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## The Taiping and the Aladura: A Comparative Study of Charismatically Based Christian Movements

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### Abstract

The paper utilizes the comparative method to work towards an understanding of cross-cultural religious interactions that eschews the distinction between so-called traditional and world religions. It highlights the importance of charismatic authority based on prophetic vision in two disparate geographical and cultural contexts. Both the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64) and the Aladura churches in southwestern Nigeria in the early twentieth century represented adaptations of Christianity to local circumstances. Although the Aladura churches did not have the politically subversive impact of the famous Chinese rebellion, their popularity as movements of prayer and healing reveal a similar dynamic: of leadership based on visions and extraordinary states of consciousness; rivalries for power based on competing visions; and strategies of routinizing charisma through institutions and Biblical texts. Both movements exhibited a concentration of spirituality, expressed in anti-idolatry and a quest for purity, that mobilized energies and led to dramatic change. Jung's theory of withdrawal of projections may better describe this process than Weber's theory of disenchantment.

### Résumé

Cet article utilise la méthode comparative pour une meilleure compréhension des interactions religieuses interculturelles contournant la classique distinction entre les religions traditionnelles et les religions du monde. Il met en lumière l'importance de l'autorité charismatique basée sur une vision prophétique, dans deux différents contextes géographiques et culturels. La rébellion de Taiping (1851–64) et les églises Aladura du sud-ouest du Nigeria, au début du vingtième siècle symbolisaient l'adaptation de la religion chrétienne aux réalités locales. Bien que les églises Aladura n'aient pas eu le même impact politique subversif que la célèbre rébellion chinoise, leur popularité en tant que mouvements de

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rière et de guérison révèle une dynamique similaire : celle d'un leadership basé sur des visions et un état de conscience extraordinaire, mais également sur des rivalités de pouvoir basées sur des visions opposées. Ces deux mouvements ont fait preuve d'une certaine concentration de spiritualité, qui s'est manifestée à travers l'anti-idolâtrie et la quête de pureté, qui a mobilisé les énergies et conduit à des changements profonds. La théorie du retrait de la projection, formulée par Jung, décrit mieux ce processus, que la théorie du désenchantement de Weber.

The present paper grew out of the belief that a comparative approach to the study of religious encounters—in this case between Christianity and Chinese and West African religions—can provide a fruitful starting point in constructing a richer set of concepts and theories to explain such encounters than are currently available. The timeliness of such a reconstruction should be self-evident: cross-cultural religious interaction is part of the patterns of worldwide change known as globalisation, even though that term is more likely to conjure up images of economic and social changes rather than religious ones. In Africa, it is well known that Christianity has advanced by leaps and bounds since the Second World War, even as it has receded in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the theological, historical, and sociological vocabularies and conceptual frameworks for talking about religious interactions in any depth lag behind what is available for discussing the more material ones.<sup>2</sup> These shortcomings, as applied to Africa, were addressed by the American anthropologist Rosalind Shaw in an article ‘The Invention of “African Traditional Religion”’ in 1990.<sup>3</sup> Shaw argues that even as European views of African culture have become more respectful, invidious distinctions have been preserved at the level of nomenclature and classification, as in the distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘world’ religions which continues to pervade textbooks in religious studies in America. Both the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘world’ beg rigorous definition. The term ‘traditional’, in addition to suggesting religions that remained more or less static—a contention that has been falsified repeatedly—also refers to a great variety of heterogeneous religions on different continents that share only the feature that they do not merit the designation ‘world religion’. Yet the latter term is equally vague. For example, if a ‘world’ religion means one that is not restricted to a particular ethnic group, then Judaism and Hinduism would be disqualified; if it means a religion based on a cosmology that covers the universe, then many Native American and African religions should be included. In short, the labels ‘traditional’ and ‘world’ were little more than tactful re-packagings of the dichotomy between ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Shaw reinforced the critique by the African scholar Okot p’Bitek of the generation of African scholars

who wrote in the 1960s, and 1970s, such as E. Balji Idowu, John Mbiti, and J. Omosade Awolalu, as complicit in this perpetuation. While seeking to portray African religions in a positive light, they did so by reinforcing an image of 'traditional' religion which was relatively static and which emphasised the congruencies with Judeo-Christian ideas, particularly of a Supreme Being. Idowu, for example, argued that all African religions could be defined in terms of a 'diffuse monotheism'.<sup>5</sup> A large part of the Western baggage that these scholars carried with them lay in the notion that religion finds its primary expression in beliefs and doctrines rather than in action and ritual. The questions that scholars like Shaw and p'Bitek have raised since the 1970s are whether such sweeping definitions do justice to the complexities of African religions, and whether African notions of a Supreme Being can be so neatly combined with Judeo-Christian versions thereof.<sup>6</sup>

