engage with the history of the present, questioning the social, political and cultural forms that they see as historical ground for the present crisis. This questioning focuses not on external interventions such as colonialism, or capitalism, but rather on the local, on the practices of local agents—‘What is basically wrong with us as a people?’ Pentecostalism’s fierce rejection of all forms of socio-cultural practice which are seen as particularly ‘Nigerian,’ ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ expresses not only a form of socio-political critique which emphasises individual agency—it is individual sin and the personal rejection of Christ that opens up the space in which the failure of the nation is manifested—but also reinforces its resolutely ‘modern,’ transnational character.

The view of Christian conversion as a mode of collective socio-political advancement is not new in Nigeria, as John Pecl has eloquently argued. Nineteenth-century missionaries among the Yoruba likewise managed to present Christianity in terms which linked the issue of personal salvation to collective progress in a time which was marked by war and great social upheaval:
The missions thus faced a major cultural task in attempting to bring the Yoruba to a conviction of the uniqueness of the soul’s trajectory, as Christian conversion required. One way they tackled it was by seeking to implicate the proposed new personal narrative in a persuasive new collective narrative. In this way an additional use was found for what was already the CMS policy of ‘Christianity, Civilization and Commerce’ that is, the spiritual regeneration of Africa should be linked to, and supported by, secular processes of development. It became a common strategy of missionary argument to invite their Yoruba interlocutors, on the basis of their own recent experiences of historical change, to buy into a new version of how Yoruba history might go, to invite them to rescript their country’s history in terms of a unidirectional narrative of social progress—basically a form of what we call modernization theory—which meshes nicely with the Christian narrative of the soul that the missions were urging on the Yoruba as individuals. 

[...] The missionary strategy or argument, then, was to take up on these indigenous historical assessments and to rewrite them into a new narrative in which Christianity would resolve the problems of the age.21

Part of the missionary strategy involved drawing Nigerians away from their ‘pagan’ ‘uncivilised’ practices, and much ceremony was made of the burning of ‘fetishes’ and the adoption of ‘civilised’ lifestyles. At the same time, this strategy played no small part in the process of the invention of Yoruba ethnicity, helping to form a new pan-Yoruba identity in the place of the bitter internal cleavages and conflicts which marked the nineteenth century.

In the same discussion, Peel draws attention to the importance of narrative in enabling individual and collective memory to be reworked and a new account given of the way things might go in the future. Part of the power of both missionary and pentecostal Christianity is that new identities are realised through narrative—whether this be the sacred text, authoritative discourses such as sermons, prophecies, or narratives of a more immediate, informal and personal nature, such as testimonies, prayers and songs. As Peel argues, narrative is a pre-eminently political discourse in that it offers the possibility of agency, in that it empowers: ‘Narrative empowers because it enables its possessor to integrate his memories, experiences, and aspirations in a schema of long-term action.’23 Narrative has a special place among those other, more material or structural, conditions which might create an openess to a new religious account, not simply because it is the principal means by which historical agency is achieved and new meaning articulated, but also because its production is a sign of change. There are periods which speak more than others, where events occur which are sufficiently marking as to remain in memory, and to demand modes of their telling. The narratives of contemporary conversion to pentecostalism involve the same process of reinventing history in order to bring order to a chaotic present and a new shape to the future. The post-colonial situation
is in some ways just as eventful a period as the colonial encounter, in some ways more, as it grafts itself onto the memory of past upheaval, and carries this memory into the interpretation of new, dramatic events. It asks people to find new ways of speaking about the events, problems and crises they must struggle with daily. As a time of intense narrative production, where the conflict about the organising principles of society and visions for the future is more acute than ever, it is also, unsurprisingly, a time of intense religious invention and competition, into which pentecostalism inserts itself with great success. Pentecostalism inserts itself in a way that builds upon the historical experience of Christianity as a mode of bringing about social change, but introduces something quite novel at the same time.

This novelty refers to the ways in which pentecostalism in Nigeria is part of a transnational movement, one in which the circulation of narrative via the media plays a central role. What is new is the way in which this break with the past goes hand in hand with a new role for the imagination in the creation of new identities and communities. Although he rejects the definition of 'modernity' as it has been typologised by the social sciences in terms of the difference between traditional and modern societies, Appadurai rightly observes that the world in which we all live does involve 'a break with all sorts of pasts.' The theory of rupture that he sketches involves a different way of looking at agency and social change from that entailed in modernisation theory, one which, as noted above, concerns the effects of media and migration on the 'work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity.' In this sense, it is not so much the individualism of pentecostal conversion which leads to the creation of modern subjects, but the ways in which its projection on a global scale of images, discourses and ideas about renewal, change and salvation opens up possibilities for local actors to incorporate these into their everyday lives. As Appadurai argues, the work of the imagination 'is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern.' As he puts it, what is new about the role of the imagination in today's world is that the imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth and ritual and has become part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies. [...] Of course, this has precedents in the great revolutions, cargo cults, and messianic movements of other times, in which forceful leaders implanted their visions into social life, thus creating powerful movements for social change. Now, however, it is no longer a matter of specially endowed (charismatic) individuals, injecting the imagination where it does not belong. Ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives.
What is new about pentecostalism is the impact that these circulating images, texts and discourses have on the way in which the individual is incited to re-imagine his life. The new wave of pentecostalism with its multiple organisational forms, its interdenominationalism, relatively loose ritual structure, the emphasis placed on the individual convert's own actions in gaining his salvation, the idea that the 'gifts of the spirit' may be at the reach of anyone, not just specially anointed, charismatic leaders, and the production by converts of a multitude of narratives (testimonies, evangelism, booklets etc.) provides a particularly powerful example of the ways in which the imagination of the individual is given a new role in the everyday lives of converts. At the same time, pentecostalism provides an example of the ways in which the 'new power of the imagination is inescapably tied up with images, ideas and opportunities that come from elsewhere, often moved around by the vehicles of mass media.'

Thus while pentecostalism is resolutely 'modern' and 'transcultural,' it does not find its success through a wholesale rejection of the past, but through an engagement with it; refashioning history and domesticating it at the same time. As Peel argues in his remarkable study of the Ijesha, new identities presuppose a history which goes beyond the invention of a 'mere "mythical charter" conjured solely out of contemporary interest,' a history which involves the double senses of temporal continuity in identity, and a 'possessed past,' understood as 'history active in the present' which is 'a reflection on a real historical process.'

