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BOOKS ON RELIGION IN AFRICA

Holger BERNT HANSEN and Michael TWADDLE,
Religion & Politics in East Africa: The Period Since Independence

Athens, Ohio University Press, 1995, ix+278 pp., tables, map, index.

Canon Kodwo E. ANKRAH. ***Development & the Church of Uganda: Mission, Myths and Metaphors.***

Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1998. v+197 pp.

Paul GIFFORD. ***African Christianity: Its Public Role.***

Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.

viii+368pp. Tables. Abbreviations. Maps. Bibliography. Index.

The role of religion in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa has been one of the most contentious issues in the contemporary era in light of pertinent concerns such as political stability, dictatorship, human rights, democracy, civil society, social justice, economic development, corruption as well as health. The three books try to look at how religion has tried to come to terms with most of these issues.

In Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle's *Religion & Politics in East Africa*, most articles discuss the interplay between religion and politics in East Africa, notably in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Somalia and the Sudan by looking at Catholicism,

Protestantism, Islam as well the emergence of "independent churches." Francois Constantin argues that few scholars have taken an interest in the development of Islam in post-colonial East Africa.

The book begins by looking at the challenge of Islam. Islam is the oldest "foreign" religion to have existed in East Africa. It arrived in this region shortly after the establishment of the religion in Arabia. Most Moslems are concentrated on the eastern coastal strip of East Africa. He argues that most Moslems are concentrated in low socio-economic jobs such as taxi-drivers, butchers and retail shopkeepers. In light of the economic crisis that has afflicted the region, there has been a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalist activity in places such as Zanzibar. R.S. O'Fahey discusses the controversial Sharia law in the Sudan. As most people know, Sudan is engulfed in a horrendous civil war between the predominantly Islamic north and the predominantly Christian and animist south. One of the reasons fueling this war has been the reaction of the south to the north's "paternalistic" attitude in trying to Islamize the whole of the Sudan, including the introduction of Sharia. The late Omari H. Kokole looked at the development of Islam during the era of Idi Amin. Under his rule, Uganda became staunchly pro-Arab in its foreign policy and being a Moslem was seen as a privilege as well as passport to many privileges.

The second part of the book looks at Christianity, Sectarianism & Politics in Uganda. Heike Behrend examines the emergence of the "Holy Spirit Movement," an organization formed by an "eccentric" Acholi woman by the name of Alice Auma "Lakwena" in 1986 on the premise that God had instructed her to fight the government and establish the rule of the ten commandments in the country. She led a rebellion against the government that was to be defeated in 1987 by the latter, but whose splinter group, "The Lord's Resistance Army," led by her cousin, Joseph Kony, is still actually engaging in guerilla activity against the state in the north of the country.

Kevin Ward looks at the relationship between church and politics in Uganda since 1962 (when it attained its Independence) with an emphasis on the Anglican Protestant Church of Uganda. At the beginning of the article, he gives a brief overview of the eminence of

the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches that are still the two greatest religious organizations in the country (despite, of course, recent developments as we shall later see). We are reminded of the fact that during the “religious” wars of the 1890s, the Catholic faction had lost out to the Protestant faction, which became more favored during the colonial era since it belonged to the Church of England. This explains why most politicians that have governed Uganda since Independence (with the exception of Benedicto Kiwanuka, a Catholic and Idi Amin, a Moslem), have belonged to the Anglican Church of Uganda, a long-standing legacy of the colonial era. Nonetheless, the Anglican church has always had a rather ambiguous relationship with the state, beginning with the late colonial era of the 1940s and 1950s when Uganda’s largest ethnic group, the Baganda saw the Anglican church as an extended arm of colonial oppression. After Independence, the Baganda were deeply aggrieved when Erica Sabiti, a non-Muganda was consecrated as the first African Archbishop of the Church of Uganda in 1965. Their grievance was further accentuated with the abolition of the Kingdom of Buganda by Dr. Apolo Milton Obote, then Premier (and later President of Uganda) when his government provided the Archbishop with new furnishings for his house as well as Sabiti’s traveling to Lira to baptize Obote’s children. After Obote’s overthrow, the tide turned against Sabiti as the new military government also associated Sabiti with the former government. Upon the retirement of Sabiti, the consecration of Janan Luwum (who was an Acholi, an ethnic group closely associated with Obote, the former President) as the new Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, was greeted with hostility by the Amin government, whose antagonism towards him reached a climax, when he was murdered for having dared to criticize human rights abuses that were taking place in the country at the time. Bishop Wani was consecrated as the new Archbishop to succeed Luwum, in part because he came from Amin’s ethnic group and in part, because he was seen as a prominent elder clergyman that would have an effect in ameliorating the government’s atrocious human rights record. The overthrow of Amin and the eventual return to power of Obote drew considerable suspicion on Wani who was categorized as an “Amin man.” He who was eventually replaced by Yona Okoth, a decidedly supporter of the government. The article leaves off with the coming to power of the National

Resistance Movement (NRM) in 1986 which preached against sectarianism within religious organizations. Nonetheless the paper underscores how the Anglican church has historically been closely related to the changing of political power in the country.