A further example of the persistence of such categories, even on the part of scholars who seek to understand Africans on their own terms, is the work of the anthropologist Robin Horton.<sup>7</sup> Horton proposed a general theory to explain conversion to monotheism, which is not restricted to Africa, though clearly drawn from his fieldwork there. Horton noted that many African religions operated on a 'two-tiered' system: a multitude of 'lesser spirits' which were concerned with more or less local affairs, and a 'supreme being' or creator-god whose sphere was the world as a whole. The creator god was often not the object of direct worship, because it had little relevance to the day-to-day affairs of the local community. But with trade and improvements in communications, the local community came increasingly to confront forces outside it, which increased the relevance of spirits whose powers have a broader geographical range. Hence the tendency to embrace the universal god of Islam and Christianity. Horton emphasised that these world-religions acted as mere catalysts for re-configurations within the existing beliefs and practices of the African religions. Thus, according to his theory, we might expect the new religions to coexist in some form with the old. Also, Horton did not restrict this story to modernisation per se; he also traced the African receptiveness to Islam in earlier centuries to the presence of mobile groups such as traders and pastoralists.<sup>8</sup>

Horton's theory has also come in for its share of criticism. Some have pointed out that it still leaves 'traditional religion' as a residual and relatively static category, which is increasingly seen to be a fiction as far as Africa is concerned.<sup>9</sup> Others have stressed that embracing a universal god does not necessarily entail ignoring the lesser ones; among the Ewe people of Ghana and Togo, for example, the transition to modernity also brought with it an increased preoccupation with demons, ironically reinforced by missionaries'

preaching about the devil.<sup>10</sup> Still others claim that Horton understated the impact that outside forces played by reducing them to mere ‘catalysts’.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, we will have occasion to see that some forms of a two-tiered pattern of religious observance persist in some cases, lending at least partial credibility to Horton’s thesis. Furthermore, for all its defects, Horton’s overall thesis of linking religious conversion to involvement in networks of communication and trade does offer a persuasive explanation of the spread of Islam and Christianity in Africa—and has proven fruitful in studies of other cultures as well.<sup>12</sup>

The merits of cross-cultural comparative historical studies as a launching pad for theory have been amply demonstrated by Max Weber, who based his sociology of religion on extensive investigations of Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism, in addition to the Protestantism which had formed part of his own background. Nevertheless, the methodological, linguistic, and terminological difficulties raised by such an approach are formidable and must be considered briefly here. Jürgen Kocka has commented recently on the pitfalls and promises of the comparative approach.<sup>13</sup> Of the pitfalls, he highlights three, all of which are exemplified in this paper: (i) it relies on secondary literature, because the linguistic skills required for cross-cultural comparisons at the level of primary and archival sources exceed the abilities of most historians, including myself. Indeed, I chose the Chinese and West African cases because there was an abundant secondary literature available. (ii) It entails deliberately taking these cases out of their local context and isolating certain features so that they can meaningfully be compared—a procedure which goes against the grain of many historians’ training and temperament. This of course renders the comparative open to criticism by the specialist, but hopefully in ways that can be useful to both. (iii) The similarities and differences between any two cases (or more) are likely to emerge most sharply precisely in the absence of causal interactions between them. Thus the point is not to argue for the influence of the Taiping on the Aladura, or of Africa on China with respect to missionary activity—or vice-versa. Kocka has pressed this point further by arguing that the very interest in cross-cultural connections which world history exemplifies has taken the wind out of the sails of the comparative enterprise recently.<sup>14</sup> However, I do not see why this need be so: connections can themselves be the stuff of comparison. Encounters between religions and ideologies with disparate roots are taking place all around us and are the stuff of daily headlines. There is no reason why such types of interactions in the past cannot be themselves isolated and compared. Indeed, there are strong reasons why they should be.

This brings me to the positive dividends of the comparative approach, which Kocka also acknowledges. He warns against over-specialisation, particularly in a global age. More specifically, such far-flung, decontextualised comparisons may have great heuristic value. In Kocka's words, 'the comparative approach allows one to identify questions and problems that one might miss, neglect, or just not invent otherwise'.<sup>15</sup> I think this is particularly applicable to the study of religious encounters. It can direct our attention to how peoples assimilate or otherwise combine the beliefs and practices of a new religion with their own cultural systems.