Through its engagement with 'local pasts,' pentecostalism helps provide a sort of continuity that the rupture implicit in secular accounts of development and 'modernisation' cannot. It has the language, the idioms and forms which can speak about the past in a way the language of secular modernity cannot, and even if the past is rejected on 'moral' grounds, in the ongoing process of conversion, all sorts of pasts—personal, family, ethnic, national and even global—are constantly present in pentecostal discourse and reflection. Local histories, traditions and practices are retold and reinterpreted in the light of distant and disparate narrative sources. The Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, provides a sort of alternative 'tribal' history, in which the trials and tribulations of the Jews on the path to monotheism enable people to reinterpret local 'tribal' history and practice, in the light of this universal story, a story which every Christian knows leads inexorably to the arrival, in the New Testament, of the saviour of the world. I myself spent an interesting afternoon with a young Igbo man who tried to convince me that the Igbo were in fact originally Jews. Apart from the overwhelming quantity of foreign pentecostal literature, audio and video...
recordings, other narrative sources include American-style ‘self-help’ discourses on setting goals and overcoming personal obstacles, discourses about other ‘local’ or ‘territorial’ spirits from as far afield as India, the Americas, and Egypt.

To embrace the idea of linear progress via human agency which is at the heart of the idea of ‘modernisation,’ individuals and collectivities must ‘domesticate’ and subdue the past. The ‘invention of tradition’ which accompanies the rise of nationalism in the West is central to this process of domestication. It is in this sense perhaps that pentecostalism provides a version of ‘modernity’ which is more compelling and more accessible; one which ‘delivers the goods’ in contexts where so many experience modernity as a series of unfulfilled promises and broken dreams. The ‘breach’ between past histories, everyday realities and the promises of ‘development’ is narrowed not only in pentecostal discourse, but the very spaces where people come to worship reflect a conscious project of creating modern, functional spaces and forms of association. It is not simply the way these spaces are ‘delocalised,’ with their emphasis on cleanliness, order and punctuality, the use of modern technology such as computers, electrical instruments, video recorders, televisions, but the way in which, in particular through the use of modern media, a sense of ‘delocalised’ community is created, one in which members are ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ in Christ before being members of different age groups, ethnic groups and social classes.

At the same time, the use of the mass media provides examples of the ways in which, as Appadurai argues, ‘consumption of the mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, agency. [. . .] Part of what the mass media make possible, because of conditions of collective reading, criticism and pleasure, is what I have elsewhere called a ‘community of sentiment,’ a group that begins to imagine and feel things together.’31 Citing Anderson’s reference to the ways in which print capitalism creates communities of national sentiment, he argues that ‘electronic capitalism’ has similar and even greater effects, since they go beyond the context of the nation-state. As he puts it, ‘it is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labour prospects’32 or, if you are a born-again, of health, wealth, happiness and salvation. Indeed, collective experiences of the mass media can create ‘sodalities of worship [. . .] communities in themselves which are always potentially communities for themselves, capable of moving from shared imagination to collective action.’33
Mediatisation and 'delocalisation'

In recent years, nearly all ministries or missions in Nigeria have become producers of some form of print and/or audio and video production. More and more services, rallies, revivals and assemblies are videotaped as well as audiotaped, and sold to members, distributed to various shops, interdenominational groups, or simply passed from hand to hand. Born-again weeklies or monthlies appear, circulate for a period, sometimes breaking off production, or being replaced by new editions, and a huge quantity of Nigerian as well as foreign booklets and tracts can be found in the growing number of private Christian bookshops, sold by itinerant sellers at large assemblies, stocked in church or ministry bookshops. Videos of local revivals, rallies and plays, as well as many 'born-again' films or religious broadcasts from the United States and other countries can be rented from a growing number of born-again video rental outfits. Those lucky enough to have satellite television can watch and record foreign evangelical programmes, but even a television with a regular aerial will enable born-again viewers to tune into a variety of local televangelists, especially on beleaguered state networks. In the apartment where I lived, my flat-mates had a video machine, and our sitting room was often full of young born-agains come to watch the latest video that my friend's uncle had brought back from his trips to preach or attend born-again seminars in the United States or Britain.

While religious doctrine and ritual proper (prayer, bible study, guides to salvation, deliverance from evil spirits, testimonies of miracles and healing, sermons) make up a significant part of these media discourses and images, they by no means exhaust them. A dizzying quantity of discourses on subjects ranging over history, politics, development, economics, family life, sexual behaviour, professional conduct, dress codes, culture and lifestyles can be found in the form of tracts, articles, lectures, discussion groups, sermons, taped or televised messages, testimonies, music, public rallies, bumper stickers, plays in theatres or video movies, radio broadcasts, public preaching or 'street evangelism.' While the 'official' secular press, admittedly one of the freest and most critical in Africa, speaks to issues which most people see as irrelevant to their social reality, pentecostalism expends enormous resources on the dissemination of its messages in forms which excite and inspire, bringing technologies of modern media to bear on the issues and idioms central to popular urban culture.

Yet the media is not simply a tool for the dissemination of repre-
sentations, but central to the imagined form of the community. Firstly, the media allows for internal debate among members, and the working out of a relatively coherent pentecostal ‘public opinion.’ A born-again ‘community of sentiment’ is formed through reading, watching and discussing tracts, magazines, videos; interchanges which entail the articulation not only of models of ‘correct’ behaviour, and new regimes of personal and collective discipline, but also new attitudes towards consumption, new dress styles, aesthetics, ways of speaking and moving. These articulations are made with reference to, often self-consciously, a global pentecostal community and its perceived modes of worship, models of behaviour, styles and culture. I remember attending a birthday party thrown by a group of born-again friends in a small Lagos flat. Someone had brought an amplifier and speaker, although the space was easily small enough for those ‘preaching’ to be heard without them. A young woman led the praise and worship, speaking with an odd American accent. My friend with whom I had come started to giggle, and when I asked him what was funny, he told me that the nearest the girl had been to the U.S.A. was Ikeja (the site of the airport). My friend was forced to retire outside so as not to disturb the praying group when the girl started to preach in Yoruba with an American accent. Rather than being evidence for the ‘Americanisation’ of local culture, what this anecdote points to is the way in which these new forms of social behaviour express new kinds of prestige, new grounds upon which social hierarchies can be established, and new models for social interaction which draw their social power, not simply among members, but in the eyes of broader Nigerian society as well, from global images of wealth and success. Access to such registers has in Nigeria typically been the privilege of a small elite, particularly those in government. Part of pentecostalism’s success in Nigeria is related to the community’s ability not only to give regular people access to these global repertoires, but also to use this in its self-representations to an outside which has not yet been saved; an outside which comprises a potential threat, but also a challenge. Increasingly intense competition in the religious field means that ‘resources of externality’ are more and more essential for success.

