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Guest Editor: Peter van der Veer

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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRAYER AND POLITICS

Introduction

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These are papers that originated in the Social Science Research Council Program on New Directions in the Study of Prayer and together they give a comparative perspective of the use of prayer as a means of spiritual warfare, as a sign of withdrawal from state politics, as providing a space for identity formation. In all these cases, ranging from Nigeria to India, France, and the USA, prayer has an important social and political significance.

Prayer, Christianity, Islam, warfare

Prayer is generally studied from the perspective of ritual performance, linguistic specificity, psychological efficacy, but rarely from the perspective of politics. This issue is therefore a unique contribution to the social science study of religion and politics. It brings together case studies of the political salience of prayer in Nigeria, France, India, Russia, and the United States. These case studies show different methodological and theoretical approaches to prayer and politics, but the authors who have different disciplinary backgrounds have been in conversation with each other, since all of them were part of a Research Program on New Directions in the Study of Prayer (2011–2015) that was run by the Social Science Research Council in New York and funded by the John Templeton Foundation.

One of the problems faced by the SSRC Research Program on was the question of whether "prayer", more or less definable as "a solemn request addressed to a greater power", was a universal phenomenon or something particular to Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) traditions. The great majority of the contributions to the Program turned out to be about the Abrahamic traditions and indeed all of the papers in this issue are about prayer in Christianity and Islam. This, however, is not as clear-cut as it seems, since the papers deal with instances in which Christian or Muslim prayer is inflected by the presence of Hinduism, African "traditional" religion, or Native American religion. Prayer cannot be

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studied in isolation from other forms of worship, ritual sequences and forms of social interaction, including, I would suggest, the framing by secular politics. While in some forms of Protestantism prayer is presented as primarily an individual form of communication, this is actually rather exceptional and, as a rule, in Christianity and also in Islam prayer can be either collective or individual and as a religious practice it is subjected to a number of rules regulating social interaction.

Politics is in the first instance central to the regulation of the practice of prayer itself. Who participates and who does not? Where is prayer allowed and where not? Which words can be used and which not? For instance, in Malaysia and Indonesia one finds a dispute about the translation of God as Allah in Christian prayer, where some Muslims have the opinion that the word Allah can only refer to their God. In Hinduism, women and untouchables were not allowed to hear or speak the sacred mantras of the Vedas. In this issue the historian Sanal Mohan shows how important in nineteenth century Kerala (South India) the creation of space for prayer was in the long struggle for emancipation of untouchable slaves. Denial of space was essential in the subjugation of the slave castes and the practice of prayer introduced by missionaries had a number of special effects: congregation, the building of prayer houses, and spatial connections with other Christians. The Dalits that were converted by missionaries used prayer to reinvent themselves as human beings who could come together to pray, and space was an essential element in that political project. Here, prayer is a practice that contests an existing hegemony.

Prayer is a practice that has to be taught and learned. It often requires literacy and certainly education which is often thought to be a prerequisite of social emancipation, critical attitudes, and freedom. In the Russian Orthodox Church, the use of prayer books and the faithful reproduction of texts is central to prayer practice and this raises the question of whether formal speech stifles creativity and free discussion, as argued by some anthropologists. In her contribution, the anthropologist Sonja Luehrmann rejects this view by closely examining the various ways texts are performed in Russian orthodoxy through improvisation and subtle changes. Luehrmann offers a thorough discussion of various forms of collective and individual prayer, in which especially the latter provide a range of possibilities that reflect changing political circumstances and show a remarkable creativity in dealing with the sorrows of socialist atheism and the pains of officially condemned practices of abortion.

The sociologist Fareen Parvez also addresses the extent to which recitation and rote learning is restrictive, but she places this in the context of the theoretical debate about the possibility of critique outside of secularism. Her research deals with a prayer group of Salafist women in Lyon who have abandoned secular education (or the other way around) and come together to recite and discuss the Koran. Central to the discipline of reciting, in fact, is the cultivation of doubt and questioning, alongside a rejection of consumer culture and norms of secular France.

In multicultural societies like France the act of prayer, as well as a number of other manifestations of piety, implicitly also refers to a context where non-believing "others" are a powerful presence. This was historically true for the tense political relations between Protestants and Catholics in France as well as later between secularist radicals and believers, but it has now come to be crucial in the relations between Muslims and other Frenchmen. In India, we have an even more tense and violent set of relations between different religious communities. The anthropologist Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi does not focus on prayer as such, but on a set of what he calls mimetic relations between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad, a city in Gujarat (West India) that was rocked by heavy communal violence in 2002, in which over 1000 people were killed in three weeks. Relations between Muslims and Hindus have not been as bad as they are today in India since Partition and one of the signs of that is that Narendra Modi who was Chief Minister in Gujarat in the period of the communal carnage (and who has been accused of orchestrating it) has recently won a landslide electoral victory to become India's Prime Minister for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. The political landscape of Gujarat been described by, among others, Ghassem-Fachandi in earlier work, but here he focuses on a subtle element in the relations between the antagonistic communities, namely mimesis of elements of the beliefs and practices of the other community. What he argues is that with the rise of Hindu nationalism the mimesis between Hindus and Muslims that surfaces, for example, in spirit possession where one is possessed by spirits of the other community, is failing. Instead of acknowledgement of alterity, one feels disgust and mental disturbance when one is confronted with the Other. If Ghassem-Fachandi is right, his findings are perhaps even more disturbing than the many factual, statistical accounts that we have of the increasing marginalization of the Muslim population in India.

Although he does not use the concept, the sociologist Ebenezer Obadare also deals with mimesis in his discussion of a form of "Charismatic Islam" that adopts from Pentecostal Christianity some highly successful methods of propagating the faith in Nigeria, a country where Islam and Christianity are each other's antagonistic rivals. We find here an emulation of the rival's success that is quite familiar from the historical literature on India and China, where Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and Daoists all at the same time competed with missionary Christianity and adopted its successful methods of propagation. Also within Christianity one finds this phenomenon of competition mixed with imitation when Catholic Charismatics started to emulate Pentecostal Christianity. Like the Catholic charismatic movement, the response to Pentecostalism by NASFAT, the movement described by Obadare, is highly innovative and has to be understood also in relation to debates within Islam. Nevertheless, the worldwide surge of Pentecostalism as a religion of the senses and as a political religion is of paramount importance, especially in Nigeria. Although a global phenomenon, Pentecostalism is extremely capable of aligning itself with local understandings of power and spiritual struggle, while at the same time offering a pathway to spiritual transformation and

a modern self. It is prayer and the location of prayer that is the primary battleground in the competition of NASFAT and Pentecostals, as graphically illustrated by the ability to attract so many participants that it creates visible havoc on the Lagos–Ibadan Highway.

The political scientist Ruth Marshall also deals with Nigeria and provides further detailed analysis of Pentecostal prayer. Her interpretation takes the theological claims of Pentecostalism seriously. She argues that spiritual warfare has always been a part of Christian theology, but that with Pentecostalism it has taken center stage in the production of a new militant Christian subject. While the current militarization of the Christian subject and of Christian prayer has American overtones and American theologians, like Peter Wagner, have been the founding fathers of this new move towards spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare, Marshall argues that one needs also to pay close attention to the local conditions of reading the global scripture. Marshall's analysis of the theological message of Dr Daniel Olukoya, a Nigerian pastor who claims to have a PhD in molecular genetics from England, whose prayer meetings attract hundreds of thousands of believers who engage in "machine-gun prayer", highlights a bricolage of both local and global aspects of spiritual warfare. A fascinating aspect is that local knowledge, including spirit and witchcraft ideas, has to be taken seriously by those who fight Satan. Nigerians see themselves as especially well equipped with local knowledge to carry out spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare is waged through the performative force of speech which is evident in the speaking in tongues, for which Pentecostalism is known. Marshall cites the Nigerian theologian Wariboko who refers to spiritual warfare as an individual and societal transformation through prayer and speaking in tongues. She rejects the political philosopher Wendy Brown's claim that there is a clear distinction between performative speech and a fact-based reasoned truth. She points out that the uncertainty about one's ability to change and to speak to God directly, as well as the sense of the constant presence of Satan is what makes this form of Christianity so aggressive. The militant language of prayer against "the enemy" (to be defined in political struggle) makes Charismatic Christianity a political force of great importance in Nigeria and elsewhere, though it does not get the same attention as militant Islamism.

The Americanist and religious studies scholar Elizabeth McAlister also discusses spiritual warfare, but this time in the American heartland. It is quite literally the American heartland, since she describes a prayer warfare boot camp organized by Native Americans who assert themselves as guardians of the land. In the group were Cheyenne, Chikasaw, Apache, Cherokee, Lakota Sioux, Navaho, Oneida, and Tlingit. In general, Christian conservatives see America as the chosen nation under God which goes out especially in warfare against the forces of evil. The drill sergeants had all served America in Vietnam. Nevertheless, they agreed that white people had stolen Native land which in turn laid America open to God's punishment. The Natives themselves were not innocent either, otherwise they would not

have been punished by God in the way they were. Nevertheless, thanks to their special connection with the land, they had a special task in protecting America. In McAlister's account this was superbly illustrated by a "mission strike" to save America from a ritual attack (a "Kalachakra for World Peace") by Tibetan lamas on the shores of Lake Ontario. The prayer team went to the shores of several of the Great Lakes and, as Native Americans, they were able to summon the spirits of the lakes to counter the Tibetan spirits.

The papers by Obadare, Marshall, and McAlister lay out the military discourse and practice, including territorial imagery and mapping, that has infused Christian evangelical practice. Much of this comes from the US which is, as McAlister points out, a highly militarized society with a strong vision of using its power to change the world for the better. This vision not only informs evangelism, but also American foreign policy in general. What all the papers in this issue do is to connect the larger picture of religion and politics with a fine-grained ethnographic account of prayer and other religious practices that provide an understanding of how geopolitics and nationalism become real in people's everyday life.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRAYER AND POLITICS

The politics of prayer books: Delegated intercession, names, and community boundaries in the Russian Orthodox Church

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ABSTRACT

Prayer is most easily conceived of as political speech when it is a spontaneous practice showing individual and group reactions to current events. Where prayer is a routinized activity involving the recitation of canonical texts, interpreters locate politics in the disciplining of bodies and acts of claiming space. This paper takes inspiration from ethnographies of oral ritual performance and Quranic recitation to include texts and the delegation of speech roles in the analysis of recited prayer. Most Russian Orthodox Christians either pray from a prayer book or order such prayers to be said by specialists. Focusing on the use of baptismal names as indexical elements in intercessory prayer, I argue that Orthodox Christian textual practices sustain a particular form of fractal social authority. Standardized prayer texts synchronize lay and delegated clerical voices, while individualizing responsibility for non-Orthodox kin and acquaintances. Through analyzing canonical and non-canonical intercessory formulae, one can see that part of the political force of prayer lies in constructing community boundaries while dynamically readjusting them.