In comparing the Taiping and the Aladura movements, one obvious difference should be stated at the outset. The Taiping ('great peace'), although it began as a religious sect, became directed against the ruling Qing dynasty, fomenting a rebellion (1851–1864) of huge proportions which at its height managed to control a portion of central China roughly equal to the size of France. It had grown from an army of some three hundred men in 1850 to about three million five years later; the number of deaths from the rebellion as a whole is estimated at about thirty million. It was not the only rebellion against the Qing dynasty in the mid-nineteenth century; others occurred in the north and in the Moslem west. All were indicative of a demographic crisis that had overtaken China, compounded with widespread government corruption.<sup>16</sup> The lack of any comparable religious-political phenomenon in West Africa undoubtedly stems, at least in part, from the lack of a single polity in the region, which also made any coordinated resistance to European colonial rule much more difficult. In contrast to the Taiping, the Aladura ('owners of prayer') were focussed on religious matters. It is true that one can find expressions of pan-African nationalism in some Aladura churches, but the degree or intensity of this feature pales in comparison to its Taiping counterpart.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, there was never at any one time a single Aladura church, but a multiplicity of them which were recognised to have similar outlooks.<sup>18</sup>

The literature on both the Taiping and the Aladura makes reference to the social composition of the movements in their formative stages, and there are certain superficial parallels between them that could be drawn. Although the early members of the Taiping consisted mostly of desperate peasants and workmen who were members of an ethnic minority, the Hakka, there were also a few prominent Hakka merchants and landowners who joined, whose talents and financial backing were essential.<sup>19</sup> The Aladura churches initially were found to have had a high proportion of clerks who had just arrived in the cities, and with a smattering of wealthy individuals as well.<sup>20</sup> Yet the differences probably outweigh the similarities. The initial surge of the Taiping

took place not in the cities or the coastal areas of China that were exposed to Western influences, but in a remote and inaccessible area of southwest China. In this sense it provides a counter-example to Horton's hypothesis. The Aladura churches, by contrast, grew up in the coastal cities such as Lagos, among people who had come from the countryside, and only later spread to rural areas.

This being said, we can turn to the main positive reason for comparing these Chinese and West African phenomena: their charismatic foundations. The Taiping originated with a schoolteacher from Guangdong Province near Canton, Hong Xiuquan, who had studied the Confucian classics for some twenty years in preparation for the official examinations, which he failed four times. In 1837, just after one of these failures, he experienced a period of madness and near-death lasting some forty days, in which he had an extended and vivid dream of being in heaven and facing a heavenly father who ordered him to return to earth to slay the evil demons there. After the battle, Hong returned to heaven to be welcomed by the father, his wife, an elder brother and sister-in-law. The father and elder brother ordered him, against his own inclination, to return to earth once more to continue fighting evil and to usher in a period of great peace (Taiping). Most, though not all, of these dream-images were quite comprehensible in terms of Chinese writings that would have been familiar to Hong. Similar millenarian features could be found in China as far back as the second century A.D. and also existed in other sects, which rebelled against the Qing in the nineteenth century. However, in 1843 Hong read a Christian tract which clarified doubtful points in his vision and reinforced its authenticity in his mind: the father was Jehovah, the elder brother was Jesus, and Hong himself was God's second son. Hong was further convinced of this by a partial coincidence of Chinese characters between the transliteration of Je-ho-vah and Hong's own name—a mode of persuasion which has been dubbed 'glyphomancy' and has been found in other cases of Chinese conversion as well.<sup>21</sup> And as another local study has shown, Hong was by no means idiosyncratic in having such visions and incorporating in them a few Christian concepts within a larger body of Chinese beliefs about the supernatural.<sup>22</sup>

Hong's early preaching emphasised the Ten Commandments and the importance of right moral action—an emphasis consonant with the Confucian tradition in which Hong had previously immersed himself. As the Taiping movement turned political—scholars disagree on exactly when—the evil demons become the Qing dynasty. From this point on, the Taiping ideology combined the moral emphasis with the punitive and fearsome aspects of the Old Testament God and the Book of Revelations, which led to a strict mili-

tary discipline in a highly effective way that reminded Max Weber of Cromwell's model army.<sup>23</sup>