The increasing use of the media also means that the locus of identification and signification is no longer the church or congregation as a ‘situated community’ which provides the place and context of the message’s enunciation. Messages and images are sent out to a public which is not defined according to denominational, ethnic, gender, geographic or social markers. Nor are they designed simply to reach
confirmed members of the church, or even the pentecostal community. Even before its mediation, every message, no matter how precise its theme, how circumscribed the original audience, is an evangelical message. That is, it is designed to reach beyond the saved, to incorporate a theoretically unlimited group of potential converts. This expansionist, evangelical position is fundamental to pentecostalism everywhere, and central to its transnational character. In the West, in particular the United States, televangelism and the intense mediatisation of the pentecostal message seems somehow in keeping with the totalising grip the media has on popular culture. But its use has particular significance in cultures where the media still represents ‘islands of modernity’ in a sea of local ‘artisanal’ culture. Here the media, and the technology behind it can often imply a magical, almost supernatural power of its own. State-controlled media is often dismissed as nothing but a ‘pack of lies,’ designed to mystify and oppress the people. Many early pentecostal tracts detailed the way the devil and his agents watch the activities of born-again Christians on televisions in their underwater lairs, and control their satanic agents in the world by use of computers, and one of the ‘holiness’ churches which grew out of the first pentecostal revival, Deeper Life, for several years forbade its members to watch television. In the wrong hands, the media and media technology are powerful tools for evil.

However, in the hands of the ‘anointed,’ electronic media can work its own special miracles. These days all pentecostals are encouraged to consume born-again media; the leader of Deeper Life now broadcasts televised messages. The technology is invested with symbolic power, the mediated message has a kind of supernatural force which has a profound impact. I often heard references made to those who were healed by touching the television, or who were moved to conversion after watching a broadcast. Below is an example of the rediffusion via the media (a taped message) of an indirect experience of the miracle of the mediated word:

I always share this testimony everywhere I go. This happened some years back. I was preaching on television in Benin City and a man watched my programme. As he watched, this man, according to his testimony, he has been sick for five years and had been on his sick bed at home. When I was done preaching I said—now you see, I didn’t even know he was there. I said, ‘get out of that bed in the name of Jesus. Do what you couldn’t do before.’ He believed me. He jumped out of his bed. His relative grabbed him and said ‘No, you can’t do that.’ Listen to me, your relatives will love you to death. They will love you and kill you. They said, ‘You can’t do that. For five years you’ve been on the bed, you can’t. Oh Uncle, stay on the bed.’ And he said, ‘Thank you, I’ve listened to you for five years and it didn’t help me. I like what that man just said.’ He said, ‘Get me
some water, I want to take a shower.' For five years they were dry-cleaning him on the bed. He got up, staggered to the bathroom, took a shower, a good shower, after five years. He said, 'Put my food on the table.' He got down and ate his food on the dining table for the first time in five years. And you know what he did next? He got out of the house, he walked to the T.V. station and he said, 'I want the manager.' And they took him to someone there. And he said 'You know, I don't know that man that just preached, but I want you to let him know that it works.'

The message conveyed in this testimony is not simply one of the powers of televangelism, nor God's mysterious ways in the world of electronic media. The miracle occurs in a 'virtual' relationship between the preacher and the sick man. Though they are total strangers, the sick man identifies immediately the televised message as a personal, intimate call. His family, who have been caring and ministering to him for five years—feeding and 'dry-cleaning' him on his bed—are depicted as the obstacles to his healing, salvation, and personal success. They may love him, but it is a dangerous love, one that thwarts and ultimately kills. The space of intimacy is thus displaced, and the story finishes with the recognition by the healed to the healer not in a person-to-person contact, (although we must imagine that such a contact subsequently took place) but rather via the television station manager.

The experience of faith, the act of conversion, is very often depicted as being the result of some kind of mediated contact with the 'Word.' Very rarely do testimonies place the emphasis on the role of personal, intimate connections of relations or friends. It is not necessarily the community which draws people in, but rather a community grows up around people who have had similar, individual experiences—at a rally, after reading a text in private, after hearing a taped message, or watching television. In this process, the projection of the pentecostal message, the image of the service, the sounds of prayers and tongues, singing and praise, in short the intense shared emotion of pentecostal communion is projected beyond the physical space of the building, the neighbourhood from which it originates, beyond the physical intimacy and spiritual communion of those initially present, outward into broader and broader circles, compelling those who later read, watch and listen to participate in this 'community of sentiment' from places well beyond its original site of expression.

The use of the media allows for the multiplication of narrative forms, and the delocalisation of messages. Sermons preached to local congregations are video or audio-taped, and then circulated among members not only of the given church or ministry, but among pentecostals and their unconverted friends, relatives and neighbours, or taken by mis-
sionaries to different parts of the country and even the world. Taped sermons are often transcribed and published in a variety of magazines, tracts, and leaflets with an equally wide circulation. The organisational structures of many new ministries, which have many local ‘parishes’ or branches, as well as many associated groups, such as youth, women’s or professional associations which are often interdenominational in membership, also ensure the circulation of discourses dissociated from specific social ‘places.’ The growth of new religious complexes such as ministry headquarters or prayer camps in what was previously socially empty space—bush land, recuperated swamp, industrial urban areas, or spaces which are not claimed or ‘colonised’ by a determinate social group, such as cinemas, national stadiums and sports grounds—reinforces the delocalisation of identity and community.

I will provide two examples of this as an illustration. The Redeemed Christian Church of God grew up in the 1950s as a pentecostal offshoot of the Aladura religious movement among the Yoruba, developing in one of the traditional Yoruba neighbourhoods in Lagos—Ebute Meta. For many decades, the church, while expanding gradually to other predominantly Yoruba neighbourhoods and towns, retained its identity as a primarily Yoruba church, whose congregations were closely linked to neighbourhoods where kinship, shared language and culture, and common social class (literate or semi-literate urban poor) were the defining elements. Over the past fifteen years, the organisation has grown enormously, incorporating multiple ethnicities and social classes and expanding well beyond Yorubaland to other areas in Nigeria, but also Ghana, Great Britain and the United States. The umbrella organisation is now called Christ the Redeemer’s Ministry International, and the Headquarters, while officially still located in Ebute Meta, has been effectively displaced to the enormous multi-million Naira ‘Redemption Camp,’ located in reclaimed bushland off the highway between Lagos and Ibadan, complete with its own Bible School, Media Production Unit, luxurious guesthouses, and stadium to hold over 20,000 people. The umbrella organisation produces quantities of booklets, tracts, bible study guides, audio and video recordings of every significant sermon, revival, and rally, as well as videos of born-again plays staged at the National Theatre. Local ‘parishes’ often have their own ‘tape ministries,’ as is the case of the Apapa parish, which produces its own desk-top-published weekly and monthly newsletters.