KEYWORDS

Prayer; social indexicality; Russian Orthodox Church; Pussy Riot; abortion

When thinking of the politics of prayer, personal and spontaneous verbal performances come easily to mind; from the macropolitics of US presidents praying with their advisors to the micropolitics of evangelical Christians using impromptu prayer to communicate with human overhearers while invoking divine addressees (Harding 2000; Luhrmann 2012; Webster 2013). When it comes to liturgical, standardized prayer where people pray at regular intervals with words that are not their own, scholars find politics in the shaping of subjectivity and desire through embodied discipline (Mahmood 2005) or the performative force of collective action. Muslims praying in French streets because their mosques are overflowing (Bowen 2009; Fernando 2014) and Pentecostals filling stadiums and mega churches with the hum of glossolalia (Marshall 2009; O'Neill 2010) are examples of acts of prayers understood to gain their force not through semantic meaning-making but through the orchestration of bodies occupying space. As Heiko Henkel notes (2005: 498), even a ritual act whose verbal component includes such clear and emphatic statements of God's greatness and one-ness as Muslim *salāt* (daily prayers) seems more readily to invite interpretations of its choreographed bodily engagement than its verbal content.

There are good reasons for anthropologists to frame their contribution to the study of religion as moving beyond texts to the intricacies of human interaction with other humans and the material world (Orsi 2004; Houtman and Meyer 2012). But anthropology's commitment to listening to people's reflections on their own actions also leads them to favor certain textual practices over others. When it comes to the study of Christianity in particular, anthropological analysis gravitates toward genres requiring personal eloquence such as conversion narratives and the casually conversational prayer of evangelical Protestants and post-Vatican II Catholics. However, there are many Christian groups where prayer books and liturgical orders are important parts of repertoires of worship, and where responsibility for such prayers can be delegated across groups of expert and lay participants. In looking at Eastern Orthodox Christian prayer, for example, I have found it useful to draw on ethnographies of prayer and textual recitation in Islam (Baker 1993; Gade 2004; Henkel 2005; Haeri 2013) and on longstanding anthropological engagements with memory, creativity, and participant frameworks in oral ritual performance (Hymes 1981; Briggs 1988; Keane 1997a; 1997b). I locate politics in recited prayer in two ways: first, in the way it synchronizes collective and individual, clerical and lay prayer while also assigning them unequal status. Secondly, in the processes of generating and authorizing prayer texts for newly relevant issues and occasions. Overall, I see prayer as a practice that marks social boundaries and endows them with the intransigence of a sacred-profane distinction (van der Veer 1992), but that also exposes boundaries to contestation by making visible the incongruence between personal and communal networks (Seligman et al. 2008). As part of a wider interest in how the Russian Orthodox Church and its adherents respond to challenges raised by legacies of state-sponsored atheism, this essay probes the kinds of community that the textual features of Orthodox Christian prayer help create, sustain, and break open. As Michael Herzfeld (1990) argues in relation to icons, conventional prayer media enable a parallelism between domestic and liturgical engagements with the sacred, and create a community that sometimes resembles the segmentary societies described by British social anthropologists more than the hierarchical centralism often associated with post-Byzantine Orthodox Christianity.

Reading one's prayers in Orthodox Christianity

Along with icons, an essential marker of an Orthodox Christian household is the presence of one or more prayer books, which are often kept on the same shelf as the

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sacred images. In Russian, prayers are always "read", no matter if one recites from memory or from an open book, and no matter if one thinks the word in the silence of one's head or voices them out loud. This peculiarity comes from a general shift in meaning of the verb *chitat'* (Old Slavonic "recite, say out loud", modern Russian "read"), similar to the semantic shift between Anglo-Saxon *raedan* and modern English "read" (Howe 1993). Other texts that can be recited from memory are also "read", such as poems (*chitat' stikhi*). At a basic level, the semantic association between prayers and reading reflects the close association between Orthodox worship and Old Church Slavonic, a literary language based on ninth-century Bulgaro-Macedonian that was created by the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius. Its distance from modern Russian can be compared to the difference between modern and Chaucerian English (Bennett 2011). In addition, to say that a prayer is "read" even when it is recited or sung from memory or silently remembered reflects a popular understanding that praying means to faithfully reproduce texts that are recorded in books, similar to reciting a poem. Although the relationship between written and performed prayer is not at all straightforward, acknowledging the authority of a variety of printed books is a crucial part of what makes prayer Orthodox.

Linguistic conservatism and textual immutability can lead one to think of read prayer as a mechanism for reproducing social authority (Bloch 1974). But what kind of society does this particular form of authority emanate from, and what are the conditions of participation in it? Different cycles of prayer in the Orthodox tradition create different bonds between individuals and communities. During liturgical prayer in church services, lay faithful are largely overhearing witnesses as the deacon reads the petitions and the choir responds. But even casual churchgoers are able to interpret the metacommunicative cues that mark a particular call-and-response sequence as intercessory prayer: The deacon comes out of the altar with a small prayer book and entones "*Mirom Gospodu pomolimsia*" (In peace let us pray to the Lord). As the choir responds *Gospodi pomilui* (Lord have mercy) or *Podai Gospodi* (Grant us, O Lord), the congregation acknowledges their inclusion in the "we" of these prayers by bowing and crossing themselves, joining the petitions through gesture rather than speech. In a wider sense, "praying" (*molit'sia*) is what all participants of a church service – clergy, choir members, and members of the congregation – understand themselves as obligated to do in order for the service to be valid and successful. In the words of a choir director from the Volga region city of Ioshkar-Ola, "when the choir members are praying [as they sing], the congregation prays, and when the congregation is praying, the priest prays more easily". As the only legitimate state of mind during a service, prayer is thereby opposed to distraction, and aligns an individual's intentions with those of the other people present at the service (Hirschkind 2006; Luehrmann 2011: 177–81). The familiar sequence and conventional responses help sustain an equation of shared attention with shared action.

A second cycle consists of the personal daily prayers that are incumbent on any Orthodox Christian, printed in prayer books as morning and evening prayers.

Different from the five daily prayers of Muslims, prayer times are not tied to positions of the sun, but to an individual's bodily rhythm: morning prayers are supposed to be read "after getting up from sleep and before any other activity" (Molitvoslov 2002: 33), evening prayers just before going to bed. These prayers differ slightly for lay and ordained Christians, but are always private, ideorhythmic observances that are not duplicated by any church service.[1] But they are sometimes performed in small groups – I have seen pilgrims gather in groups of two or three in the evening to read from a shared prayer book; and a weekly Bible study group attended by college-age youth in Moscow ended their meetings with a reading of the evening prayers in which every attendee took a turn. Such occasions are often tacit attempts at missionization, when a more committed, "churched" Christian will invite others to join in reading the prayers because they suspect they would not perform them on their own (compare Henkel 2005: 492). By bringing together practitioners at different skill levels in decoding and entoning Church Slavonic, shared prayers serve as teaching moments that can set in motion an "affective dynamic of escalating engagement" (Gade 2004: 4). Whether performed alone or in a group, the prayers include sections of intercession for others that are crucial connecting points between these ideorhythmic prayers and notions of community.

Finally, there are occasions for intercessory prayer for particular purposes (*treby*). These can be collective and priest-led, as in a prayer service (*moleben*) for particular needs; or they can take the popular form of an *akathistos*, a hymn of praise to a saint, festival day, or an icon of Mary (Liudogovskii and Pliakin 2013; Shevzov 2006). Such hymns are technically extraliturgical (meant for individual or group performance by lay people), but are becoming more and more popular for performance in church as well, often as an add-on to vespers or to the Eucharistic liturgy. Popular *akathistoi* include those addressed to icons of Mary such as the "Cup that Cannot be Emptied" (invoked against alcoholism) or the "Helper in Birth" (for pregnant women), and to saints with particular portfolios such as the Holy Martyr Tatiana (the patron saint of students who helps with exams). In church, they are read alternately by a priest and the choir, and provide a clue to the kinds of social issues and concerns that a congregation seeks to address.

Like liturgical and daily prayers, occasional intercessory prayers are dominated by standardized texts read from books, brochures, photocopies, or, more recently, digital devices. Comparable to Islamic *du'a* (Haeri 2013), some of the invocations end in more personalized requests that can be voiced, verbalized silently, or written down, such as the letters left at the popular shrine of St Ksenia in St Petersburg (Kormina and Shtyrkov 2012). These more personal utterances gain part of their power from the canonical texts that accompany them, another part from the person who animates them. In this category of prayer in particular, people make choices about (only) praying themselves or (also) delegating prayer to others. Standard written texts can have a crucial synchronizing function that enable the passage between a specialist's "delegated voice" (Keane 1991) and personally enacted prayer.

When members of a household lack the time or confidence in their ability to pray over a particular concern, they will invite a priest or order prayers in a local church or a monastery. Prayer is one of the main goods for sale in church kiosks as well as on Orthodox fairs that are held in many Russian cities throughout the year. Here, one can pay a distant monastery for a 40-day commemoration of a loved one who suffers from alcoholism or cancer in front of the appropriate icon of Mary. The sponsor is told the date when the prayers will start, and is encouraged to join in with some prayer effort of their own, such as reading the icon's *akathistos* or liturgical stanzas addressed to it at home once a day. Few households own the full *trebnik* (Slavonic literally "book of needs", or book of occasional services) from which the monastic service will be performed. But the shorter prayers and hymns that are included in many lay prayer books make it possible for sponsors and specialists to achieve a perceived synchronicity in action across distances. Since many people consider monastics and priests to be more spiritually advanced, their prayer is said to "reach God faster", while the family member's participation adds the sincerity of heartfelt effort. Even experienced devotees rely on this economy of unequal co-participation, because the possibility of delegating prayer helps balance out the risk of distraction that goes along with habitual repetition. When I asked an elderly woman selling candles at a church booth if she found it easy to keep focused during prayer, she said, "No, my mind wanders all the time. But for us, the best we can do is to read the morning and evening prayers as best we can, and the rest is up to the fathers (*batiushki*), they know how to do it".

Different from the verbal virtuosity of evangelical and post-Vatican II Catholic prayer, those prayers that Orthodox Christian say out loud rarely use words for which they would take the responsibility of an "author", and sometimes they are not even the animator of their own prayer request. At the same time, praying by the book is not an act of rote repetition, but a generative process comparable to using grammatical rules to construct new sentences (Bloom 1994). Lay people use their prayer books in different ways, because actualizing pre-given elements in worship grows more complex with experience and practice. What is more, the pursuit of "new compelling horizons for potential competence and mastery" (Gade 2004: 5) not only involves improving one's own performance through better understanding of Old Church Slavonic and more sophisticated ways of recitation, but also building confidence in choosing and enlisting the services of specialists. The formatting rules for delegated prayer serve to distribute responsibility across several categories of actors in some cases, while concentrating it on individuals in others. This frays the social boundaries affirmed by prayer, as church-centered and ego-centered networks sometimes overlap, and sometimes remain separate.