John M. Waliggo looks at the development of the Catholic church beginning with the late colonial era, through the contemporary era. Unlike the Anglican church, the Catholic church had started the "Africanization" of its higher clergy in the 1940s. For example, by 1947, Joseph Kiwanuka was a Bishop. Despite the historical antagonistic relationship between the Catholic church and the Anglican church in Uganda, Bishop Kiwanuka had always tried to bridge this gap as far back as the 1940s when he often urged the *Kabaka* (king) of Buganda, Muteesa II (who belonged to the Anglican church) to put the interests of his people first in light of the colonial government's oppressive political and economic policies and had even agreed to serve on the Protestant-dominated constitutional commission that drew up the new Buganda Agreement of 1955 that resulted in the triumphant return of the *Kabaka* after his deportation to England in 1953. For the time being after the return of the *Kabaka*, the latter and the Bishop worked closely together and were on cordial terms. However partisan politics was to destroy this union with the formation of the Kabaka Movement, which was bent on preserving the Protestant-based hierarchy of Buganda. However, the article, unfortunately skips some important events of the Catholic church such as the historical visit to Uganda of Pope Paul VI in 1969 as well as the Amin era and takes us straight to the post-Amin era. Even during this period, it overlooks such momentous events as the army's raid on Namugongo in 1984, at the height of the country's civil war in which a Catholic Bishop was killed and just superficially touches on the relationship between the Catholic church and the current NRM government. In a related article, Ronald Kassimir looks at the relationship between Catholicism and the Kingdom of Toro. The article looks at the burgeoning influence of the Catholic church in the kingdom since Independence. He goes to some length in discussing the relationship between the Catholic church and the NRM during its guerilla struggle for power, though, like Waliggo, does not delve into details about the church's current relationship with the government.

Part three of the book examines the relationship between Christians and Moslems in Kenyan politics. David Throup and G.P. Benson look at the trajectory of church-state relations in Kenya since independence. They contend that (unlike in Uganda), church-state relations in Kenya were very cordial under the first President, Jomo Kenyatta (1963-1978). For sometime, these relations were also affable under his successor, President Daniel arap Moi until 1983, whereby, in the aftermath of an attempted military coup d'état, Moi decided to dump his erstwhile political backers, namely Charles Njonjo and Mwai Kibaki (who belonged to the vocal and outspoken Protestant denomination) in an apparent power struggle. The churches also became increasingly vehement in their criticism of the government's increasingly autocratic form of governance. Donal B. Cruise O'Brien looks at the Moslem predicament in Kenya. Like Uganda, the minority Moslem population has historically been politically marginalized and as the political and economic situation has rapidly deteriorated in the country, there have been threats of a form of an Islamic jihad to address what are perceived to be historical injustices against it.

Part four summarizes the relationship between religious organizations and the state. A.B.K. Kasozi examines the historical adversarial relationship between Christians and Moslems in the three Anglophone East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, while M. Louise Pirouet sums up the churches' stance against human rights abuse in Kenya and Uganda since Independence. Martin Doornbos concludes that the development and functions of religious organizations in East Africa will often mirror the development of the state in these countries.

Development & the Church of Uganda is technically an autobiographical account of Canon Kodwo E. Ankrah, with special emphasis on his service to the Church of Uganda that lasted for almost three decades. His involvement with religious affairs in Uganda, is interesting, taking into account that he is originally from Ghana. The first four chapters in the book deal with the author's growing up in Ghana and going onto college in the United States and later working as a refugee secretary for various religious organizations, including the World Council of Churches. His first acquaintance with Uganda is

in 1966 when he arrives as a refugee secretary for the World Council of Churches. He arrives in the country during the climax of the 1966 political crisis in the country, whose climax results in the storming of the *Kabaka's* palace and the subsequent abolition of the monarchies which ushers in the Republican form of governance. He subsequently gets acquainted with the politics of intrigue within the Church of Uganda. Despite the political upheavals in country and the persecution of some church officials (such as the murder of the Anglican Archbishop, Janan Luwum as well as the Catholic editor of the *Munno* newspaper, Father Clements Kiggundu), during the Amin era, he steadfastly sticks with his church through thick and thin until his retirement in 1992. Like other autobiographies, his account of events is very interesting in that it deals with the author's person-to-person relationship with not only church officials but also government functionaries. As a foreign-born national, Ankrah is commended for having steadfastly put up with the country's most dangerous historical phase in the service of his church.