The case of Bethel Church in Lagos provides a striking example of how the media penetrates even the intimate space of the congregation and also demonstrates how new places are built from spaces without
creating localised social formations. Bethel Church is an impressive pentecostal complex developed in the late eighties on recovered swamp-land along the Lekki Peninsula, about ten miles from Victoria Island (where the rich and powerful live) and at least half an hour by car (on a Sunday) from the Lagos mainland. Proudly presenting itself as the only air-conditioned born-again church in Lagos, it boasts a large and beautifully decorated central church surrounded by well-appointed offices worthy of any of the offshore banks which are found in neighbouring Victoria Island. The church has a fleet of new buses, which it sends out early on Sunday mornings to various parts of Lagos to bring the faithful to worship. The service itself is extremely high-tech, even for pentecostal standards, the most striking aspect of which are the closed-circuit televisions dotted throughout the congregation, which number about three or four hundred. What I remarked immediately upon entering was the incongruity of these televisions in a space which, while large, still appears relatively intimate in comparison with the many other new ‘converted warehouse’ churches which can hold congregations of several thousand. One can see the pastor on the raised stage from all points within the church; clearly the televisions are not there to ensure everyone can see as well as hear the message. But people do watch them. The congregation is socially mixed—people from different areas of Lagos, different social classes, different ethnic groups. Many are young and fairly middle class, but there are middle-aged businessmen who arrive in Mercedes, their beautifully groomed wives on their arms. I spoke with a couple of older market women in traditional attire, and shared a pew with a young man in a worn suit who told me he was a vulcaniser. In this example of the mediation of the message, the performance staged by the preacher on his closed-circuit televisions takes to an extreme the tendency for the church to become less the site for the formation of ‘local’ communities, and more and more a stage for a performance whose audience is elsewhere. One could almost say that at Bethel, the physical audience is already only virtually present.

If we compare these organisations with other older, more established churches, both among mainstream or orthodox denominations, the Aladura churches, and even earlier pentecostal churches, we find striking differences in the ways in which congregations are set up as communities, and the way in which they identify themselves as co-religionists. As André Corten argues with reference to pentecostalism in Latin America; ‘Through the media, transversal relations [among churches] are formed; the community of the church still exists as a reference, but is transformed from a place of praise and cohesion to a “show
place” [lieu de spectacle] where deliverance and divine healing are staged. In this staging of a “show,” there is a change of imaginary [imaginaire].

This change of ‘imaginary’ involves the ways in which pentecostalism inserts itself into a situation of urban crisis, where ‘local’ identities and social relationships in Appadurai’s sense of ‘neighbourhoods’ are harder and harder to maintain and reproduce. This is in part due to the ways in which identities are imposed and manipulated by the Nigerian state, but also related to economic crisis and the strains it puts on local networks and social relationships, increased rural-urban migration, and perhaps most importantly, the ways in which the global images, ideas, commodity forms and technologies, have been absorbed by local culture. As Appadurai argues, in this context identity appears less and less as something tacitly accepted and reproduced as ‘natural,’ and more and more a question of conscious choice, justification and representation.

Pentecostalism offers forms of identification and community formation which are extremely well-adapted to this context, enabling individuals to recreate their personal and social lives in a way that helps them overcome the social anxiety and economic hardship of everyday life in the city, but also allows them to master this new context by providing their own account of it which inscribes itself into the logic of displaced communities and transnational identities.

For pentecostalism, the media is triply powerful—not simply as a tool which assists the spread of the message, and as a new mode of imagining the self and the community in terms of transnational identity, but also as a mode of appropriating modernity, and the material and symbolic goods it offers. As Appadurai argues, ‘electronic mass mediation and transnational mobilisation have broken the monopoly of autonomous nation-states over the project of modernisation.’ Although the ‘mega-rhetoric’ of developmental modernisation is still being spouted by the Nigerian state, we may see pentecostalism as an example of one of the ‘micronarratives and other expressive forms which allow modernity to be rewritten more as vernacular globalization and less as a concession to large-scale national and international policies.’

This is one aspect of pentecostalism’s relationship with the Nigerian state; the other evokes the dangerously volatile relationship between a nation-state in crisis, and the rise of more than one community of ‘postnational Others,’ groups which, as they compete for ‘a piece of the nation, and the resources of the state […] inevitably enter into the space of potential violence.’

It is this second line of inquiry outlined in the beginning of this paper that I will now examine briefly.
Winning Nigeria For Jesus: The political mobilisation of identity

In the light of brief remarks made at the beginning of this paper on the ‘crisis’ of the nation-state, what can we say about the Nigerian context? One can hardly talk about the loss of a fundamental national identity in places where it has never been fully established, or, at least, where its existence reveals a radically different history from that of its Western counterparts. Despite convincing arguments for looking more closely at the historicity of the African state, and rejecting the image of the ‘imported’ state which hangs like a ‘balloon’ suspended above society, the mode in which the modern nation-state is ‘grafted’ onto indigenous political forms unsurprisingly results in something quite different from the liberal model. Yet the ‘crisis’ of identification finds its parallels in the Nigerian context, even if the history of the nation is a radically different one.

Nationalism in Nigeria, and, more particularly, the socio-cultural content of citizenship and normative notions such as civic virtue have always been the weakest aspect of the Nigerian nation-state. Historically, anti-colonial nationalism expresses the refusal to accept membership in a civil society of subjects, and forces to a greater or lesser degree the opening up of a dialogue between the colonial state and its subjects who claim the rights of citizens. However, anti-colonial nationalism cannot successfully mobilise identification with the nascent nation-state, since the state is synonymous with colonial power and the ‘nation’ is at this stage empty of the symbolic and emotive content required to command allegiance and provide the grounds of the imagined unity upon which citizenship rests. It is therefore not surprising that processes of identification in the nationalist period do not conform to the liberal models. Lonsdale’s excellent discussion of Kikuyu ethnicity, in which he distinguishes between ‘moral ethnicity’ and ‘political tribalism,’ provides a more appropriate model for the ways in which communities and identities are formed. The illegitimacy of the colonial political economy means that members of society cannot rely upon its ideological structures to provide an identity which could alleviate ‘the terror of not knowing how civic virtue could be achieved in social practice, how to allocate and control authority.’ ‘Moral ethnicity’ involves the creation of new communities through an ongoing debate about civic virtue against which the regime is tested, and in terms of which identities are constructed. The rise of independent Christianity and the force of religion in anti-colonial movements could also be seen from this point of view, as I have argued elsewhere.
Thus forms of ‘public space’ develop outside the unified community of the nation, that is, as multiple ‘publics’ or multiple, competing identities. Pluralism in Nigeria means not, as theorists of liberal democracy explain it, a plurality of interests meeting in a public sphere whose underlying cohesion is determined by a principle of citizenship captured by the ideology of juridical equality and symbolic force of ‘the nation.’ Rather, it means a plurality of ‘citizenships,’ each with its own moral vision, invented history, symbolic forms, models of power and authority, and institutional expressions, all interacting in the context of an authoritarian power whose control over public goods and accumulation is constantly under the pressure of their claims, and whose legitimacy is challenged by their alternate visions. The national official public sphere in the post-colonial period becomes not less but more synonymous with state power, and does not denote an intermediate space of negotiation. The official public space is a ‘monologic’ one which, as Ekeh argues, is ‘morally empty.’ The state retains its monopoly over discourses of social progress and development and attempts to ensure that competing identities remain fragmented and politically unmobilised. Groups negotiate under the form of ‘political tribalism,’ attempting to colonise this space and appropriate the state’s power for their own in a struggle of all against all.