Turning to the Aladura churches, much of the charismatic authority of their leaders was based on the power to heal illnesses through prayer. At the risk of some simplification, one can point to four different churches: (i) The Cherubim and Seraphim traces its beginnings to a prolonged trance by a fifteen-year old girl in Lagos in 1925, Christiana Abiodun Akinsowon, who had just been confirmed in the Anglican Church. Like Hong, she found herself in heaven, addressed by angels, but was told that she would die unless she met someone who could really pray. Her family brought an older itinerant evangelist, Moses Orimolade Tunolase, the son of a priest in the Yoruba Ife cult and also a visionary, to pray for her, and she recovered. The two began to hold regular prayer meetings, which attracted much public attention and eventually developed into the church. (ii) The Christ Apostolic Church traced its origins to the influenza epidemic of 1918, which neither Western medicine nor Yoruba medicine could cure. A group who believed that prayer alone could heal met at the home of J.B. Sadare, a goldsmith, who had experienced visions before the epidemic, and who named it the Precious Stone Society. It continued to meet, and during the Depression it experienced a great revival thanks to another powerful visionary, Joseph Babalola, a semi-skilled worker of Anglican background. (iii) The Church of the Lord Aladura was founded by Joseph Oshitelu, an Anglican school-teacher, who had a series of visions between 1925 and 1929, including an eye as bright as the sun, but also of witches, which he managed only gradually to overcome. Once having done so, he founded the church in 1930, by holding open-air meetings and speaking in tongues. He became known as the 'last Elijah'. Oshitelu did not pay as much attention to healing at first, but as his church grew in the 1930s he could not afford to ignore it. (iv) The Celestial Church of Christ was likewise the child of a single prophetic figure, Joseph Oschoffa, raised a Methodist in 1947, who assumed the title of 'Pastor-Founder'.

Inseparable from charismatic authority is the problem of its routinisation, which both Taiping and Aladura leaders had to face in their lifetimes.<sup>24</sup> In themselves, powerful movements are likely to generate personal rivalries and struggles for power; when such rival claims are supported by rival visions, the effort to maintain stability and continuity is rendered all the more difficult. This was true both of the Taiping and the Aladura churches. In China, Hong's authority was first exercised over a group known as the Society of God Worshippers in a remote area of Guangxi Province in the 1840s; it unleashed among the people a wave of further visions and other shamanistic features

which had been part of the folk religion in the area. From this emerged two other powerful leaders, one a peasant, the other a charcoal burner, both without the Hong's literary training, and who claimed to be the voices of Jesus and God respectively.<sup>25</sup> The second of these, Yang Xiuqing, became the chief military strategist of the rebellion. From these experiences, Hong probably concluded that the routinisation of his charisma could come none to soon. When the rebels took over the city of Nanjing in 1853 and proclaimed it the heavenly capital, Hong hastened to introduce measures modelled on the imperial dynasty with the intent of establishing a new one: a hierarchy of titles and regalia, palaces, concubines, a new calendar, and a new set of civil service exams. This meant that, taken as a whole, the Confucian elements predominated over the Christian ones in the movement.<sup>26</sup> The establishment of this structure did not, however, prevent the rivalry from escalating, as Yang Xiuqing arrogated to himself the additional title of Holy Spirit and began to challenge Hong himself. The result was bloody internecine warfare, which began in 1856, when Yang was assassinated. This undermined the physical and moral strength of the rebellion and was a major factor in contributing to its eventual failure.

Hong also realised early on that his personal vision would have to be buttressed by scriptural authority in the religious sphere. During the formative years of the God Worshippers' Society, he was actually in Canton studying the new Chinese translation of the Bible. During the final years Hong himself withdrew increasingly from public ceremony and view. While most scholars interpret this as a retreat into mental illness, Jonathan Spence argues that Hong was actually working on a Biblical commentary and revision, attempting to bring its stories into line with his moral code and to reconcile the Old Testament genealogy with his original vision and hence to legitimise his lineage and ultimately his dynasty. He came to believe he was the incarnation of King Melchizedek, mentioned fleetingly in Genesis 14 as 'priest of the Most High God' at the time of Abraham.<sup>27</sup>

The tendency to factionalism and the need to buttress charismatic authority with a more stable set of institutional and intellectual structures were also prominent features of the Aladura churches. The most dramatic case was the Cherubim and Seraphim, where a much-publicised split occurred between the middle-aged Orimolade and the 22-year-old Abiodun; this was but the first of six splits in seven years! Clearly age and gender issues were involved—most of the women in the movement sided with Abiodun—but the splintering continued long after Orimolade's death in 1933.<sup>28</sup> The evolution of the Christ Apostolic Church from the small Precious Stone Society was also not without its schisms and secessions, but the leaders realised that they needed



some guidance apart from their personal visions, and affiliated successively with several foreign organisations—one American, one Canadian, one Welsh—that held to faith healing as a central doctrine.<sup>29</sup> The Church of the Lord Aladura and the Celestial Church of Christ, both more closely tied to a single founder-figure than the other two, were better able to weather the schisms that occurred there as well, because both leaders paid attention to organisational matters early on. Both incorporated a principle which effectively routinised the charismatic impulses: that of splitting the ‘prophetic’ branch of the hierarchy from the administrative one. Prophets were promoted on the basis of their spiritual gifts, of having visions and interpreting those of others, and were not expected to engage in the day-to-day running of the church itself—a structure which reflected widespread African practice.<sup>30</sup> And even the Cherubim and Seraphim found a way of channelling certain types of visionary material so as not to endanger the church organisation: visions were reported to the leaders, who decided how they were to be interpreted.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, all the Aladura churches stressed the importance of Bible study to reinforce and stabilise the visionary impulse. All in all, this routinisation was highly successful, as the Aladura churches continued to expand after independence, even to the African diaspora communities in Europe.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that the Aladura churches succeeded because they incorporated certain familiar aspects of indigenous religions—such as interpretation of dreams, prophecies, dancing and clapping during the services, into a Christian framework—in a way that the churches founded by missionaries had failed to do.<sup>33</sup>

