

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
Spring 2010-2011

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Humanities 4131
Office hours: Tu., 2:30-3:30 pm
and by appointment

African Christianity
Thursday 3:00-5:00 pm
Humanities 5257

Historians once studied Christianity as a tool of colonial oppression and alienation, or as a platform for African resistance and cultural appropriation. Recently, the conversion of Africans and the translation of the Bible in the vernacular have been explored as mutually transformative processes, impacting European missionaries and the Church at large. Beyond the significance of ritual and material culture in the life of the converts, historians have learned to approach African Christianity as a genuine spiritual experience, and a site where important aspects of modern African intellectual history can be investigated. In the last twenty years, the exuberant spread of Pentecostal Churches and Born-Again Christianity in Africa has captured the scholarly imagination, and led scholars to engage in new debates on the spiritual imagination of modern Africans.

The seminar will help students to read seminal studies on African Christianity, contextualize the vast and ever-expanding literature on the topic, and discern the major debates that occur among scholars. After several weeks of reading, students will conduct research and write a paper on a topic of their choice.



Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, 'The Historic Death of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito, on 17 January 1961'
(N.D.) Collection Bogumil Jewsiewicki.

Requirements and Grading

- 1) Leading the discussion for one session (you can choose to do this with another seminar member). This involves being able to contextualize the required readings by looking at some of the recommended readings for that week (listed under “also”).
- 2) Five-page critique (week 3 to 8): For the week you lead discussion, you will submit a five-page critical analysis of the week’s reading. Rather than summarizing the reading, your paper should engage it by raising critical questions about the methods, theories, and conclusions put forward by their authors. In short, you should critically assess and analyze the contents of the book, discuss their significance, and the contribution the book makes to the history of Christianity in Africa. You are encouraged in their papers to build upon the readings from previous weeks and the supplementary readings listed under “also”. A hard copy of the paper will be due in class on the day of discussion. Electronic copies of your critique should be distributed to other seminar members by Tuesday noon preceding the relevant class.
- 3) Writing a 20-30 page research paper on a select topic chosen in consultation with me. A preliminary outline and bibliography for your research paper is due in class on week 6.

Grading will be based on your participation to the discussions, your work as a session leader, your five-page critique of a week’s reading, and your final paper.

Research

- I recommend that you start your research as early as possible, as some archives and sources, available though interlibrary loan, can take a while to arrive.
- Memorial Library owns microfilms of the huge missionary archives of the CMS (Church Missionary Society). This is a key source for British colonies in East, Central and West Africa. There are also archives in French on Congo-DRC and French Africa in the Department of Special Collections: look at the Memorial Library website, and search for “Miscellaneous Collections.” Several other resources exist (for instance, the American Historical Society holds the diaries of American missionary William Walker who served in Gabon at the end of the 19th century).
- Browsing through the Memorial Library bookshelves in the DT section, by region or country, will yield many published memoirs, books, reports, and fictions (missionary novels: a favorite genre among white ministers) dating from the 19th century. Look also for African writers.
- Look also at the Center for Research Libraries, which houses the Cooperative Africana Microform Project (CAMP): <http://www.crl.edu/area-studies/camp>.
- You can also search around the catalog for the Herskovits Library at Northwestern, particularly the vertical files collection: <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/libraries-collections/evanston-campus/africana-collection>.
- I’ll bring a copy of the Africana Archival Materials, a catalog edited by David Henige in the mid-1980s that describes various resources in the US, in Europe and in Africa. David Henige can help you in locating material (dhenige@library.wisc.edu).

- You may be able to find private collections located in US cities (particularly in Kansas) if you look for specific churches or missionary congregations.
- Visual Archives. I am a big fan of these. A careful analysis of colonial pictures and photographs can bring considerable insights in the colonial period. For scholarly guidance on the craft of iconographic analysis, look at Paul Landau and Deborah Kaspin, eds., *Images and Empire* (), and relevant chapters in Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge* (2002) and *Along the Archival Grain* (2009). I amused myself by practicing this in a recent article in *African Affairs*, July 2010: “Colonial Bones,” available on my website: <http://history.wisc.edu/bernauld/publications.htm>. For visual archives: at UW, the digital collection Africa Focus has some historical pictures (look for Kuba for instance). At Northwestern, look at the Humphrey Winterton Collection on East Africa: <http://repository.library.northwestern.edu/winterton/>. The French National Library has a rich collection of digital pictures that you can search by topic or country name: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/> (click on “images”). I found interesting pictures in The Negro Artist (for precolonial Africa, Kongo Kingdom): <http://www.negroartist.com/precolonial%20africa/index.html>, and on Columbia University’s website on African Diaspora in the World WideWeb: <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/diasporas/resources.html>.



Lady Missionaries in Uganda (CMS), n. d.