Attempts by the post-colonial state to moralise the political economy, to link power with virtue and thus legitimate its exercise, reveal not the officially stated ambitions extolled in the press—a just society, a thriving economy, prosperity for all, and other such official cant—but the dissimulation, the ‘unreality’ that Mbembe places at the heart of post-colonial relations of power. While continuing to plunder shamelessly the coffers of the state, living lifestyles and publicly displaying their power in a manner that reflects well Mbembe’s characterisation of the state in terms of excess and obscenity, various leaders with the aid of the national press have attempted to impose ‘morality’ and ‘discipline’ by fiat. Shagari’s ‘Ethical Revolution’ during Nigeria’s Second Republic or General Buhari’s ‘War Against Indiscipline’ are two examples of the outrageous sort of ‘doublespeak’ that those in power have used to try and impose a version of civility and disciplined behaviour on the population, one completely at odds with the real activities of powerful men.

As Appadurai points out, states ‘are everywhere seeking to monopolise the moral resources of community, either by flatly claiming coevality between nation and state, or by systemically museumising and representing all the groups within them in a variety of heritage politics that
seems remarkably uniform throughout the world. In Nigeria, the state has used a combination of these two strategies. In the aftermath of the civil war, ethnic forms of identification become officially proscribed, 'tribalism' is trumpeted in the press as the great enemy of the people—ethnicity, officially speaking, does not exist. However, budget allocations and the apparently endless spate of state creations, political appointments and election strategies show that the taxonomies of ethnicity are very much alive in state rationality and strategy. Judicious deference paid by government leaders and dignitaries to 'local customs,' the staging of 'traditional' dances and the wearing of traditional regalia during official visits and ceremonies which are often televised, the funding of cultural events, such as Festac, the television and radio productions or dramatisations of local ceremonies, stories and fables, all of these are part of a 'heritage politics' which seeks to abrogate and control the content of such identity, to reduce the potentially volatile differences among groups to a series of 'traditions' which are portrayed as the 'same,' insofar as they are boiled down in state rhetoric to the 'Africa-ness' or the 'Nigeria-ness' of the nation. Religion has its official uses as well—leaders make much of their 'devoutness' as Christians and Muslims, calling publicly on God to help them in their task of national redemption, and bargaining with, or buying off prominent religious leaders, yet all the while denouncing 'fanaticism' and the evil machinations of those who seek to use religion to 'political ends' whenever it appears that groups or individuals have placed their loyalty in their faith above their obedience and allegiance to the nation-state. The national press's reporting on religion rarely deviates from this official line; religious riots are inevitably the work of 'fanatics' under the grip of foreign doctrines and finance, which 'corrupt' and 'distort Nigerian Islamic [and Christian] culture'; pentecostal leaders in particular have been portrayed recently as money-grabbing manipulators who dupe their congregations into believing foreign doctrines for their own personal profit and to serve their political ambitions.

As Mbembe points out, the signs, narratives and vocabulary that the state produces are not meant merely to be symbols; they are officially invested with a surplus of meanings which are not negotiable and which one is officially forbidden to depart from or challenge. So as to assure that no such challenge takes place, the champions of state power invent entire constellations of ideas; they adopt a distinct set of cultural repertoires and powerfully evocative concepts; but they also have resort, if necessary, to the systematic application of pain.

When groups refuse to participate in this 'dissimulation,' when their claims go beyond what can be silenced by state rhetoric or bribery,
violence (and the threat of violence) is the frequent and effective solution. One only needs to think of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni, or the death sentence pronounced on General Zamani Lekwot for his alleged role in the Zangon-Kataf religious riots; extreme examples of violence that has become a central feature of everyday life in Nigeria. Government violence is often portrayed as a necessary evil for the 'security and well-being of the nation,' as this pithy comment in the African Concord on the Maitatsine religious upheavals in the early '80s shows: 'As usual, they started forcing Islamic fundamentalism on other Muslims. Predictably, government had to use force to dislodge them, resulting in the death of about 400 Nigerians.' This dissimulation or 'pretence' (le simulacre) which distinguishes postcolonial rule finds its dissemination in the national press and television, despite the fact that the Nigerian press is one of the freest in Africa. Presidential speeches, official events, development projects are 'staged' in newspapers and television broadcasts. Despite the fact that national weeklies and dailies often criticise particular government policies or expose scandals, as Louise Bourgault observes, the national, or quasi-official press is one of advocacy rather than critical journalism. In any case, as Mbembe makes clear, it is not as though people believe in the pretence; hence its 'exposure,' while potentially dangerous for journalists, doesn't remove the fact that, whether people believe or not, they are forced to participate in it. As Oluyinka Esan shows, popular responses to news and information programmes characterise them as 'lies,' 'a nauseating business.' The extravagance and violence of the state, its arbitrary interventionism, its ability to produce relations of 'domesticity' and complicity with its subjects through the use of signs and cultural repertoires which partially confiscate the identities of people, means that the official public sphere does not need to be the primary space of allegiance, nor does the media really need to persuade, but rather both function as a kind of 'stage' for the enactment of power. The people are required to participate as an audience, to applaud or to jeer, but be part of the theatre.

One of the central cultural repertoires that the state evokes, if not in so many words, is the realm of the supernatural. The developmentalist state must pay lip-service to its Western model, official public discourse remains secular and rational, in particular its forms in the official media. And yet the outrageous excess of personal accumulation, the extravagance and obscenity of elite lifestyles, the arbitrary uses of terror and violence, all of these immediately refer, in popular imagination, to the idiom of occult powers and witchcraft. J.-F. Bayart makes reference to this in his analysis of the 'politics of the belly,' in which he
locates elites’ strategies of accumulation and consumption in an historical system of ‘extraversion’ where rents from their privileged connection with the ‘outside’ enable elites to maintain their positions and ‘eat’ their fill. This idiom of the belly also evokes the relationship between eating and the world of occult forces, in particular, witchcraft. As Peter Geschiere argues, in Africa, ‘the problem of power has reached unprecedented proportions. This is one of the reasons why ideas like evu, djambe or sem [forms of witchcraft] seem to impose themselves when one attempts to understand modern relationships. […] The association between power and eating (and thus witchcraft) serve to express a profound anxiety, but at the same time an obsession vis-à-vis power, and its new forms. The official discourse about governance is seen as mendacious and unconvincing to most people since it fails to address those issues which are central to the idioms that make up popular political consciousness—in particular the unseen world of spiritual forces. The popular press is full of stories of witchcraft, ‘money medicine,’ evil spirits such as ‘Mammy Wata’; in urban centres, rumour and panic about uncontrolled spiritual forces abound (such as the ‘missing genitals’ scare of 1990, where people were lynched after having ‘spirited’ away the private parts of others by casual contact). In Nigeria, power is itself the evidence of strong spiritual connections; all ‘big men’ that have ‘eaten well’ are understood to have links to secret and occult forms of power. The state, with its references to Nigerian ‘culture,’ its uses of evocative symbols and language, reinforces, not unconsciously, the popular understanding of a whole world of dirty and dangerous dealings behind the scenes.