The phenomenon of charisma and its associated features strikes us as something that does indeed transcend the distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘world’ religions. Weber acknowledged this by describing charismatic authority as irrational and extraordinary, a type of authority radically opposed to that of traditional elites or of bureaucracies.<sup>34</sup> Charismatic leaders are by no means unknown in the West, whether as leaders of religious revival movements or as political ‘geniuses’ such as Napoleon or Hitler. The two cases considered here, however, point to a feature which is probably taken more seriously outside the West, namely the prophetic role of visions experienced in an abnormal state of consciousness. Weber rightly argued for taking such phenomena at face value, rather than attempting to explain them away as somehow pathological. An ethnographic study of 488 societies in different parts of the world revealed that 90 per cent of them reported that such altered states of consciousness were a part of their accepted cultural patterns, at least for certain individuals.<sup>35</sup>

This brings us to a final and most interesting point of similarity, which, for want of a better term, we might call the *concentration of spirituality*.

Even though, as we have seen, both movements managed to integrate foreign elements into an indigenous cultural matrix, this by no means meant that all pre-existing aspects of native religions were uncritically carried over into the new. Quite the opposite is the case: both Hong and the Aladura prophet-leaders used Christianity, particularly its monotheism, as a means to sweep away large portions of indigenous beliefs and practices. The most conspicuous example of this in both cases was the campaign against idolatry, based of course on the First Commandment. One of Hong Xiuquan's first acts upon assuming his new calling was to smash the tablets to Confucius in the school where he taught (a gesture to be imitated, incidentally, forty years later by a youthful admirer of Hong who would go on to become China's most famous Christian, Sun Yat-Sen).<sup>36</sup> Later the Taipings also destroyed images and temples to local divinities throughout the area which they occupied, including Buddhist and Taoist shrines. Similarly, the rejection of fetishes, charms, and statues to local deities was a common denominator among the Aladura churches. Babalola's revival of 1930 featured conspicuous burnings of such objects; Oschoffa summarised his founding vision of the Celestial Church of Christ as follows: 'many Christians there [in the mainline churches] who are on their death bed do not see Christ because they had become idol worshippers before their death. This is the task entrusted to me'.<sup>37</sup>

The anti-idolatry can be seen as part of a desire for some sort of purity that was evident in both movements. This included many features that we normally associate with Puritanism: prohibitions against alcohol, tobacco, opium, gambling, and a distrust of sexuality. During the Taiping rebellion, the leaders enforced strict separation of the sexes in separate camps; even husbands were not allowed to cohabit with their wives. At the same time, women were organised into fighting units with their own officers. The avowed purpose was to concentrate one's energies on the military task at hand—segregation was promised to end when peace came.<sup>38</sup> The Aladuras, while not so severe, did insist on separation of men and women in church. Indeed, the CCC constitution, previously referred to, contains a list of prohibitions which reflect the Puritanical impulse: tobacco, alcohol and pork are forbidden, as well as black and red clothing (white robes are worn to church), wearing shoes in church, coloured candles (again, white only), and menstruating women (a common indigenous taboo, though one with Biblical sanction).<sup>39</sup> The focus of purification is clearly the church itself as a sacred space, a familiar feature of African religions.<sup>40</sup> Yet innovation was present in this aspect as well. This is seen in the fact that corpses are not allowed in the church: funeral rites are at the home and gravesite only. This is a departure

both from the previous Yoruba practice and from that of the mainline Christian churches.<sup>41</sup> Services in the Celestial Church of Christ begin with Psalm 51, which is about the cleansing of sin.