Formatting and social belonging

One oft-noted effect of routinely repeated, officially authorized texts is to lift social authority out of the realm of denotational meaning. No longer subject to logical

argument, social values and distinctions are naturalized through a "hegemony of form" (Yurchak 2003). Maurice Bloch's famous line "one cannot argue with a song" (1974) could easily apply to the repetitive poetics of liturgical prayers that are chanted or speed-read in an archaic language. However, anthropologists of performance *and* textual recitation agree that following canonical forms can enable rather than restrict personal appropriation and contextualization through such processes as improvisation (Wilf 2014), variations that index the social context (Keane 1997a: 113; Hymes 1981; Briggs 1988), or mental elaboration on the meanings of invariant forms (Haeri 2013). Inspired in part by such work on performance and frames of social interaction, Seligman et al. (2008) argue that ritual, instead of perpetuating a rigid social order, allows people to play with norms and boundaries by setting up an as-if world whose non-correspondence to social reality makes it possible to expand and contract relations of possibility and circles of empathy with others. Ritual, in this interpretation, is not simply an occasion to act out and internalize accepted orders, but a moment where shifts in norms and boundaries can happen because people become conscious of the contingency of their shared symbols.

In Eastern Christian churches, shared authoritative symbols are present through the canonical sensory media that dominate all liturgical contexts. In addition to prayers pronounced by Biblical characters, psalms, and well-known texts of the church such as the Nicene creed, the daily prayers incorporate a series of prayers attributed to named saintly authors – the prayer of St Makarius, for example, or the prayer of St Basil the Great. Like the icons that worshipers are encouraged to look at while praying, prayer texts emphatically do not come from the individual's imagination, but have been vetted by collective discernment.

At the same time, people come to liturgical and domestic prayer with particular concerns for which they seek help and validation from the church. As Robert Orsi notes (2004), religion is often lived as a way of linking human and human-divine relationships. Intercessory prayer is a crucial way in which this happens. Being relatively more immutable than oral speech, printed prayer books cannot use indexical variation as the primary way of connecting domestic and ecclesial concerns. Instead, they provide specific slots where the person praying can insert personal requests, mostly revolving around care for a network of living and dead kin, acquaintances, and benefactors. In order for these slots to function as switchpoints between particular concerns and those of the church community, requests have to be properly formatted as lists of personal names. There are set places in the morning prayers for such names, and some editions of prayer books contain blank pages to record names of "the living" and "the reposed". In some traditional Orthodox communities, such as Old Believers or monasteries, "books of commemoration" (Slavonic *pomianniki*) may be kept for several generations and constitute a record of the community across time (Kenworthy 2010; Naumescu 2013; Rogers 2009). For the relatively small number of contemporary Russian Orthodox Christians who regularly perform daily prayers, the names they insert

into their morning prayers are personal records of ego-centered networks not unlike a list of friends on a social network website. On the threshold between everyday and church-related practice, formatting is an occasion where the as-if nature of church communities comes to the fore.

Listing names is not an art for religious virtuosi only. The act of "writing a little note" (*podat' zapisochku*) for prayer is an occasion when even the most unchurched of Russians develop proficiency in church formatting requirements. "Notes" (Russian *zapiski*) are pieces of paper that one can fill out for a fee at the church candle stall, asking for loved ones to be included in liturgical prayers for health (of the living) or repose (of the dead). Upon entering a church or monastery, visitors will notice instructions for arranging the names according to lay or ordained status, gender, and age. Furthermore, all names must be written in the genitive case, because they will be inserted in the sentence "And still we pray for the health and forgiveness of sins of the servants of God . . .", or "And still we pray for the forgiveness and eternal rest of the servants of God . . .". Grammatically pre-formatted, the note can be read quickly by a priest with minimal conscious thought, blending into a much longer list of names. Someone who enters the church and writes a note "for the health of Andrei, Olga, and Nataliia" may never recognize the moment when these names are read during the service, because there will likely be a flood of Andreis, Olgas, and Nataliias being commemorated.

The repetitive nature of names in a prayer litany is a consequence of the most important formatting requirement, which is the use of baptismal names, all of which are those of Orthodox saints. In cases where someone gets baptized as an adult or an infant's parents have registered the birth under a name that is not on the list of saints, the requirement of choosing an Orthodox saint's name becomes a moment of declaring membership in a community that is far more unequivocally Russian and rooted in a vision of continuity with Christian Byzantium than is the case for twenty-first century Russia as a whole. For example, I have known an Ėlina (a Tatar name) whose baptismal name was Elena; and a Muza (a Soviet name referring to the muses of Greek mythology) whose baptismal name was Mariia, although she went by her legal name in her work as Sunday school teacher. The baptismal forms of some common Russian names are closer to the original Greek, such as Ioann for Ivan. The saint's name grants church membership by giving the baptized person a place in the transtemporal community of Christians. In intercessory prayer, it functions as an unambiguous code that God will recognize in the absence of any other information.

As an inherently variable and indexical element of Orthodox prayer, the baptismal name points to two kinds of boundaries: at a basic level, it sets up a distinction between sacred and profane, where people who in their ordinary lives might go by nicknames such as Natasha and Vasia are referred to as Nataliia and Vasilii, as a way of paying homage to their patron saint and treating them as an image of the saint and, by extension, of God (Hirschon 2010). In addition, referring to someone by their baptismal name incorporates them into the church community where

everyone is considered equal and connected by mutual bonds of care. Using or not using the baptismal name can thus be a way to acknowledge or refuse common membership in the body of Christ. In a famous recent example of generative variation of a known Orthodox Christian prayer form, the feminist activist group Pussy Riot performed a "punk prayer" (*pank moleben*) in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow in February 2012. Their refrain "O Virgin Birthgiver of God, put Putin away" gained its affective force from the way it both referenced and departed from established Orthodox conventions of intercession. The opening copied the beginning of the Orthodox version of Hail Mary both in word and in the musical phrasing taken from Sergei Rakhmaninov's Vespers. In addition to being a part of many liturgies, O Virgin Birthgiver of God is a popular prayer used by laypeople, especially women, in times of need (Shevzov 2014: 128). The point of departure from the canonical beginning was marked not only by the aggressive content of the petition – "putting someone away" is not usually part of Orthodox prayer requests (compare MacAlister, this issue). It was also evident in the insistence on using last names: "Putin" and "Patriarch Gundiaev", instead of "Vladimir" and "Patriarch Kirill".[2] Through using last names, the band broke the frame of the genre, but also marked the subjects of the prayer as standing outside the community that prayerful commemoration usually entails.

As observers have pointed out, reactions to the Punk Prayer from the Russian Orthodox Church and the larger public were quick to concern themselves with re-establishing a number of boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (pertaining to proper places and forms of political expression, lay versus clerical roles in the church, and gendered codes of decorum) whose deliberate breach took on its force in part through the unauthorized use and creative manipulation of ritual form (Bernstein 2013; Denysenko 2013; Shevzov 2014). But for all its shock value, the Punk Prayer took a possibility to the extreme that is already incipient in the form of the prayer book itself: the modification of canonical forms in response to perceived social needs. For example, most prayer books contain prayers to various saints and icons that help in particular needs. The precise prayers included vary depending on the publisher and edition. There are special prayer books with selections for parents, expectant mothers, incarcerated criminals, soldiers in war, and sick or elderly people. Orthodox publishers prove themselves able to use the indeterminate form of the prayer book for their own community-shaping ends, simply through selecting and collating existing texts without changing their content. The feminist punk rockers were not so unusual in using prayer as a means of political intervention; where they crossed the line was in using the church as a platform for expressing positions of protest that had no other place in Russia's public sphere at the time. The ironical adoption of gestural, textual, and musical elements of prayer and the use of alienating last names for such quintessential insiders of Orthodox intercession as the head of the local church and the head of the national government rhetorically displaced the church from its course of non-confrontation with the likely winner of the

upcoming election. The artists sensed the connection between intercession and the delineation of communal boundaries, thereby giving prayer a prophetic role from which the church itself was careful to steer clear.

Names and the delegation of responsibility

While few Orthodox faithful use prayer in acts of political protest, there are more mundane ways in which they encounter the capacity of naming practices to mark contested moral boundaries. In many Orthodox churches across Russia, the person who seeks to write a prayer note encounters a second kind of formatting instruction, this one pertaining to names which cannot be included. Near the booth where candles are sold and prayers can be ordered, one often finds a printed sign saying: "The unbaptized, people of other faiths, unbelievers and suicides are not commemorated in the church". I found this prohibition on ordering prayers for the non-Orthodox enforced on several occasions when I wrote down names of Orthodox relatives in Russian churches, and my foreign accent provoked the question: "Are they all baptized?" In the religiously and philosophically pluralistic world of post-Soviet Russia, many people have friends and relatives whose care they cannot delegate to the church because they are not baptized Orthodox Christians. The name-slot in prayer texts thus becomes a site where religious boundaries measure up in strength against personal networks.

The baptismal name, as we have seen, makes it possible to delegate prayerful care for a person to an expert, whose prayers are supposed to be more efficacious than the layperson's. Ritual delegation and sharing of speech roles (as that between sponsors, animators, and principals of a prayer, curse, or insult) has been analyzed as a way in which communities constitute themselves as collective agents while dispersing moral responsibility for an action (Irvine 1996: 136–37). Such a "separation of voice and agency" (Keane 1997a: 142) is crucial to the structure of Russian Orthodox prayer in multiple ways, from the requirement to pray with the words of other, more spiritually advanced people to the tendency for intercessory responsibilities to accrue to particular members of a household or community, such as the oldest female member of a household (Kormina and Shtyrkov 2012; Hirschon 1989), or a priest known to be a powerful pray-er (*molitvennik*). This preference for dispersing and collectivizing the responsibilities and risks of prayer would fit well with the reputation of the Eastern Orthodox churches of being the least individualizing branch of Christianity (Hann 2007). However, similar to icon copies kept in the homes of Greek villagers that refer to the patron saint whose icon is kept in the church but also give households autonomy as ritual centers (Herzfeld 1990), the nesting scales of intercessory roles can have segmenting as well as unifying effects. An interesting side-effect of the exclusion of non-Orthodox people from church intercession is that in some human relationships, responsibility is once again individualized and agency is concentrated in the voice of a lay speaker who cannot delegate that role to others.

Responsibility for non-Orthodox members of personal networks becomes individualized because personal prayers offer more leeway to pray for people whom the church would not commemorate liturgically. "One can pray for whomever one wants", said a friend born in the 1970s whose husband is an Orthodox priest in Moscow, explaining that she had no problem using names that did not refer to saints in her daily prayers. Another young woman of the same generation, who had spent time as a student in the United States, told me a story of how she tried to order prayers in a Moscow church for one of her American professors who was ill. She initially tried to write his name on a *zapiska* for prayers for health in front of a miracle-working icon. But then she decided that "there should be no lies in the church", and explained to the woman in the church candle booth that the person she requested prayers for was a Protestant, "but a very good person". A conversation developed with several old ladies working in the church, in the course of which they decided "that this was something I had to do on my own. So they found me the necessary akathistos and I went to read it in front of the icon".