Mission Christianity took a strong position about ties with ‘traditional religion’ and cultural practices, but failed to develop a discourse which would address the continued reality of the forces expressed through these cultural forms. The discourse it developed about civic virtue and allegiance to the state was a purely secular account. The secular discourse about civic virtue simply misses the mark, since in Nigeria, ‘virtue,’ or normative issues about the uses of authority, are indissociable from supernatural matters. What is novel about pentecostalism is that it directly addresses the problem of the forces of evil and incites public testimony about the workings of evil forces, producing discourses which expose these forces and show the individual how to overcome their dangerous and destructive influence. These narratives enable the individual to constitute himself as an historical agent who is not only empowered in his personal life, but together with other believers has the strength to do battle with ‘powers and principalities,’ ‘raising
up an army for God in the Land.’ The critique of government in the excerpt below, which I have cited and discussed elsewhere, shows that pentecostalism faces squarely the real issues behind the workings of power in Nigeria:

Nimrod, he was a hunter... and there's a hunting spirit that has come all the way down from Nimrod. Now notice that Nimrod was a man who dealt a lot into sorcery, he was into all kinds of things. And most of the continent of Africa, you notice, are the people of the descendants of Ham, and the things that you find in the life of Nimrod, you find all over the continent... The man was actually possessed of a leopard spirit, a hunting spirit... many African leaders seem to have something in common with the leopard. A lot of them love leopard skin, either as part of the decoration of their houses or as part of their regalia. If you look at their hats, certain of these leaders somehow derive powers from the spirit of the leopard.... Now, these hunting spirits affect the political life of this continent. You notice that hunters actually steal the life of the animals, and when you look at the way corruption goes on in this continent, you will see that it is a derivative of this hunting spirit. What does a man want to do when he steals 8 billion dollars, 10 billion dollars? Even if he lived five lives he will not be able to spend 10 billion dollars. He probably will be able to spend maybe 2 or 3 million, but when a man steals 13, 14 billion dollars, then he's richer than the nation itself which he's ruling, then you begin to understand that there is something in it. When you notice that virtually every civil servant wants to steal from you because he is in a position where he has to help you, and if he does not sign the paper, he does not pass the file on, then whatever you want cannot be done. Then you understand that something is at work. It's not necessarily poverty only, there's a spirit behind it.

Pentecostal discourse on the current economic and political situation in Nigeria entails a fairly bold attack on the Nigerian state. In its engagement with local forms of knowledge and practice it develops an ongoing critical debate about government, one which not only indicts the immorality and inequality at the heart of domination, but does this by using a language and imagery that resonates in the imagination of the dominated. It is, in part at least, through this ‘intellectual response to social process... [this] contest of moral knowledge’ that the community constitutes itself politically. Pentecostalism is a political force not merely as a result of successful competition within the religious field—providing the spiritual and material benefits others did not. Its radical success in conversion has as much to do with the fact that it reconceptualises the moral order, claiming a redemptive vision of citizenship in which the moral government of the self is linked to the power to influence the conduct of others. To align oneself with the wrong sort of supernatural and material powers, and to regulate one's conduct according to the wrong set of precepts opens up the space in which the ‘failure of the nation’ is manifested. It sets itself the political mission of ‘healing the land,’ quoting Isaiah 58,12: ‘And they that shall

Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism

305
be with thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach.' Kehinde Osinowo, when asked why he had started his organisation ‘Christians for the Regeneration of the Nation’ explained that; ‘without spiritual change, no program will have its effect. The sin of the nation is based on the sin of the individual . . . we shall restore Nigeria to moral probity, godliness and prosperity.  

Pentecostalism engages directly with the state, but in a manner which I would like to argue is novel, and does not quite fit into Mbembe’s characterization. Mbembe argues that the complicity between ruler and ruled in the ‘simulacrum’ that defines the relationship of power means that those who have had their identities partially confiscated have been able, by taking over the signs and language of officialdom, ‘to glue back together the bits and pieces of their fragmented identities.’ The fact that they may do this, ‘may demystify the commandement or even erode its supposed legitimacy’ but ‘it does not do violence to the commandement’s material base. At best it creates pockets of indiscipline on which the commandement may stub its toe.’ I find his argument convincing in general, and I have argued elsewhere that pentecostalism, despite its egalitarian position on spiritual power, bodily control and abstinence, its rejection of bribery, theft and sexual excess, and its penetrating critique of the workings of power, does in other ways appropriate the language and imagery of the state, especially when it attempts to enter the political arena. Winning Nigeria (Africa, the world) for Jesus means the projection into the national public space of a highly political agenda. The image of the ‘invading army,’ sweeping all unbelievers in its path, expresses the political ambition on the part of pentecostals for material and political autonomy from the state, all the time using the state’s own images of armed leaders waging war, with the ultimate goal of replacing one ‘theocracy’ with another. As one pastor puts it:

Clearly, we will have to contend and conflict with wicked spirits in heavenly places and rulers of the darkness of this world and wrest their control over entire cities, regions, nations and continents to enable us to do our job of preaching the gospel to all nations of the world. The Holy Spirit has recently been calling the Church (the body of Christ) to prepare for unprecedented warfare through many Christian leaders. The 1990s will definitely witness the most intense (sic) spiritual warfare the Church has ever been involved in over its entire 2,000 year history. There is no de-militarised zone. You will have to fight. Be of good cheer our Lord has already given us the victory.

And yet pentecostalism appears to bring something extra to this uneven struggle of ‘glueing’ identities back together, something which might
ultimately result in more than a stubbed toe for the nation-state. As I
discussed above, it is the access pentecostals have to ‘resources of exter-
nality’ and the way that the communities are constructed as part of a
transnational movement that gives it its particular position of strength
vis-à-vis the state. Firstly, because it has access to completely new reper-
toires of images and narratives about ‘modernity’ and ‘modernisation’
which are quite different from those monopolised by the state. Local
appropriations of global pentecostal narratives about the course of world
history, about the workings of evil spirits in the global political arena,
of models of domesticity and family life, of aesthetics and lifestyles, of
consumption and accumulation, provide a new site from which to evalu-
ate the past and imagine the future. Moreover, these narratives and
images adapt themselves so easily to local concerns and problems, in
a way that mission Christianity did not, that they immediately appear
to have that ‘naturalness’ and plausibility that is so vital for belief.
American pentecostals are completely at home using the Internet to
discuss how demons enter the body and how to make sure deliverance
is complete. Nigerian pentecostals identify immediately with the way
that what have typically been presented as two separate registers—
‘modernity’ (the computer) and ‘tradition’ (the evil spirits)—find their
untroubled marriage in this new form of global modernity. These con-
nections give local appropriations a sort of intellectual legitimacy and
prestige, a kind of global guarantee, and the fact that Nigerian pente-
costal narratives and media productions are received and diffused well
beyond national boundaries only serves to enforce this, as well as strengthen
their sense of trans-national belonging and purpose.