It is also clear from the case studies that this concentration of spirituality sets the Aladura churches apart from the indigenous religion in certain ways. All the case studies agree that the Aladura movement is more than simply a reshuffling of previous Yoruba religious elements. Something new is added. To quote Turner,

Many observers have commented on this central conviction, among the independent groups in Africa—that the “impersonal and remote (God) had all at once descended from this heaven, and met them as the holy, incorruptible, but also as the loving God”.<sup>42</sup>

At the same time, the Aladura practices set them apart from the mainline Christian churches as well. Because these churches had remained European in ritual and had not incorporated much of Yoruba practice, the frequent result was the ‘two-tiered’ behaviour that Horton hypothesised, namely of going both to church and to also the native priest or doctor when the need arose. The members of the Aladura churches did not do so as much; their religion served as a new and genuine synthesis of indigenous and Christian elements.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, one notices that the ‘two-tiered’ approach does replicate itself in another form, namely of crossovers between the mainline and the Aladura churches. Some of the latter allow dual membership, and one study has noted a significant number of ‘clandestine’ Aladuras who find it more fashionable to belong to a mainstream church but continue to come to the Aladura services as well.<sup>44</sup>

Certainly the ‘quest for purity’ is a phenomenon not unique to the Taiping and the Aladura churches; a collection of essays, edited by Walter E.A. van Beek, appeared in 1988, and included case studies of the Taiping, Calvin’s Geneva, the New England Puritans, as well as the Wahhabis, the Fulani Jihad, the Iranian revolution, and Communism—among others.<sup>45</sup> Most of these movements shared a political dimension; the editor’s introduction stresses the obsession with evil in all the cases under consideration, which invariably led to the failure of the movements to attain their ideals. The Aladura case suggests, however, that this characterisation may be too restrictive.<sup>46</sup> Concentrated spirituality may involve a quest for purity that accentuates the positive to a greater degree. Thus, whereas the concentration of religious energy in the Taiping was directed to military discipline, in the Aladura it is directed to prayer. The sheer amount of time spent in church is one indication, evident from the descriptions of the weekly round of services for the various denominations.<sup>47</sup> Daily morning services are not uncommon, although often

for particular groups within the church, and there are special evening services several times a week in addition to the Sunday service which lasts two to three hours. Recall that the original purpose of the Aladura churches was faith healing, a good example of concentrated spirituality. Many churches also emphasise fasting as a means to spiritual power.<sup>48</sup>

Many will recognise this narrowing of range of religious beliefs and practices to mobilise one's energies and change one's behaviour—and that of the world—as resembling the asceticism which Weber pointed out in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Nonetheless, the commonalities of these African and Chinese movements diverge from Weber's model in some significant respects, particularly his use of the concept of rationalisation. In his writings on the sociology of religion, Weber elaborates this concept as based on such features as a consistently worked-out cosmology and a methodical calculation of means and ends to achieve a result (such as salvation). Neither of these fully captures the phenomena under examination here.<sup>49</sup> The world was energised for the Taipings and the Aladuras, but hardly disenchanted. Emotions and visions were as much a component of the religious experience as was intellect. Although Bible study was important, there was also a deliberate attempt to preserve the visionary experiences. Several Aladura churches have regular services in which members are encouraged to enter a semi-conscious state, so as better to communicate with the spiritual powers.<sup>50</sup>

A more adequate theoretical interpretation is provided, I believe, by certain ideas of Carl Jung, although not necessarily in ways elucidated by Jung directly. One does not have to subscribe to Jung's notion of a fixed repertoire of archetypes that reside in a human collective unconscious to appreciate his understanding of the power of visions as numinous religious experiences. Like Weber, Jung traced the roots of modern, secular Western society to religious changes. He also envisaged a process of disenchantment, which he described in psychological terms as a 'withdrawal of projections'.<sup>51</sup> By this he meant the growing conviction that belief in deities and spirits are mere superstitions, figments of one's imagination. This could be a very dangerous process, Jung believed, because a person's need to project, i.e. to displace psychic contents onto objects, did not disappear just because these objects were no longer available. The result is that projections become unconscious and thereby more powerful:

After it became impossible for the demons to inhabit the rocks, woods, mountains, and rivers, they used human beings as much more dangerous dwelling places ... A man does not notice it when he is governed by a demon; he puts all his skill and cunning at the service of his unconscious master, thereby heightening its power a thousandfold.<sup>52</sup>

Jung mounted a powerful critique of the Enlightenment on this basis, associating its campaign against superstition on the one hand with the fanaticism and destructiveness of the French Revolution on the other. 'Our fearsome gods', he wrote, 'have only changed their names. They now rhyme with -ism'.<sup>53</sup>

While the Taiping and Aladura phenomena do not fit Jung's scenario of secularisation and unconscious projection, they do exhibit the process of psychological divestiture of identification with a multitude of deities and spirits and the concomitant intensification of identification with one God. It was the very simplification of the beliefs and the concentration of the practices themselves, which enhanced their transformative power. This process involves the whole person, not just the intellect or the emotions. Once again, this is a phenomenon that cuts across the usual division between 'traditional' and 'world' religions.

The construction of an ideal-typical model of concentrated spirituality affords material for further comparisons among religious and secular movements across the world. It may possibly be applicable to the recent wave of Pentecostal churches as well, which likewise transgresses the boundary between 'traditional' and 'world' religions. In any case, such a model, if tested against a variety of cases, can perhaps lead to a better understanding of at least one type of response that occurs when disparate religions meet and interact.