This story is instructive because the same women who insist that it is not possible to request corporate prayers for a non-Orthodox person recognize the need and possibility to pray for him individually. They even offer advice on choosing the right icon and text for the particular ailment. Rather than denying the young woman's sense of responsibility for the well-being of her Protestant teacher, they affirm that no one else can take on that responsibility for her. Having non-Orthodox people in one's circle of acquaintances, then, becomes an obligation of religious care, because it cannot be delegated to more competent authorities.

In the aftermath of Soviet secularization, counting people among one's loved ones who do not fit the requirements for inclusion in corporate prayers is far from exceptional. The church recognizes this through specialized saints whom one can appeal to for such cases. For example, the martyr Varus (known as Uar in Russian), a Roman soldier stationed in Egypt in the fourth century who is said to have interceded for the family of Cleopatra, is becoming known as a patron of those who died without baptism or renounced the church. Prayers to him are included in many prayer books "for times of trouble" or "for loved ones". They emphatically lack the places for the insertion of personal names and simply ask Varus to intercede for "those we remember" (Akafisty 2004: 467). There is also a special prayer on behalf of suicides, which includes the request not to "count this prayer in condemnation" against the person interceding. Most prayers to such liminal saints are for solitary performance (*dlia keleinogo chteniia*, a monastic metaphor literally meaning "for reading in one's cell"). However, the church recognizes unbelief and suicide as widespread concerns by making prayer texts and icons available. In the central Russian city of Tula, the diocese has designated a church as "a family temple", with the main altar dedicated to the Conception of the Virgin Mary and side altars to the Innocent Infants of Bethlehem and St Varus. Varus, the rector explained, was known to intercede for people who died without baptism, without repentance, or as suicides. "Of course this doesn't mean that we

can pray for them here in the church, but he is the saint who prays that the Lord may forgive these acts, these sins, and give them some relief in the other world". The Infants of Bethlehem stood for a concern with an even more problematic category when it came to intercessory prayer: aborted and stillborn fetuses, who lacked not just a baptismal name but any name at all by which to refer to them in prayer. In the context of political concerns with the demographic situation of Russia, this particular category of nameless dead is provoking ritual innovation.

Namelessness and innovation

Icons of the martyr Varus index one legacy of the socialist period: many people have relatives who died without baptism or without last rites. Another consequence of Soviet secularization and gender orders is the fact that many women aborted pregnancies. Abortion was *the* method of fertility control and demographic transition toward small nuclear families in the postwar Soviet Union, and abortions outnumbered live births every year since their (re)legalization in 1955; at their peak in the mid-1960s by a ratio of almost 3 to 1 (Luehrmann forthcoming; Rivkin-Fish 2006). Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, the Russian Orthodox Church has taken an increasingly public stance against abortion, denouncing it as murder and sin. This creates a dilemma for many elderly and middle-aged women whose reproductive years fell in the Soviet period. They are told that their aborted fetuses were real human beings whom they murdered, but they cannot commemorate them as other dead relatives, because they lack a crucial part of full social membership in the Orthodox community: a baptismal name. Even more than non-Orthodox friends and relatives, aborted fetuses are a category of persons who are increasingly in the public eye, yet for whom intercessory responsibility is completely individualized and cannot be delegated to the wider church.

Officially, the lack of a saint's name bars these categories of departed from corporate prayers, although there are debates in various parts of the Orthodox world about creating a funeral service or other liturgical acknowledgement for stillborn infants in the *trebnik* (Baum, Kishler and Kishler 2010; Kizenko 2013). The officially recommended prayer to commemorate aborted fetuses is the same as for stillborn children, a brief intercession phrased in the plural and without mentioning any names: "Lord, have mercy on my children, who died in my womb. By my faith and my tears and for the sake of Your mercy, Lord, do not deprive them of your divine light" (Angely 2007: 122). The prayer refers to the opinions of the Hellenic Church fathers, some of whom held that although unbaptized children are not in hell or in limbo, they are not in paradise either, but in an in-between place out of sight from the full light of God. In a prayer book aimed at parents wanting to intercede for their children, this prayer is followed by an explanation that although the Orthodox believe that God shows mercy to these nameless dead, "there is no commemoration of unbaptized infants. Parents can pray for them, with faith in the mercy of God" (Angely 2007: 122).

Although I met women who reported including this prayer in their daily devotions (often accompanied by a number of prostrations as a sign of penance) and priests who recommended it, there was often a sense of looking for a more elaborate ritual acknowledgement through expert or personal effort. Different from Japan, where Buddhist temples offer the purchase of mortuary names and the erection of small bodhisattva statues known as *mizuko* (literally "water children") for aborted or still-born children (Hardacre 1997), expert intercession in Russia is available only for the parents, not for the aborted fetuses. But like in Japan, the motivation for seeking such intercession often comes from a sense of responsibility for the fetus and the moral balance of the family.

At an Orthodox fair in Kazan, a long line of women formed at the booth of a convent from the Urals region that offered intercessory prayers in front of the icon of the Holy Innocent Infants of Bethlehem, an emergent symbol of abortion. Although the prayers are advertised as being "for women who have committed the sin of abortion", and their names are written down on the list, women colloquially refer to such rites as "praying out the infant" (*vymalivat' mladentsa*). A non-canonical rite that explicitly has this purpose is the so-called "Rule of the Schemanun Antonia", a litany in the course of which a mother picks a male name for the aborted fetus and asks John the Baptist to baptize the child by that name. The prayer rule was reportedly revealed to Anastasiia Kaveshnikova (1902–1998, who took on the monastic name Antoniia later in life) by an icon of the Virgin Mary in Moscow at some point in the years after World War II. After reciting the litany, the prescription is to donate a baptismal robe and baptismal cross to a church to enable the baptism of a poor or orphaned child. "Over there in the other world it all comes true right away, and your children are no longer bloody demons, but beautiful babies waiting for their mama", a woman in her twenties explained to a fellow pilgrim during a walking pilgrimage in Kirov region in 2013. I met at least four other women over the course of my research who reported using the prayer rule and finding it comforting.

While many priests denounce posthumous baptism as "paganism", it is notable that even this highly non-canonical text is made up almost entirely of standard Russian Orthodox prayer texts, such as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Prayer, psalms commonly used for prayers of repentance, and a verse from Paul's letter to the Galatians. The use of canonical parts has facilitated its circulation and acceptance in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. A group of Antoniia's followers whom I interviewed in Moscow in 2014 remembered that she would "give the [prayer] rule" to visitors who asked for spiritual advice, writing it down as a list of the titles of prayers that would be familiar to any Orthodox Christian, with marks of how often to repeat them. The only non-standard parts are short appeals to St John the Baptist, St Simeon the God-Receiver, and the Prophetess Hannah to baptize and receive the child. In the eyes of the followers, a crucial point confirming the legitimacy of the prayer was that the rite does not actually confer baptism, but merely requests it. The male name was required because,

they explained "in Heaven there are no differences between men and women, so everyone is male like the angels". They recalled that mother Antoniia told people to expect to receive such names in a dream. The names conferred through the prayer rule were thus mortuary names, not quite equivalent to the names of living people that would index such social characteristics as gender and family tradition. At the same time, the desire to give the aborted fetus a name (see also Lar'kina 2012) shows the importance people attach to individual reference for effective intercession. The anonymous prayer for "my children who died in my womb" is not specific enough, and lacks the added power of invoking a patron saint together with referring to an individual. Importantly, uncanonical acts of naming still do not completely assimilate aborted fetuses into the ranks of other dead relatives – I never heard anyone speak of writing down their names for church prayers for repose, for example. Caring for these newly individualized dead remains a deeply private responsibility, something one has to do on one's own, much like showing prayerful care for a non-Orthodox acquaintance.

Conclusion: reading and responsibility

Prayer not only shapes individuals in ethical and cognitive ways; people's ways of praying and the things they pray about also shape communities. Among insiders as well as outsiders, the Orthodox Church has a reputation for being centralized and having a rigid structure of authority – I have heard priests compare it to the army. But despite rigid discipline, the experience that laypeople have of the church is as often one of segmentation as of centralized authority, with texts and images being used in independent, parallel actions that are sometimes in consonance with what the church recommends, sometimes at odds with it. People may be reading from the same prayer books, but do so with very different ideas of who is in and who is out the circle of prayerful concern. At the same time, the alternation between delegation and individualization of prayerful responsibility enables the church to respond to new social issues while maintaining its claim to transhistorical authenticity and political neutrality.

Is individual responsibility burden or empowerment for the lay believers who take it on? Among the felicity conditions of Russian Orthodox prayer, concern with the correct execution of canonical procedure is trumped by the requirement that the person carrying out the procedure be appropriate to the task (Austin 1965 [1962]: 34). One of the ways in which ordinary believers as well as church hierarchs engage in the politics of prayer is to exercise judgment about who can appropriately pray for whom. In most situations of intercessory prayer, there is a fractal alignment (Gal and Kligman 2000: 41–43) of nested, but structurally analogous levels of responsibility. The use of a common stock of texts in the household and in the church facilitates the movement of care between these levels. However, the fractal harmony only works as long as sponsors, subjects, and animators of intercessory prayer are all baptized members of the Orthodox Church. When it comes to praying for outsiders, the only appropriate intercessor is someone in a close personal relationship, no matter how inexperienced in prayer. In a religiously and ideologically pluralistic society, instances where the nested communities of Orthodox belonging fray at the edges become more numerous. Laypeople may be prompted to take on tasks of prayerful care by subtle encouragement from the church (as in the case of rites for aborted fetuses) or by lack of such encouragement (as in prayer for political change). In both cases, laypeople shoulder much of the political risk of prayer, facing the possibility of divine or legal condemnation for their unorthodox, but topical concerns. Be they political activists or the kinfolk of suicides or unbaptized children, lay risk-takers enable the Church to extend its reach into the messiness of pluralistic politics, while safeguarding its claim to an encompassing catholicity that stands beyond political controversy.

Notes

1. The term "ideorhythmic" refers to a form of monastic life where hermits live in proximity to one another and attend liturgical services together, but each follows their own daily rhythm of work and prayer, as opposed to the cenobitic tradition where the whole monastery follows a shared order (Taft 1993). I am borrowing the term to point out that a similar tension between communalism and individualism exists in lay Orthodox prayer practices as well.
2. Gundiaev is Patriarch Kirill's legal last name, which is formally shed by a person who takes monastic vows. The line using his last name directly refers to the deification of the state on the part of the church, which was the main object of criticism of the performance event: "Patriarch Gundiaev believes in Putin/Bitch, better believe in God instead" (see Bernstein 2013).