Communities which do not have a fixed ‘sense of place’ or defined
locality present a particular challenge for the state. The Nigerian gov-
ernment may refuse visas to visiting evangelists, may close down churches
or refuse building permits for new ones, may wage war against them
in the national press; pentecostalism can work around such constraints
in ways that other identities or groups may not. With its own media
networks, its connections with global pentecostalism which do not depend
for their survival on the movements of individuals, with its ‘delocalised’
forms of community and networks which extend well beyond a neigh-
bourhood church, or specific physical site, the state has a much more
difficult time policing its activities. At the same time, it provides a form
of overarching identity which makes the government’s manipulation
and control over other forms of identity much less traumatic and con-
sequential for individuals. Because they occupy a space of relative exte-
riority vis-à-vis the state, pentecostals can afford to reject ‘complicity’—
refusing to bribe, refusing all sorts of excess, rejecting well-established hierarchies and social relations, refusing to compromise their beliefs for many of the other competing identities they may have access to.

Yet at the same time, such engagement with the state inevitably involves the politicisation of identity, one which, in the context of their transnational links, demonstrates the limits of integration within the nation-state and the dangers to national unity. Pentecostals are fighting what they see as a life and death battle with the enemy—a zero-sum struggle for existence. The enemy is whatever cannot be assimilated to the born-again articulation of reality. Now clearly a nation whose population is half Muslim, and whose Muslim population includes similar movements with a similar political agenda, cannot easily hold itself together under the weight of such opposing forces. Despite the intensified authoritarianism of the Nigerian state at the present time, this newly volatile political fault line presents perhaps the greatest threat ever to its grip over Nigerian society. The increasingly violent religious riots in Northern Nigeria over the past decade must be seen as directly related to pentecostals' evangelical strategies and their use of the media to disseminate their messages. Their political agenda is made all too clear by the leader of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria in a speech in 1993, which I will quote at length:

In Nigeria we can become a fantastic force for good. What kind of force? A fantastic force for good for this nation... Brethren, God expects us to reach a situation whereby we will decree that there will be no rain in Nigeria. And until we call for again there will be no rain. The Almighty God wants us in a situation where we will say, alright, because the government could not do what it was asked to do, from hence forth we ask the supernatural power of God to paralyse the electricity and power generators, they will not work because the current will not flow... it is written in Proverbs 28:2 'when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice'. And how are we going to get someone who is righteous in authority? Don't let anybody deceive you, thieves will never vote for a policeman. Never. Thieves will always vote for thieves, robbers vote for robbers, in other words, only the righteous will vote for the righteous... So how are we ever going to put the righteous in authority? It is by winning the masses to Jesus Christ. Nobody can bribe him to vote for the wrong man... We can become the force of change not by loving politicians, but by winning souls. If we do what God wants us to do, i.e. if we can get at least eighty percent of the people in Nigeria born again, you can be sure a Christian will be the president. You do not even need to spend a kobo to get them; you won't even need to be a rich man before you become president, because the people will say you are the one they want and you must be there...

The plan of God is not limited to Nigeria alone. Very soon, there will be an extension when PFN will become PFA, i.e. Pentecostal Fellowship of Africa. We will take over the whole of Africa. And that is not the end of the whole vision. The Almighty God wants PFN to become number one in the gospel for the world, and other nations of the world will say, what is happening? We thought Nigeria was finished, but all of a sudden it has become leader of the world. Because I
want you to know, brethren, when the spiritual climate is right, things will happen in the economy. . . . I remember the time when one pound sterling was almost equal to one Naira. Today, what is the situation? And the politicians are telling you there is no hope. God has promised, it is not going to come from the promises of politicians who said we will do a mighty thing and they didn't build mighty things when they were there. They spoil the thing. . . .

Brethren, may I tell you that the strategy we are going to use to win Nigeria has to be the strategy of an invading army. When an army wants to take over a nation, they have certain characteristics, they don't make noise, like so many of us are doing. . . . Look at the those who are really doing substantial work in Nigeria today. . . . They have started building churches, house fellowships are spreading, they are winning people all over the place. . . . People who are working while others are sleeping and they take over the essential things, they don't just go and kidnap the president. They take over the media, the radio, the television stations, they convince the rich people, the businessmen, they get the students, they get backings, because when they take over it is the market women and the students they will tell 'come and demonstrate it if you are in support.' If you want to take over Nigeria you better win the students, win the market women, the media, the broadcasters, the rich, the poor and the press. Glory be to God, I am sure they are here today. By the time they leave, they will be born again.68

Central to their strategy of winning Nigeria is the demonisation of Islam. The competition that Islamic movements represents, not only in terms of the religious field, but also in terms of the appropriation of the state-dominated public sphere, results in the linking in pentecostal discourse of the evil spiritual forces at work behind Islam to the current state of economic and political decline, capitalising on the resentment felt widely among Southern Christians about the Northern (read Muslim) domination of national politics since independence, and growing fears about the 'Islamisation' of the nation-state. In the pentecostals' bid for political mobilisation, the internal debate about the proper form of government is conflated into a Manichean struggle between two religious complexes, rendered in terms of a global battle between spiritual forces of good and evil. Exhortations such as the following would have been unthinkable coming from the pentecostal community a few decades ago, and show to what extent the changes in the ways identity and community is constructed and mobilised politically have potentially extremely real and dangerous consequences:

When a non-believer in Christ strikes a Christian, the latter (Christian) should stand up erect and look at the former direct in the face. A look can many times transform the non-believer, can pierce and melt the heart. . . . But there are moments when the Christian like the master should take up his whip and flog sense into people. Moments of open and direct confrontation may sometimes be called for. On no account should a Christian take himself as the one who always has to bear the stroke of the other. There are moments when he has to stand up on his two feet and say like the fly, 'No' to the huge cow! We Christians in Nigeria want peace and unity of the nation. But on no account shall we compromise our religion for any or both of them.69
Winning Nigeria for Jesus entails a national strategy which expresses not so much the process of mobilising identity in terms of local 'invented traditions' which typically characterises ethnic nationalisms, but rather involves the localisation of a transnational conflict between what are global religious identities. The localisation of global identities inevitably brings into the context of local politics pressures and conflicts from a much wider arena, with the result that local political imagination increasingly brings such events and conflicts to bear on the interpretation of mundane occurrences as well as state policy. In the kind of large-scale 'delocalised' identity which pentecostalism seems to foster, face-to-face everyday relationships are reinterpreted such that everyday certainties about 'others' are subverted, and one's Muslim neighbour or brother-in-law suddenly becomes a dangerous agent of the devil. At the level of national politics, state decisions and activities are likewise interpreted in terms of larger conflicts; for example, the Nigerian state's decision to break diplomatic relations with Israel was seen by many pentecostal leaders as a principal reason behind Nigeria's economic decline, and more evidence for the 'Islamisation' (read 'demonisation') of the nation.