SCHEDULE

Week 1. 01/20

Conversion

Thomas Spear, “Towards the History of African Christianity” in Spear and Kimambo, eds., *East African Expressions of Christianity* (1999)

Paul Landau, “Religion and Christian Conversion in African History: A New Model,” *JAH*, 23-1 (1999)

Pier Larson, "Capacities and Modes of Thinking." *American Historical Review* (1997)

Also: Horton, R. "African Conversion," *Africa* 41-2, 1971
Sanneh, L. *Translating the Message* (1989)*

Week 2. 01/27. Mission Life

Mongo Beti, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1956)

Also: Harries, P. *Butterflies and Barbarians* (2007)*
Martin, P. *Catholic Women in Catholic Brazzaville* (2009)*
Pels, P. *A Politics of Presence* (1999)

Week 3. 02/XX. Material And Spiritual Engagements

Sandra Greene *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter* (2002)

Also: White, L. "Roast Mutton Captivity," in *Speaking With Vampires* (2000)*
Hunt, N. "Dining and Surgery," in *A Colonial Lexicon* (1999)*

Week 4. 02/10. New Perspectives on African Christianity

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

Also: Comaroff, J. and J., *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991 & 1997)*
Critique of the Comaroffs by J. D. Y. Peel: "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?" *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, 1995
Landau, P. *The Realm of the World* (1995)*

Week 5. 02/17. Independent Churches and Healing Movements

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit* (1996)

Also: Fields, K. *Revival and Rebellion in Central Africa* (1985)*
Lan, D. *Guns and Rain* (1985)*

Week 6. 02/24. Literacy, Translation and Vernacularization

Derek Peterson, *Creative Writing* (2004)

Preliminary outline and bibliography due in class

Also: Comaroff, J. & J. *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991 & 1997)
Sandgren, D. *Christianity and the Gikuyu* (1989)*

Spear T. & Kimambo, I. eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity* (1999)*

Week 7. 03/03. The Devil

Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil* (1999)

Also: Ellis, S. and ter Haar, G. "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36-2, 1998
Longman, T. *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (2010)*
Meyer, B. "Commodities and the Power of Prayer," in *Globalization and Identity*, edited by B. Meyer and P. Geschiere (1999)*

Week 8. 03/10. Pentecostal Converts as Modern Subjects and Citizens

Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities. The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (2009)

Also: Gifford, P. *Christianity, Politics, and Public Life in Kenya* (2009)
Maxwell, D. *African Gifts of the Spirit* (2006)

Week 9. 03/17. Spring Break

Week 10. 03/24 No meeting- work on your research

Week 11. 03/31 --

Week 12. 04/07 --

Week 13. 04/14 --

Week 14. 04/21 Presentations in Class

Week 15. 04/28 Presentations in Class

Week 16. 05/05 Work on Paper

*****Final Paper (two copies, please) due on Friday May 6 by 12:00 pm*****
[students passing prelims can arrange for a later deadline]

Journals

Journal of Religion in Africa
Journal of Religious History
Journal of Religion and Health
The Journal of Religion
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
Cahiers d'études africaines
African Affairs
Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History

Selected Readings on 19th -21st Centuries

Asad, T. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power* (1993)
Anderson, A. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (2004)
Bearley, J. and Spear, T. "Mutesa, the Missionaries and Christian Conversion in Buganda," *IJAHS* 21 (1988)
Behrend, H. *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits* (1999)
Blakely, T. D. ed. *Religion in Africa* (1994) [good collection, including on Islam]
Bockie, S. *Death and the Invisible Powers* (1993) [superb on Kongo beliefs]
De Boeck, F. "Borderland Breccia: The Mutant Hero in the Historical Imagination if a Central African Diamond Frontier," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (2000) [Diamond miners' *santu* statues as Christian Saints and fetishes of the *hamba* cult]
Ellis, S. and ter Haar, G. *Worlds of Power* (2004) [mostly on witchcraft]
Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa* (1997)
Fabian, J. *Jaama: A Charismatic Movement in Katanga* (1971)
Fernandez, J. *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination* (1982)
Gray, R. *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (1990)
Hansen, H. and Twaddle, M. eds. *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (2002)
Magaziner, D. *The Law and the Prophets* (2010)
Maxwell, D. *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe* (1999)
Mbembe, A. *Afriques indociles* (1988) [on Xty as resistance to colonialism]
MacGaffey, W. *Modern Kongo Prophets* (1983)
Peires, J. *The Dead Will Arise* (1989)*
Ranger, T. "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Studies Review* (1986)
Ranger, T. *Peasant Consciousness in Guerilla War in Zimbabwe* (1985)
Schoeffeleers, M. "Christ as the Medicine Man and the Medicine Man as Christ," *Man and Life* (1982)
Sundkler, B. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1961)
Sundkler, B. *Zulu Zion* (1976)
Sundkler, B and Steed, C. *History of the Church in Africa* (1998)
Taylor, M. C. ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (1998) [brilliant collection of thought pieces]
Taussig, M. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980) [crucial]
Tonda, J. *La guérison divine en Afrique Centrale* (2002) [divine healing in Congo and Gabon]
ter Haar, G. *How God Became African* (2009) [a slim book, with good information on African Christians going global in the modern Diaspora]

ter Haar, G. *Halfway to Paradise. African Christians in Europe* (1998)
ter Haar, G. *Spirit of Africa: The Healing Ministry of Archbishop Milingo of Zambia* (1992)

Early Christianity

Sweet, J. *Recreating Africa* (2003)
Thornton, J. *The Kongoese St Anthony* (1995)
MacGaffey, W. "Kongo and the King of the Americans," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 6-2 (1968)
Thompson, R. F., and Cornet, J. *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (1982)
Thompson, R. F. *Flash of the Spirit. African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (1984)
Heywood, L. ed. *Central Africans and Cultural Transformation in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2002)