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Prayer and pedagogy: Redefining education among Salafist Muslim women in France

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ABSTRACT

This article draws on participant observation in a working-class Salafist women's mosque community outside of Lyon. A decade after the headscarf ban in public schools, public hostility and aggression against Salafist women is rampant. As they remain estranged from the secular educational system, prayer and Islamic education have come to serve as an important substitute. Prayer is defined expansively as recitation, supplication, and the effort to strengthen one's attachment to God. I argue that Salafist women are developing their own pedagogy and learning to question the meaning and purpose of knowledge itself. They do this through their study circles in which they share prayers and have conversations about doubt, forgiveness, and wisdom. The struggles and reflection their study requires are in contrast to depictions of Islamic education as merely mechanical and stifling. Further, their education shares similarities with critical pedagogy in its religious critique of capitalist culture. The paper asserts that France's political crisis over *laïcité* has also become a crisis of public education. This, in turn, has facilitated the deepening of prayer as part of the new pedagogy among marginalized and stigmatized Muslim women.

KEYWORDS

Islam; France; Salafism; education; prayer

"Not going to school anymore poses a challenge, but we're forced to overcome it. We have to be open, create our own education, and learn through the world. Read and study and learn for yourself. If you want to learn English, you have to speak with native speakers. If you want to learn history, you have to meet people who are making history." (Amal, age 22[1])

Amal, a young Muslim woman from a working-class *banlieue* of Lyon, recounted to me how her understanding of education and pedagogy has shifted through her encounters and participation with French Muslim women and girls who homeschool or who felt excluded from universities because of their veiling practices. A

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natural teacher, Amal herself completed public high school (*le lycée*) and now privately tutored Muslim girls who did not attend school. She had attended university despite numerous hostile experiences there. Years before, Amal had also been ill, physically and psychologically. She said medicines and doctors did not help and in the end, she found relief though "a lot of prayer, a lot of *duas* [supplications]".

Amal's story is not uncommon among working-class Muslim women of Salafist, or "reformist", orientation.[2] A decade since the headscarf ban in public schools and three years since the ban on "the *burqa*" in all public space, the women of Salafist communities especially are alienated from French educational institutions. Young women committed to wearing a *djelbab*, a loose covering of the entire body except the face, find it easier to homeschool rather than take off their head coverings at the door of the public school. Aside from being estranged from public schools, such women routinely face employment discrimination, stigma, and sometimes harassment from strangers in settings ranging from metro stations to public libraries.

Based on participant observation in a working-class suburb of Lyon, this paper presents the religious reactions within a community of Salafist women to the French political climate of militant *laïcism* and public hostility to fully veiled women. It focuses on the importance of prayer, in the forms of recitation and supplication, as well as Islamic lecture and study sessions (*dars*). The definition of prayer employed here is expansive in that it goes beyond ritual prayer and beyond direct communication with God to include divine invocation as worship (Hefner 2009: 6). Such invocation occurs in the process of recitation as well as in study sessions that are geared toward strengthening attachment to God and faith in divine unity (*tawhīd*). I argue that for reformist women, given their political, economic, and social exclusion, prayer serves as an important substitute for secular education. As they seek to strengthen their faith and purify their practice from cultural rituals, they develop their own pedagogy and learn to question the meaning and purpose of knowledge itself.

Literature on Islamic education, as focused on memorization and recitation, has claimed that the traditional Islamic pedagogical style leads to stagnation and rigidity. It has not only looked primarily at male education but, more importantly, has neglected the diverse political contexts that shape the experience of education. I argue that in France, women's Islamic study circles have fostered participation and dynamism rather than mental stagnation. Moreover, reformist women's religious study and prayer replaces secular education in a way that is deeply satisfying for them. This is ever more critical as their status as French residents and citizens remains stigmatized and precarious.

In the following discussions I present literature on pedagogy and Islamic education, showing how prayer and Islamic study among this group of women shares some elements of radical pedagogy in the context of the crisis in public schooling (Giroux 2003). I then describe my research method and site, though I do not present a historical overview of post-colonial Maghrébins in France as this has been provided in numerous sources (Davidson 2012; Bowen 2010; Hargreaves 2007; Silverstein 2004; Kastoryano 2002; Kepel 1991; Etienne 1989). Next, I present types of public hostility that reformist women in France face in everyday life, followed by a discussion of how prayer and Islamic learning function as substitutes for an educational program. I focus here on recitation and conversations about attachment to God, doubt, forgiveness, and the relationship between faith, knowledge, and wisdom. I do this through three ethnographic settings: a weekly *dars* (lesson), Fatima's study circle, and an afternoon with homeschoolers.

This paper contributes to literature at the intersection of education and the anthropology of Islam as well as a burgeoning literature on Islam in Europe. It provides a more expansive view of radical pedagogy that is different from liberal secular accounts and prescriptions, and it challenges the prevalent notion that religious belief in a universal truth is incompatible with mental creativity and openness. The paper also highlights the role of prayer in augmenting faith and in creating solidarity through recitation and through the circulation of *duas*.[3] Empirically, the paper contributes to our understanding of how marginalized religious Muslims in Europe are struggling to transform their situation of hopelessness to one of purpose and meaning.

Pedagogy, truth and resistance

Some scholars have characterized Islamic education as "merely" reproducing culture and therefore, stifling creative thinking and social change (Talbani 1996). Because of the focus on Quranic recitation and memorization of prayers, media accounts and older literature have claimed Islamic education is purely mechanical (Hodgson 1974; Brown 1972: 31). Iconic images and videos of madrasa boys and girls chanting Quranic verses in unison seem to reinforce this view today. Memorization is also coupled with the "authoritative acceptance of knowledge" (Talbani 1996: 70), where students must obey and imbibe information from the teacher rather than engage in dialogue or critique. These types of assessments are aligned with the stigma and marginalization many madrasas suffer more generally and especially since the War on Terror (Zaman and Hefner 2010; Noor, Sikand and van Bruinessen 2008, Hefner and Zaman 2007).[4]

Others have tried to depart from such perspectives by acknowledging the rich history of Islamic education. However, they nonetheless reinforce dichotomous categories of Islamic pedagogy as either "fundamentalist and doctrinaire" or "flexible and open to critique" (Waghid 2011; Meijer 2006; compare Asad et al 2013).

In contrast to these images and assessments of Islamic learning, scholars have argued that Islamic education is not uniform but, rather, highly contingent on numerous sociological factors, not the least of which is state power and administration. While recitation and memorization are part of most Islamic learning traditions, debates over what types of knowledge, and for what purpose, should be included in Islamic education have a long history and dynamism (Gesink 2006; Starrett 1998). The results of these debates have shifted over time and place. As

Eickelman wrote, "Once this shifting is recognized, the interesting issue is the circumstances under which redefinitions in what is considered to be the 'proper' scope of the religious sciences is brought about" (1978: 490–91). In the case of France, this particular political moment of the crisis of *laïcité* has impacted what working-class women emphasize within their informal Islamic education. Additionally, the world of Islamic education has changed with the dramatic entry and leadership of Muslim women around the world (Mahmood 2005). Because of this fact, it is hardly accurate to generalize about learning style, as women's different structural conditions impact the pedagogy and thinking they develop (Sakurai and Adelkhah 2011).

Although Islamic education centers on truths enshrined in foundational texts, it is problematic to infer from this a lack of mental flexibility or thoughtless technical training (Eickelman 1978). First, as I will show, the existence of doubt is something that is explicitly discussed and not exactly discouraged.[5] Secondly, the internal struggle to strengthen one's faith and purify one's heart is an active process that is never finished. This renders one's relationship to Islamic education profoundly dynamic. For example, thinking about one's actions, praying for forgiveness, or reflecting on the effects of one's speech are all processes that require thinking, reflection, and struggle. In her study, Mahmood (2005) presents the "open-ended discussions" and debates in the women's mosque movement in Cairo, indeed, describing them as "pedagogies of persuasion". While the pedagogical style in this French case is, in contrast, more top-down and teacher-driven, the activities nonetheless encourage struggle and thinking. Achieving mastery in any particular dimension of Islamic education is also a practically unending journey (Waghid 2011: 34). Finally, recitation and memorization are not merely mechanical, as some scholars have shown. They require the development of sensibilities that in turn act on the heart and soul (Hirschkind 2001). When done collectively, students actively invest in each other's efforts and successes and work through peer support and pressure.

A second body of literature that relates to Islamic learning among reformist women is critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy calls for examining the relationship between knowledge and power as well as empowering alienated youth (O'Shea and O'Brien 2011). One of its premises is that there is a crisis of public schooling (Giroux 2003), a reality that applies to poor urban neighborhoods in France as to many cities around the globe. Scholars of critical pedagogy point to the increasingly neoliberal turn that schools are taking, under pressure to act as a business rather than a public good. To resist this trend, educators must ponder the situation of "young people [raised] in a world that has been radically altered by a hyper-capitalism" (2003: 13) and unprecedented commodification – after all, this is the world within which they struggle to find meaning and identity (Frymer 2006). Further, critics of institutionalized public schooling point to its reproduction of state ideology, high cost, and contribution to the persistence of poverty and inequality (Althusser 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Willis 1977; Illich 1971). Forms of resistance therefore include deinstitutionalization, the analysis of pedagogy and power in cultural spheres other than schools, and resistance to corporate culture (Giroux 2003: 13; Illich 1971).

I do not argue here that Islamic education and prayer among reformist women constitute a pedagogy of the oppressed or of resistance, because they do not directly aim for social transformation *per se* or a Western liberal vision of empowerment or social justice (Friere 2000). At the same time, the political-economic context of under-resourced public schooling, coupled with the effective barring of girls in headscarves, has created a crisis. More directly, teachings in this community often critique consumerism and market logic, even sometimes connecting them with the grave sin of *shirk*, the association of others with God. Finally, according to Henry Giroux, critical pedagogy raises questions "regarding what knowledge is of most worth, in what direction should one desire, and what it means to know something" (Tristán 2013). This is precisely what the Salafi women here are doing. For these reasons, Islamic learning shares commonalities with critical pedagogy in the contexts of Salafi reform and urban decline.

Methods

The data presented here are from approximately six months of participant observation, conducted in 2014, in a mosque community of Salafist Muslim women in a working-class *quartier* of Lyon. My arguments in this paper draw on this data but also derive from a larger project on Islam in France for which I had completed a year of ethnographic research that began in 2006 in the same neighborhood. Vénissieux, where I attended two mosques, is a primarily working-class *banlieue* of Lyon. It has long been associated with urban rebellion, the rise and fall of immigrant activism, factory closures, unemployment, and more recently, Islamic revival.

Les soeurs, sisters, as women in many Muslim mosque communities refer to each other, live in Vénissieux and other nearby working-class areas. About 50–110 *soeurs* regularly or occasionally attend Mosquée Hasan as well as informal study circles at each other's apartments. Many live in public housing, and the majority are in their 20s and 30s and wear the *djelbab*. Over the years I have seen the number of women attending Mosquée Hasan increase and the ages of attendees diversify to include both younger and older students. My activities consisted of weekly attendance of a two-hour *dars* at the mosque and weekly attendance of an informal study circle at a friend's apartment in a housing complex a few miles from the mosque. In addition I met with friends for social visits and conversation and attended a weekend-long workshop held by a *cheikh* on the topic of *hadith* (sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammed). I took daily field notes but was unable to record classes or conversations due to the wishes of my participants. Mosquée Hasan, like many mosques in France, was recently targeted for violence by a right-wing militant. Fears of surveillance and hate crimes have been part of the community for several years.