### Notes

1. Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 1; Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 9-10, 131.
2. Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 248; Walls, 10, 158.
3. Rosalind Shaw, 'The Invention of "African Traditional Religion"', *Religion*, 20 (1990):339-353.
4. *Ibid.*, 340-2.
5. *Ibid.*, 345-6. Cf. Okot p'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, [1970]), 41, 84-88.
6. These critiques tend to support the thesis of Jean and John Comaroff in seeing the residues of missionary Christianity as a type of colonisation—that of imposing Western forms of thought on African consciousness. See Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 1997). This position has called forth its share of critics, who put greater stress on the ways in which Africans shaped the Christianity—particularly its practices, as distinct from belief—in their native

- territories. See Elizabeth Elbourne, 'Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff', *American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 435-59. The Comaroffs respond to some of their critics in vol. 2, ch. 1. For a more general critique of cultural imperialism, see Ryan Dunch, 'Beyond Cultural Imperialism. Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity', *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 301-22.
7. See Horton's critique of Mbiti and other 'devout' interpreters of African religion through 'Judeo-Christian Spectacles', in *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West. Essays on Magic, Religion and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 189.
  8. Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', *Africa* 41 (1971): 85-108, esp. 101-105; 'The Rationality of Conversion', *ibid.*, 45 (1975), 219-35; 373-99.
  9. Thus Terence Ranger, 'The Local and the Global in Southern African Religious History', in *Conversion to Christianity*, (ed.), Robert W. Hefner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 65-98; Isichei, 96, 228.
  10. Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil. Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), xxiii, 109-110.
  11. Humphrey J. Fisher, 'The Juggernaut's Apologia: Conversion to Islam in Black Africa', *Africa* 55 (1983): 153; Robert N. Wyllie, *The Spirit-Seekers: New Religious Movements in Southern Ghana* (Missoula, MO: The Scholars Press, 1980), 100; Carolyn Ifeka-Moller, 'White Power: Socio-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity in Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8 (1974): 59-60.
  12. For a sympathetic evaluation involving African and Indian cases, see Deryck Schreuder and Geoffrey Oddie, 'What is "Conversion"? History, Christianity and Religious Change in Colonial Africa and South Asia', *The Journal of Religious History* 15 (1989): 496-518.
  13. Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond', *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 39-44.
  14. *Ibid.*, 42.
  15. *Ibid.*, 40.
  16. My account of the Taiping is drawn mainly from: Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion*, China Research Monograph, no. 25 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1982); Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Vincent Y.C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967).
  17. See H.W. Turner, *African Independent Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 2: 312-314, 321-322, which includes the text of a hymn 'Africa shall rise' and mentions the fact that some Aladurans believe in a universal sense of mission to spread African Christian religious sensibility to whites as well. The Taipings, on the other hand, believed that their struggle with the

Qing was to restore an ancient belief in the Supreme God that had become corrupted over the millennia by the worship of many gods.

18. The discussion of the Aladura churches is drawn primarily from: J.D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Akinyele Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim. The History of an African Independent Church* (New York: NOK Publishers International, 1982); Afeosemimi U. Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ. The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic-Charismatic Movement* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999); and Turner (see n. 17).
19. Jen Yu-Wen, 34; Spence, 106.
20. Peel, 83-85; Turner, 2: 18; Adogame, 50. On prominent members, see Ayokunnu Ogunranti, 'Pastor and Politician: Isaac Akinleye, Olubadan of Ibadan (1862-1955)', in *Varieties of Christian Experience in Nigeria*, (ed.), Elizabeth Isichei (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), 131-136; Omoyajowo, 'Mother in Israel: Christianah Olatunrinle in Ondo (c. 1855-1941)', *ibid.*, 141-146. In a more recent study, Adogame found members of the Celestial Church of Christ in both urban and rural areas (Adogame, 50).
21. Spence, 32; David K. Jordan, 'The Glyphomancy Factor: Observations on Chinese Conversion', in Hefner, 285-303.
22. Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 7-15.
23. Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1920), 1: 508.
24. This deviates from Weber's ideal-typical presentation of the concept, in that Weber linked routinisation to succession following the death of the charismatic leader. See *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 297.
25. Spence, 107-108; Jen Yu-Wen, 50.
26. Thus Shih's detailed discussion of the sources of Taiping ideology devotes 17 pages to Christianity and 107 pages to the Chinese classics!
27. Spence, 254-261, 291-297.
28. Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, ch. 4, esp. 82; Peel, 269-276.
29. Turner, 1: 33; Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity. The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst, 1983), 184-186, 194-197.
30. Turner, 2: 38-39; Adogame, 75-76, 99.
31. Peel, 126-127; Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 140.
32. See Adogame, 'Engaged in the Task of "Cleansing" the World?: Aladura Churches in 20th Century Europe', in *Transkontinentale Beziehungen in der Geschichte des Ausereuropäischen Christentums*, ed., Klaus Koschorke (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2002), 73-86. On individual churches, see Omoyajowo, *Diversity in Unity. The Development and Expansion of the Cherubim & Seraphim Church in Nigeria* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984); Jacob Kehlinde Olupona, 'The Celestial Church of Christ in Ondo: A Phenomenological Perspective', in *New Religious Movements in*