Islam is itself increasingly transnational in the same ways as pentecostalism, and the symbolic and material networks of Nigerian Muslims, the ways in which identity is formed, community imagined and the media implicated in these processes are remarkably reminiscent of the discussion above. In this sense, the nation is not so much the prize of political mobilisation as the stage upon which it is acted out. This situation may seem paradoxical, especially in the light of the highly 'nationalistic' language which is used in pentecostal political discourse and its stated ambitions for 'national regeneration.' However, Appadurai points out that this sort of expression is less about the hegemony of territorial nationalism, and more to do with the fact that 'no idiom has yet emerged to capture the collective interests of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and post-national identities. Such interests are many and vocal, but they are still entrapped in the linguistic imagery of the territorial state. [...] Postnational or nonnational movements are forced by the very logic of actually existing nation-states to become antinational or antistate and thus to inspire the very state power that forces them to respond in the language of counter-nationalism. This 'linguistic trap,' which of course goes well beyond just 'words,' but involves the internalisation of an historically realised political form, seems to describe well pentecostalism's apparently paradoxical project of personal and collective emancipation as well as sectarian violence and theocratic ambition.
We are witnessing the construction in Nigeria of what might be called a 'postnational' form of religious identity, in which global images, ideas and forms are locally appropriated and used in the creation of new subjectivities and collectivities whose forms and activities appear to reflect a new role for the imagination in changing the everyday lives of individuals, one which is intimately linked to the use of the media and processes of globalisation. Yet such a construction inevitably engages these groups into the vicious circle of conflict which results when the Nigerian state as well as other large-scale movements, unable to tolerate the challenge pentecostalism represents, respond with aggression, censure or violence, provoking in turn a 'counternational' response. This vicious circle can, particularly in the context of violence, hardship and precariousness which marks urban life in Nigeria, easily become an escalating spiral of violence, and indicates the very real danger that this new form of imbrication between local and global presents not only to the nation-state, but to the lives of those who are caught up in it.

NOTES

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1. There is a growing literature on the subject of globalisation, and a fair amount of discussion over the definition of the phenomenon. The term ‘transnationalism’ (transnationalisation) seems more often used in the francophone literature; ‘globalisation’ and ‘modialisation’ are often understood as involving a process of the ‘homogenisation’ or ‘Americanisation’ of global culture, thus in the anglophone literature ‘transnationalism’ appears to be used as a way of distinguishing the phenomenon from this approach. In this paper, I will use the terms more or less interchangeably, and will make my definition clear in the discussion below. See M. Featherstone, S. Lash, R. Robertson eds. Global Modernities (London: Sage, 1997); R. Robertson Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture (London: Sage, 1992); M. McLuhan, B. Powers The Global Village: Transformations in World, Life and Media in the 21st Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).


3. Ibid. p. 70.

4. Ibid. p. 73.


6. Ibid. p. 53.


8. Ibid. p. 31.


20. This was the title of another address given by Emeka Nwankpa, at the conference cited below.


34. I thank Karin Barber for this apt expression, used in comments she made on one of my papers in progress.


49. The Festival of Black Arts and Culture hosted by Nigeria in 1977. I often heard pentecostals make reference to the demonic influence this festival had on Nigeria. Rosalind Hackett cites one pentecostal writer who claims that 'through this lavish and glamorous festival [. . .] Nigeria had given an open invitation to the very Kingdom of the Devil to invade her and perpetuate his reign.' L. Ononyem, 'Stop the Delphic Games! Another Demonic Invasion Looms on Nigeria,' in True Light 1,1 1993, cited in R. Hackett, 'Mediating the Miracles: The Charismatic Appropriation of Media Technologies in Ghana and Nigeria,' in this collection.
50. A wonderful popular response to this use of religious sentiment is quoted in T. Falola and J. Ihonvbere, The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic 1979-84 (London: Zed Books, 1985) p. 117. The oilworker cited below was reacting to Shagari's national address in 1983 in which he called on God to help him sort out the unholy mess his administration had made of the economy.

I think say di man don dey craze for head. [. . .] Since four year ago, we never see anything. The man no dey even fear, na becos people no dey stone am. Wey people no see food to chop or money to pay rent, na i+m e day say God go helpe him? Na God can hand for all de bad thing them dey do since dem come enter pawner?
54. African Concord, op. cit.
59. See Ibid.
60. These are extremely popular and widely circulated booklets, which are often also circulated in audio form as well as reprinted by installments in a variety of pentecostal magazines. They often mirror very closely stories which circulate in the popular 'tabloid' press, with themes such as 'How my search for a baby led me into witchcraft' and 'My wife is initiating my children into witchcraft.' The titles of these booklets are themselves very suggestive: 'How I Served Satan Until Jesus Christ Delivered Me: A true account of my twenty-one years experience as an agent of darkness and my deliverance by the powerful arm of God in Christ Jesus' and 'Former Satan Deputy in the World Turned Follower of Christ' and 'Exposition on Water Spirits.' Similar accounts, though usually less detailed, can be heard in services and revival rallies during the time consecrated to conversion testimonies.
63. J. Lonsdale, op. cit.

65. Interview, Lagos, April, 1993.


68. This speech itself provides an interesting example of the way in which Pentecostal discourses circulate via the media. The speech was originally given in closed PFN meeting in October, 1992. The PFN is an interdenominational body formed in 1986 to represent Pentecostals in the Christian Association of Nigeria, a group which represents Christian interests to the Nigerian state. Recorded by a member of the President’s church, it was transcribed and printed in the church’s monthly newsletter in two installments (December, 1992, January 1993). Another version of the same speech was given at the organisation’s second biennial conference in February, 1993, where it was taped by the organisers and on sale for those attending the conference, as well as circulated among the congregations of many of the groups in attendance. The original message, presented before a live audience of about 200, most of whom were PFN State or Local Representatives, becomes available not simply to the general pentecostal public, but also the general public, including state officials and members of the press (who were in fact in attendance at both the October and February meetings).


70. Appadurai, op. cit., p. 166.

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