I had known some of my participants over five years. In the article I refer to these women as my field "companions" rather than informants or research participants, terms that do not adequately describe the long-term relationships developed in ethnographic research. There were approximately 15 others whom I met for the first time and spent time with in 2014. As with many ethnographic projects, the process of gaining entry and trust in this particular community was arduous, a journey I have discussed in previous work.

Hostility and aggression

The last time I had seen some of my field companions was in 2009, just as the national debate over the *burqa* had started. I would ask them how the last five years had been; others wanted to tell me although I hadn't asked. "It's much worse, frankly", Amal said. Most others concurred that the level of stranger hostility and aggression against them had increased since the ban on the *niqab* (face covering) had passed. At the same time, some of my companions took a different attitude. I got the impression that for them, it was overly simplistic but also upsetting when others insisted on such a negative view of their immediate society. When Amal said, "They've really been going after us, and it's gotten much more aggressive", Katia interjected after a few minutes of listening, "Well, let's focus on the positives, right? There are also many people who are tolerant". On another occasion, four sisters and I got out of the car in front of the mosque in Vénissieux. A middle-aged white woman stepped out of her house and began staring at us, me in a *hijab* (headscarf) and the other three in their dark *djelbabs*. Two of us gently laughed and rolled our eyes at this common experience. But Sanae, one of my companions, asserted: "Sometimes people are just curious, that's all. It's natural to be curious".

Laughter often lightened the mood around these episodes. Once, when driving to Fatima's apartment from the mosque, we passed two policemen standing on the road surveilling an unknown situation. They saw five veiled women in the car and stared at us closely. My companions burst out laughing and joked that they would be stopped and fined 80 euros for their dress. But there were other moments that were disturbing and threatening. I was taking the bus again with Amal and Katia when a middle-aged man stood up from his seat and walked over to us. He addressed Amal, who was wearing her *djelbab*. After a few moments, it was clear he was drunk. "The other day I saw a woman covering her face", he started. "You know it's banned. Why do you do that?", he asked aggressively and leaned in toward Amal's face. "We're in France, you know. *In France!* Can you just explain to me why? You're turning yourself into an object!". Katia was scared and quickly glided away from him. Amal handled it well and seemed to find it amusing.

I also witnessed one episode where a young white man approached a group of *soeurs* walking to the metro. He was specifically asking questions of a woman wearing the *sitar*, a full covering that hides even the eyes, an exceptionally rare practice. He was following her so closely that at first I assumed he may have been her husband. I eventually saw and heard that he was interrogating her about various matters – but amusingly, also asking her for spiritual advice.

This hostility and aggression (and in better moments, curiosity) has political and economic consequences. My companions do not typically vote in elections. Sanae, in her early 40s, was embarrassed to admit she had voted for the first time in recent municipal elections only because a Maghrébine woman had run for office. Dounia, who lived in another *banlieue* near Vénissieux, was so disaffected after the mayoral election of a *Front Nationale* candidate in her town that she said she wanted to leave France. She, too, had never voted in a political election. Economically, Salafist women face great discrimination in employment, something I have seen over several years. Asma, a young black woman, struggled for months with her employer who had hired her as a babysitter. The employer often scolded Asma for wearing the *djelbab* and told her that she would only offer additional hours of work for her if she stopped wearing it. "You will never be accepted here", her employer said. Asma was telling us the story, "So I said, 'I don't need to work extra hours. Forget it'". She was indignant.

Asma had been training to become an educator of disabled children but had to stop, she said, because of discrimination regarding her *hijab*. When Asma came to my apartment in the old tourist section of Lyon at one point, I was in disbelief that it was the first time in her life that she had come to this part of the city. She was all but terrified as we walked the quiet cobblestone street to my apartment. "Be careful, it's very racist here!", she warned me repeatedly. I told her if people stared at me that I just ignored them. But she was adamant that "skinheads" were plentiful in downtown Lyon and that I had to pay attention to my surroundings. Asma evidently did not approve of my living downtown, nor did she quite understand my work. Later that night, I received a text message from her: "Sheikh Al-Utheymin said: 'the harm caused by science that is of no benefit is greater than that caused by ignorance'".

A new education

In this context of regular hostility, the Islamic study circles and mosque lessons are a critical routine – where Salafist women learn, develop themselves, and increase their understanding and faith. Since the headscarf ban and later, ban on the *niqab*, it is not uncommon that high school girls in the community drop out of public school or never enroll. Most of my companions do not pursue higher degrees, though some dabbled in university coursework but ultimately stopped. Rarely, I met someone who completed her *baccalauréat*. While they may not attend school, many pray, read, memorize, and recite on a nearly daily basis.

Weekly dars

Our weekly 2-hour class with Malika was a routine that we looked forward to wholeheartedly. Malika's charisma had a great deal to do with how much she

made us focus, discuss, and reflect. She structured the *dars* around two specific themes that we would explore over a few weeks, following along her own use of certain books. The room was often packed, as 50–110 women huddled together on the floor, while Malika sat on a small stool in front of us. Most of the women were riveted each time, though the chatter of a number of small children was sometimes distracting. Malika accepted the request for others to listen to the *dars* by phone if they could not attend, though it was not her preference. She always had a handful of mobile phones in front of her. After each session several women would immediately crowd around her to ask her questions. I often had questions of my own but found it very difficult to get through.

Whatever the theme of the *dars*, the teachings regularly came back to strength of faith in the oneness of God. "Everything that is in my life is a manifestation of the acts of God. It is *Ar-Rabb* (lord) who educates us, teaches us, and protects us. *Allah* and *al-maula* [companion, protector] come from the same root". Malika repeated over a couple of weeks the importance of staying attached to God and being careful to not become overly attached to or enamored by individuals. She would remind us that no person, whatever their status, embodied perfection. "But we know French culture and television", she laughed. Consumer culture, as we all nodded, encouraged a type of adoration of stars and individuals that pushed consumers to attribute perfection – even creation – to others. This stems from lack of faith, she argued. One woman asked about love for one's husband. "Of course you love him", Malika responded, "but within the bounds of sharia (tradition of Islamic law)". As we talked about faith and attachment, the topic of the relationship between students and teachers also arose. We discussed how it was natural to grow attached to a teacher or attribute something special to him or her. Again, Malika reminded us, we must not pass the limits of sentiment, beyond which learning turns to adoration. This example, though brief, is one way in which the understanding of education differs from a typical schooling experience. In the latter the mark of a successful teacher-student relationship is often personalized and measured by bonds of admiration. In this Salafist community, personalized affection for a teacher is problematic if it leads to attributing qualities of perfection to one's teacher rather than seeing true learning as a manifestation of God.

As the Islamic month of Ramadan approached, Malika spoke frequently about purifying one's heart in preparation for the holy month. This meant striving for a firmer attachment to God, or a "locking" of faith into one's heart (*aqidah*). But crucial to this conversation is the question of doubt. Malika was reassuring and understanding on the question and made clear that doubt does not nullify or lower one's faith even though one must struggle to combat it. Doubt, in fact, is a sign of faith, as the "devil tempts precisely those who have faith". One woman brought up a friend of hers who was a student in Islamic sciences when she started being "touched by doubt". In general, throughout the course of my research, I realized that my Salafi companions believed that the risk of pursuing higher worldly education was precisely the potential for greater doubt.

On several occasions, Malika offered to us a *dua* that, according to *hadith*, would help heal the condition of having doubt. The *dua* invokes four (of the 99) names of Allah: Al-Awwal (*the First*); Al-Akhir (*the Last*); Az-Zahir (*the Manifest*); and Al-Batin (*the Hidden*). We were to meditate on each of the four names to help alleviate doubt and to recite the *dua* each night. She translated from Arabic to French, "Nothing is before you. Nothing is after you. Nothing is above you, and nothing escapes you. Show me the way to pay my debts". She clarified, "It's not about financial debts but what you owe to God and to others. You're asking God to help you give everyone in your life the rights they are owed". Someone asked why we should recite the *dua* at night, and Malika explained that people tend to worry the most just before sleeping.

Malika's pointing us to this prayer, in my experience, created a palpable moment of solidarity among the women. My companions exchanged notes, discussed the *dars* afterward, and would make sure they knew where to find a copy of the prayer. Malika's own belief in the power of the *dua* was comforting. Incorporating a new *dua* into one's routine was part of developing one's education and furthering faith.

At one end, women share prayers to relieve doubt. At the other end, prayer is also crucial when one has already sinned. Over a few different sessions, Malika focused on the act of *tawba*, or asking God for forgiveness. There were not specific prayers or words that were recommended. Instead, we went over the conditions, circumstances, and state of mind that make *tawba* most effective. Personal trials, sadness, and crises are all ways to bring someone toward repentance, she emphasized. God creates the circumstances to draw someone back to [Him]. When we left the last class on *tawba*, my companions and I were quietly moved as we got into Fatima's car. "Oh, it's so nice when you really feel the connection to what she says", Fatima said. "You mean about going through personal crises?", I asked. "Yes". We all chatted in the car about praying for forgiveness. Fatima suggested that one seek forgiveness in the pre-dawn hours before the *Fajr* prayer. According to *hadith*, this is when God descends to the lowest heaven. "But I try to be mindful throughout the day. I ask forgiveness (*Astaghfirullah*) throughout the day for small things. It's the bigger things that are harder".

Another related domain of teachings involved the purpose of knowledge and its relationship to wisdom. This came down essentially to posing the question of what the ultimate point is of learning, speaking, and doing certain things. Worldly knowledge in the absence of faith, my companions emphasized, ultimately lacks wisdom. Malika sometimes approached this topic through the gender stereotype of women's so-called penchant for gossip. "And now I present a *hadith* that is really for women. A good Muslim abandons that which does not concern her. Women have an illness", she stopped and laughed, "of curiosity".

> It's normal to be curious about people. The world is diverse. But to augment your faith, you have to let go of things that do not concern you – in Islam and in daily life. Always ask yourself, "'do I need this [knowledge] in my religion? Do I need this in my daily life?" People want to ask questions of Islamic jurisprudence [and complex matters]

> when they don't even want to know the basics and don't have faith. When you want to ask a question of someone, ask yourself first, "does this concern me?"

She discussed how asking too many personal questions can cause the person being asked to feel sad or envious and also distances one from God. It requires noble effort to stop one's curiosity. "It's best to observe rather than speak. But it demands a certain patience to sit and learn; it's part of one's *jihad* (struggle)".