- Nigeria*, ed., Rosalind I.J. Hackett (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 49.
33. Omoyajowo, 'The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence', in *Christianity in Independent Africa* (ed.), Edward Fasholè-Luke, Richard Gray, et al., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 105. See also the paper by Olufunke A. Adeboye on the disdain of the Pentecostals for the Aladuras because they had retained too much of the 'traditional' religion, 'Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America: A Comparative Focus on Nigeria and Brazil', *Afrika Zamani*, nos. 11&12, 2003-2004.
  34. Weber, *From Max Weber*, 245-8, 295-6.
  35. Erika Bourguignon, 'Introduction: A Framework for the Comparative Study of Altered States of Consciousness', in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (ed.), Erika Bourguignon (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 9-11.
  36. Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 15.
  37. CCC Constitution, quoted in Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ*, 17. Cf Peel 95; Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 16, 94; Turner, 2: 85.
  38. Spence, 120-122, 184-185; Jen Yu-Wen, 120-121.
  39. Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ*, 131; on the last, cf. Turner, 2: 43; Olupona, 61.
  40. Walls, 118.
  41. Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ*, 171; Turner, 2: 254-255; Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 148.
  42. Turner, 2: 337. The internal quote is from Ephraim Andersson, *Messianic Movements in the Lower Congo* (Uppsala, 1958), 180.
  43. The point is made by Turner, 1: 12; Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 182; Omoyajowo, 'Aladura Churches', 109.
  44. Gabriel I.S. Amadi, 'Continuities and Adaptations in the Aladura Movement: The Example of Prophet Wobo and His Clientele in South-Eastern Nigeria', in Hackett, 89.
  45. Walter E.A. van Beek, ed., *The Quest for Purity. Dynamics of Puritan Movements* (Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 1988). The collection includes studies of Calvin's Geneva, the New England Puritans, the Wahhabi movement, the Fulani Jihad, the Iranian Revolution, as well as the Taiping and Communism.
  46. *Ibid.*, 5-9, 16-17. The editors stress the negative side—the continuous campaign against sin and evil which ultimately renders these movements self-defeating. The Aladura, I think, provide a counter-example of a 'puritanical' church with a positive attitude.
  47. Peel, 157-165; Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 150-151; Turner, 2: 114-121; Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ*, 159-162.
  48. David D. Laitin, in his *Hegemony and Culture. Political and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 36-42, looks to another theoretical model to understand the Aladura: that of the Islamicist



Humphrey J. Fischer. Fischer proposed a three-stage model based on the long-term penetration of Islam in West Africa: (i) quarantine, where foreign traders practised Islam in isolation from the native population; (ii) accommodation, where Islam spreads while incorporating native practices; (iii) reform, a reaction to accommodation in the name of purifying the faith. The concentration of spirituality would be an example of a 'reform' phase. Laitin also interprets the early missionaries to the Yoruba—recaptured slaves, refugees, and other marginal peoples—as illustrating the 'quarantine' stage. My difficulty with this approach lies with the middle term, accommodation. For Islam, it meant adapting increasingly to African customs. For Christianity, by contrast, the expanded conversions of the late nineteenth century seemed to work in the opposite direction, to greater identification with the customs of the foreigner (as evidenced by the adaptation of English names by the Yoruba in Lagos and other trading cities). Also, 'accommodation' misses the increasing racism that distanced Europeans from Yoruba Christians at this very time. Cf. Humphrey J. Fischer, 'Conversion Reconsidered. Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa', *Africa* 43 (1973), 24-40.

49. Weber, *Religionssoziologie*, (1:251-253); trans. in *From Max Weber*, 280-281. My interpretation also differs from Peel's, who uses Weberian terminology, pp.120-122.
50. Peel, 164-5, Adogame, *Celestial Church of Christ*, 161. On the balancing of emotional and intellectual components, see Turner, 2: 119-121.
51. C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (1937), in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (ed.), Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, et al., 20 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953-1979), 11: 82-83.
52. Jung, *Marginalia on Contemporary Events* (1945), *ibid.* 18: 594.
53. Jung, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, *ibid.* 7: 203.