In *African Christianity*, Paul Gifford scours the status of Christianity in contemporary Africa by undertaking an investigative analysis of religious activity in four countries, notably, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Cameroon. The aim of this book was first, to look at recent developments in African Christianity by using conceptual tools from Political Science and Sociology and second, to critically assess the churches' role in handling the multifarious crises confronting the continent. The first two chapters put contemporary conditions in Africa in their theoretical perspective. He analyzes the patrimonial nature of African political leadership. He critiques the external relations that have affected Africa such as the Structural Adjustment Programs as well as the increasing economic marginalization of the continent in the 1990s. Political reform such as the role of civil society in the African context is appraised. He also looks at the African churches in the global context, by looking at the proliferation of Pentecostal/evangelical/"revivalist" churches in the past few decades.

He starts off by analyzing Ghana's Christian historical development such as the arrival of the Protestant missions in the 1820s. Unfortunately, he does not indicate when Catholicism arrived in

Ghana, despite the fact that it is the largest Christian denomination in the country (comprising 50 percent of Christians in the country). He highlights the Catholic church's condemnation of human rights violations of the 1980s as well as its increasing involvement in social services such as education and health. He also spotlights the emergence of various churches such as the Pentecostal, and Deliverance churches. The conventional conflict between Christians and Moslems is discussed, albeit in a rather superficial way. His discussion of civil society and its relationship with religion in Ghana is to be found most wanting.

The next country he looks at is Uganda. As in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle's *Religion & Politics in East Africa*, he looks at the history and development of Christianity in Uganda. Like Ghana, Christianity in Uganda is dominated by the Catholic and Protestant churches, with the exception that while the Methodist church is predominant in Ghana on the part of the Protestants, its counterpart in Uganda is the Anglican Church of Uganda. He discusses the politics of intrigue within the Christian churches, with special emphasis on the Church of Uganda, whereby the Diocesan crisis in Busoga almost tore apart the Anglican church in the 1990s. His observations of political and ethnic differences within the Church of Uganda parallel those observed in Canon Kodwo A. Ankrah's *Development and the Church of Uganda*. He argues that the reason why the Catholic church has avoided the pitfalls bedeviling the Church of Uganda is that first of all, the Church of Uganda is a loose autonomous conglomeration of the Anglican Canterbury Church of England, whose autonomous relationship with its religious affiliations may have facilitated the mismanagement of the latter's resources. Second, oftentimes, the Catholic church does not recruit its clergy from its Diocesan jurisdiction. Thus, this has eliminated many problems such as corruption, nepotism as well as the mismanagement of church resources. However, he bemoans the decline of male catechists in the Catholic denomination. He also discusses the proliferation of many churches in the past few decades.

As far as Zambia is concerned, it has a Christian configuration that in a way resembles that of Ghana and Uganda. Like Uganda and Ghana,

the Catholic church is the most important religious denomination. However, unlike Ghana and Uganda, Zambia was faced at Independence by two powerful separatist churches, notably, one that was led by Alice Lenshina, known as the Lumpa Church and the other one led by Emilio Mulolani, known as the "Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," both of who had strong nationalist overtones at Independence. Lenshina's church was violently suppressed because of its violent confrontations with the government, while that of Mulolani simply "went out of style" due to its controversial religious practices. Christianity has played a big role in Zambia's politics, after all 75 percent of its population professes to be Christians. It is this statistic that persuaded President Frederick Chiluba to declare Zambia a "Christian nation", despite controversies such as the separation of church and state as embedded in the Zambian constitution. Nonetheless, unlike Ghana and Uganda, the churches appear to be more united and more outspoken against government policies deemed to be highhanded. Like the other two countries, there has been a proliferation of messianic and charismatic churches in the country in the past few decades.

Like the other three countries, the Catholic church in Zambia is the only church that appears to be undivided. The country also has a strong Protestant presence in the form of Presbyterians, Zambia, Cameroon is an amalgamation of two separate colonies (the north which had been under French rule and the south which had been under British rule). It has roughly the same composition of Christians as in Uganda, which hovers around 65 percent of the population, although it has a higher Moslem population, that is approximately 23 percent. Other churches in existence in Zambia, include the Baptists and other revivalist churches.

All in all, despite a few typos that could drastically change the meaning of some sentences, Paul Gifford is commended for having written an original book that assesses the role of Christianity in contemporary Africa.

In a summation, the role of religion in contemporary Africa is appraised in the three books. In light of the current multifarious crises

that afflict the continent, the books concur that the role of religious institutions is bound to play a bigger role in assisting the continent's people in their protracted struggle for genuine democracy and social justice.

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