Malika would also complain that some people are too rational, that they wish to analyze questions to the extent that they can't understand the wisdom (*la sagesse*) of something. There were two dimensions implied by this teaching. One is that any significant subject of study must be pursued with seriousness and depth, with investment of time and attention. I would often hear the analogy that just as a doctor or scientist spends many years to study and specialize, one who studies different elements of Islam (for example, recitation or jurisprudence) requires many years toward mastery. Anything less is merely superficial. Thus, it is problematic to casually pose numerous questions of Islamic law, for example, when one lacks deeper comprehension of the basic pillars of the religion.

The second dimension, as I mentioned earlier, is that the pursuit of knowledge in the absence of faith lacks wisdom. While it was not always clear to me what was meant by wisdom, it generally invoked faith in the manifestation of God's oneness. She gave an example of a mother worrying about her children's education but not realizing that it is God who gives the results or provides success, as opposed to the means and effort the mother or child exerts. "Muslims should never be attached to the means (*les moyennes*) but rather, to Allah. People often say, 'I worked hard, I studied', to explain success. They walk around on this earth with such arrogance. Instead, just say 'Alhamdulillah, God provided for me'". Although these types of examples she gave validate the desire to enroll and succeed in school, they also show how the emphasis here differs from the ethos of secular schooling. Individual hard work – or *effort* – is not necessarily to be celebrated or used to explain one's achievement. More broadly, pursuing knowledge without faith keeps one attached to *les moyennes* instead of to God.

This does not at all imply that my Salafist companions deny knowledge we do have of the world. Rather, they are comfortable with the idea that we cannot and do not need to know everything. When we were discussing the value of ascetic living, Malika proclaimed, "We don't need philosophers. Alhamdulillah [thanks to God], we already know not to over consume". She cited the act of searching the Internet for new restaurants, new goods to buy, and clothes to wear as a waste of time and cause of perpetual dissatisfaction.

Fatima's circle

Fatima has been a member of this mosque community practically since its inception. When I first met her she was in her early 20s, had quit public school, and was a serious student at the mosque and in other circles. In 2014 she was a confident

teacher, whose Quranic recitation seemed flawless. She attracted numerous other sisters to her recitation circle to the point where I fretted that she no longer had as much leisure time to spend with me. Although she had been learning at Mosquée Hasan over many years, she herself did not offer a *dars*. But she has taught perhaps scores of children and young women Arabic reading and prayer recitation and memorization. Every week she taught approximately 10–12 women and 3–5 children.

I was never quite sure how Fatima found some of her students. Several of them were *converties* (converts), while others were Maghrébines who did not wear the *hijab* let alone a *djelbab*. I recall one very young, unmarried, woman who had just started attending a beginner class with Fatima. She had wild, dyed hair, was wearing checkered leggings and a tight t-shirt that said, "love me or hate me". Her shirt barely covered her midriff, and she was obviously pregnant. Out of fear of being impolite, I did not ask how it was that she was attending a study circle with a Salafi *soeur*. I never saw Fatima proselytize with anyone, and she only rarely had a proselytizing manner with me. But she did reflect a lot on how to communicate effectively with people. At one point she was reading a short book about how to communicate Islam more effectively. "You have to reach out to them and try to understand *them*!", she exclaimed. "It's not the other way around".

Most of my companions were from nearby housing complexes, and some had more education than others. Kenza loved to try speaking English with me and told me how she used to be a top student in her geography class, where she learned about the US. Asma rolled her eyes. "I must have missed that unit", she quipped. All of them took their learning with Fatima very seriously. By the time I met them, they had already memorized long sections of the Quran, and each week I was incredulous at how much more they had memorized. For me, in contrast, Fatima assigned the task of only very short prayers. In comparison to the time I spent in memorization, my companions were spending hours each day in their reading, memorization, and recitation practice.

All of us were scared of disappointing Fatima. She was intense and sometimes admonished us, either for chatting during our session or making mistakes in our recitation. I worked hard to remain focused so as not to annoy her, though I knew she was easier on me than the others. Kenza, who I thought was very impressive in her *tajwīd* (rules and art of recitation), nonetheless disappointed Fatima. "Look, I work extremely hard on this everyday", she pleaded. "But this past week, I just couldn't do it because so many things came up. I'm sorry, Fatima, but frankly . . .", she nodded her head and stopped. But no one bore the brunt more than Dounia. She often recited too fast and made mistakes. Once, Dounia was reciting a very long *surah* (Quranic chapter). She made only one mistake, but Fatima insisted it was a big one. "How could you mistake that letter? It's very serious, it changes everything. I can't believe you've all been working for so long on this *surah* but still don't have it perfect. You should practice together, meet for an hour before class". Fatima always suggested peer learning as an important method. Finally,

she told Dounia she had to relearn the entire *surah* and find a different method of learning. I asked Dounia if she might record Fatima's recitation for herself, but she said she didn't have a recorder.

Most of the time, Fatima was proud of us. At one point with me, she even clapped and exclaimed, "and you're even starting to have a rhythm!" My own method of memorization was to record Fatima and follow along, imitating her manner of recitation. She didn't want me to depend on her recordings, saying that it was okay for a start but that I had to "find my own voice". Kenza agreed that she found this difficult and that her recitation reflected Fatima's personality. Fatima laughed embarrassedly and said that we had to give our recitation our own personality.

In my experience, recitation was a great moment of connection among my companions. We spoke about many mundane matters and had many laughs, but nothing compared with the moments of hearing each other recite. As I wrote in my field notes one day:

> It's a slow process, start and stop. Fatima stops us. "All in one breath", she commands. "Find the sound further back in your mouth". We start again, heads down, struggling to recall the verses. As each sister recites, I wait, hanging on to each letter to see if she'll make it. She closes her eyes and enters her zone. We each want the other to succeed. We all smile when she emerges. "*Masha Allah*" ("as God has willed"), says Fatima.

An afternoon with homeschoolers

Amal was from a working-class immigrant family that was not religious and initially disapproving of her turn toward Salafi practice. Her mother warned her that she was inviting difficulties into her life. But now, she says, her mother is proud of her for acting on her own beliefs. She had a mixed experience at university, saying that she learned a lot but was continually discouraged. She once walked into a large lecture, and the professor put her down in front of everyone, saying, "The headscarf is banned. You're in *France*". So she left the class and never returned.[6]

Since finishing her own studies, she has focused on school-age girls in the community and the subject of homeschooling. She saw homeschooling as an important, albeit threatened, space for growth and potential that many families consider. According to Amal, state evaluators can come to the student's home without warning, and some families worry they cannot meet the state standards. She herself worries that the state will at some point make homeschooling illegal except in cases of illness. As to public school, she claims the atmosphere has gotten particularly aggressive, citing the example of a recent state proposal to teach gender construction theory as part of standard curricula. This proposal indeed earned the upset of Muslim and other religious parties.

I was unsure when Amal asked me to meet with two girls in Vénissieux who were homeschooling. She wanted them to see that "it's possible to be a woman, and Muslim, and achieve something in life. I want them to know it's not like this everywhere". I felt guilty, as I thought to myself that I faced nearly none of the barriers these young girls faced in their lives. On the other hand, the goal was also simply to diversify their weekly educational routine. I met them at an impeccably decorated café in Vénissieux owned by Muslim women. I encouraged them to practice their English with me and told them about my work and travels.

Both Lydia and Nura were shy, perhaps even scared. Amal worked hard to make them relax which they did eventually. As they were draped in their *djelbabs*, I found it interesting that they were daughters of the generation born and raised in Lyon. Amal commented that their parents tried to "integrate" – they believed in integration and desired it. But this newer generation, she said, has nothing to hold on to and is therefore very different. When Nura's mother came to pick her up later, she thanked me profusely for giving her daughter the chance to speak with a native English speaker. This made me even more uncomfortable. "I always wanted to learn English, but the teacher and I didn't get along. So I stopped trying and was no longer motivated". Amal nodded knowingly. It was a story she had heard countless times.

Both Nura and Lydia asked me questions about the US. I couldn't gauge what their home schooling looked like or how effective it was. Neither Lydia nor Nura liked math and science, and they mostly studied alone or with tutors. But Lydia claimed that she studied 8–10 hours a day. At one point in our conversation Amal put them on the spot and asked them what they wanted to do as adults. Lydia said she wanted to teach French or English. She then asked the question of Nura, but Nura didn't say anything. Lydia then half joked, "she has no future (*pas d'avenir*)!" This immediately saddened Amal and me, and Amal intervened. "No, it's not like that. Nura, you can do anything you want!" I meekly agreed.

Later, when Amal and I were talking at the metro station, she was visibly upset. She told me how much that joke upset her and how surprised she was that they were so aware of discrimination at their young age. She said Lydia sometimes complained, "I'm very tired". It was simply too hard to embody such stigma, especially in one's adolescence. Amal spoke at length, "I want them to have hope. I want them to do something other than cook for their husbands! Women should be able to know everything. They have to know history, and they have to know the Quran. They're raising kids, the future generation!".

When I asked Amal how it was that she had learned so much, she said she studied mostly on her own. She in fact disagreed with some of Malika's methods and attitude toward worldly education: "I think that some *soeurs* do not understand a lot of what Malika says, because they have not really developed their minds". At the same time, she doesn't see public schooling as a viable option. On top of the problem of discrimination and the headscarf ban, "regular school only teaches you to imitate and not to think creatively or think for yourself". The task that Amal and other Salafist women face is therefore significant. If they stay in public school they must abandon a practice they see as central to their faith. As they instead refocus their efforts on Islamic education, they must struggle to

understand complex teachings in an informal manner and to continually revisit and question the relationship between knowledge and wisdom.

Conclusion

This paper has urged a rethinking of Islamic education which has been depicted in media and some scholarship as purely mechanical, stifling, and authoritative. Such assessments reflect the post-9/11 stigma against madrasa education, employ a Western colonial lens, overlook the role and leadership of Muslim women, or neglect the local political conditions under which debates over the substance of Islamic education take place. I showed the collective work of engaging the teachings at the mosque every week and the struggle and reflection that Malika, a mosque teacher, encouraged. The regular and repeated imperative to ask oneself the ultimate purpose of a question or domain of inquiry and its relationship to faith – toward the goal of wisdom – hardly promotes an unthinking or mechanical approach. Although in many ways the teacher-student relationships in this community seem authoritative, this is also not an accurate depiction. In the recitation circles, Fatima encouraged us to find our own voice and rhythm, even as we enjoyed hearing hers as the best one. More sharply, any notion of individual *authority* in this community is problematic because ultimate power and authority belong only to God.

The paper also showed how Islamic education among working-class Salafi women is in silent dialogue with critical pedagogy. On the surface, it is odd to draw such a connection. But closer examination reveals that critical pedagogy and the Islamic education I presented share the idea that learning about the world without a unified ethics has little point or worse, is harmful. The teachings in this community critique key aspects of capitalist culture, not explicitly out of desire for social justice *per se* but out of desire for stronger faith. According to the critiques, constant corporate advertising promotes hyper-consumption, a striving for individual material success, and a type of "adoration" – indeed, worship – that distances people from God and more gravely, emulates *shirk*. Articulating such critiques in almost every *dars* makes the education in this community a form of critical pedagogy.

What does this case of Salafi women tell us about prayer and about the relationship between prayer and politics? Prayer as recitation of Quranic chapters involves physicality and mental struggle to memorize and articulate correctly. When this struggle is undertaken collectively, it creates a social bond and investment in each other's ability to pray. Prayer as supplication is shared and passed around. In this mosque community *duas* provided comfort, protection, and security against the guilt of sinning (*tawba*) and against doubt. Though supplications allow individuals to address their own particular needs, in practice they also serve a clear collective purpose. This is especially important within the mostly informal religious structures within which women practice.

This paper has taken a more copious definition of prayer as worship of God – or seeing "everything that is in my life as a manifestation of the acts of God", in the words of the mosque teacher. The effort to view the world this way imbues all of the Islamic education I observed in this reformist community. I have argued that France's political crisis over Islam and *laïcité* has also become a crisis of education for Salafi Muslim women. This crisis, in turn, has fostered the development of a new pedagogy that centers on deepening one's relationship to prayer through increasing attachment to God and questioning the value and methods of secular education. If political crisis forces marginalized and stigmatized communities to ask profound questions of their lives and activities and to nourish their collective solidarities, we might say that crisis is what has facilitated the growth of prayer.

Notes

1. All proper names and identifying details have been changed for protection of confidentiality.
2. I use "reformism" here as employed by Osella and Osella as "projects whose specific focus is the bringing into line of religious beliefs and practices with the core foundations of Islam, by avoiding and purging out innovation, accretion and the intrusion of 'local custom'" (2008: 247–48). Reformist tendencies are associated with different movements across the globe. In France they are associated with Salafism. On Salafism, see *Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement* edited by Roel Meijer (2009).
3. *Duas* are expressions of one's relationship to God outside of the prescribed *salat* and include supplications for worldly desires as well as personal virtues and salvation. They may also include requests for forgiveness and prayers of blessings for the Prophet. Many formal *duas* were transmitted from the Prophet to early Muslims, but they are otherwise informal. Generally recited while raising one's hands, they can be individual or collective (Nakamura in al-Ghazali 1990: xxviii–xxxvi)
4. The marginalization of madrasas has roots in colonial reorganizing and undermining of traditional Islamic learning institutions. As prestige and resources went toward secular education imposed by colonial powers, madrasa education began a trajectory of decline.
5. As Talal Asad discusses, what matters in the Islamic tradition are social practices rather than internal thoughts and beliefs. Doubt or disbelief are not subject to worldly punishment (2013: 34–36).
6. It is technically illegal to turn students away from university because of veiling. Several women told me that it happens nonetheless, and when they have tried to pursue legal action their cases were dismissed.

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Creation of social space through prayers among Dalits in Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

Control over social space was central to the everyday practice of caste in Kerala, India. Caste system in Kerala had evolved extreme forms of control over social space, which was critiqued by European missionaries in the nineteenth century. The missionary work among the slave castes that emphasized learning prayers and the Gospel provided the untouchable slaves with a new conceptual language. This was central to the claims of slave castes to the social space as they could come together defying the caste rules and regulations of distance pollution for prayer meetings which began in the slave schools and chapels in the evening after a day's back-breaking labor in their landlords' fields. The slave schools and chapels created a new social space that enabled the slave castes to claim all other modern social spaces. The slaves took over new cultural practices such as forming social organizations from the missionaries and used them effectively in their congregational activities. The experiences of social movements such as the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) show that the former slave castes could effectively use prayer as a powerful instrument to claim social space which was highly structured and in egalitarian.

KEYWORDS

Prayer; spatiality; Dalits; Christianity; slavery

Introduction

Prayers have played a significant role in the formation and sustenance of the congregations of the former slave castes of Kerala that joined the various Christian missions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. However, this particular aspect of their life and experience has not received scholarly attention. Although scholars have been writing about the social and religious aspects of the history of the missions, we are yet to have research dealing with the significance of prayers that had a decisive influence on the slave caste people. In the environment of severe landlord oppression, prayers played a decisive role in forming a community of the oppressed people (Turner 1987). An analysis of the power of prayer in transforming the slave castes and providing them with a new social space and a new social imaginary is central to the concerns of this paper. It is in this context that we wish to analyze the prayers and prayer practices of Dalits in Kerala from the mid-nineteenth century to contemporary times. This paper is divided into four parts; in the first part we situate Dalit communities historically in Kerala as slave caste laborers in the agricultural sector. This is followed by an analysis of the subjugation of the slave castes in the second section, characterized by denial of space. It was in this context that the Christian missionaries of the Anglican missions worked among them and introduced prayers, which brought in congregation, prayer houses, and spatial connections with other Christians. The third section deals with Dalit engagement with missionary Christianity and the transformation of the lives of the slave castes following the every day dimension of prayers. In the fourth section we analyze the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha founded by Poyikayil Yohannan in the early twentieth century and the prayer practices that Yohannan had introduced. In the final, concluding section I discuss the significance of the present study in understanding Dalit experience in India.

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Situating slave caste groups of landless laborers in Kerala society

The caste system in India has attracted the attention of social scientists for a long time and there is a huge body of writings on caste that cannot be subsumed in any particular genre. Indian social anthropologists like M.N. Srinivas, while trying to interpret caste, created a variety of concepts to interpret its historical significance and longevity by introducing, among others, concepts such as sanskritization, and dominant caste (Srinivas 1996: 6; 1995). While the former is a concept that tries to explain social change in India essentially thorough the prism of the upper castes, "sanskritizaton is a process by which a 'low' Hindu caste or tribal group changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, frequently a 'twice born' caste". The notion of dominant caste, refers to the powerful social category that exerts power in a given region of India due to their dominant position in society. These two concepts were important for Srinivas to analyze caste and its structural transformation in the twentieth century. Louis Dumont, the famous French Cultural Anthropologist introduced the paradigm of purity and pollution in the study of caste (Dumont 1998). The notion of ritual purity of the upper castes and impurity of the lower castes was to become the most defining aspects of caste, following Dumont's argument. Nicholas Dirks proposed another, most powerful argument on caste, proposing it as a colonial construct that had its

genesis in the nineteenth century colonial census operations (Dirks 2003). In spite of such theorization, the phenomenon of caste slavery of the lower castes in various parts of India seems to have escaped the attention of most scholars who wrote on caste. Pre-colonial as well as colonial writings have made copious reference to the prevalence of caste slavery in Kerala and other parts of South India (Logan 1989; Saradamoni 1980). In spite of this we do not have a strong historiographical tradition in Indian history problematizing caste slavery that has created a denial of slavery in Indian history (Eaton and Chatterji 2006). Until the mid-nineteenth century, most Dalits were slaves of the upper caste landlords in Kerala. The practice of slavery was abolished in the year 1855 in the native states of Southern Kerala and more than a decade before (1843) in the Malabar region of Kerala which was under the Madras Presidency, directly under the British (Saradamoni 1980). It is appropriate here to provide some idea of the slavery as it prevailed in Kerala by nineteenth century to understand its magnitude. The southern princely state of Travancore had, as per the 1836 census, a slave population of 164,864 out of a total population of 1,280,663 (1980: 81). In 1856, the Malabar region had a slave population of 187,812 out of a total population of 1,602,914 (Logan 1989 [1887]: 148), while Cochin State had in 1854 more than 50,000 slaves owned by landlords and 6,589 by the government that together constituted one sixth of the total population (Day, 2006 [1863]: 65). Numerically, the most important slave castes were Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas, and they were mostly employed in cultivation. They were also employed in other crafts, such as basket making as in the case of Parayas. There were also smaller caste groups that were treated as slaves. The slaves were bought and sold along with land and sometimes without land. Moreover, the landlords had the power to inflict corporal punishment on their slaves, as evident from the slave transaction documents executed which clearly stated that "you may kill or you may sell", articulating the absolute power the landlords had over slaves. The slave castes were owned by upper caste Hindus and Christians as well as the state and temples. These upper castes and temples and the state together controlled most of the cultivatable lands. The slaves were not allowed to own land or property. Similarly, they were not allowed to have proper families, houses, food or clothes, let alone education and other pursuits of life. If for some reason a slave had acquired some property, that would eventually revert to his master after the slave's death. The children of slaves were the property of their mother's master. Even in the mid-nineteenth century there existed slave markets in various parts of Kerala where ownership of the slave caste men, women and children was transacted. Natal alienation, which was a central feature of slavery, was central to slavery in Kerala too, as families were broken, and father, mother and children sold to different landlords. It has also been reported that the slaves were transacted outside the country, probably reaching the international slave routes. Research has yet to be carried out on the transnational dimension of slavery in Kerala. This particular imbrication of caste and slavery made the caste oppression of the slave castes in Kerala far more complex than many other parts of India (Prakash 1990).

Slave castes and the denial space: Spatiality of caste

Modern social space and access to it was a much-contested area in Kerala from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The social world is constituted by the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of human life. Social space, as conceived here, comes out of the multiple negotiations taking place in these spheres of social life (see Lefebvre 2007). In modern social theory, the concept of social space is thought to be fundamental in understanding the transformation brought about by capitalism and modernity. Henry Lefebvre makes a distinction between representations of space and representational spaces in his theorization of social space (2007: 38–39). Representations of space stand for "conceptualized space, the spaces of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers . . . all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived". Representational spaces on the other hand refer to "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of inhabitants' 'and users', but also of some artists and perhaps those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and ascribe to do no more than describe" (2007: 38–39). Michel De Certeau, makes an important distinction between place and space in his influential work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988). A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. He further says "a place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability". A space on the other hand "is composed of intersections of mobile elements". He further argues "space is a practiced place" (1988: 117). Edward Soja has an extremely relevant observation regarding space in his *Post Modern Geographies*. According to him, "space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience" (1990: 79–80).

Following the above critical observations of social space, the fundamental concern of this paper is to analyze the manner in which the social space of the slave castes of Kerala was transformed by the new religious practices introduced by the protestant missionaries. Before we enter into such a discussion, it is significant to see the spatiality of caste in the traditional Kerala society. Although the theories of social space mostly deal with the capitalist society, it is possible to use some of the critical insights generated in such discussions to analyze pre-colonial and colonial societies. Representations of space in traditional caste society were the exclusive privilege of the upper castes. They in fact conceived and controlled it. Absolute control over space in the caste order that denied freedom to the slave castes was accomplished by exerting control over their spatial mobility. Stuck in the places where they lived, in most cases on the banks of rice fields or the borders of the landlords' farms, the immutability of space was the experience of slaves.

Malleability of space was not available to them. They were fixed to the huts where they lived. The slave castes could not conceive of a physical space of interactions except agricultural land. However, it was their labor power that the upper caste landlords ultimately benefited.

In the caste society, representational space was also controlled by the upper castes even as the lived space provided a certain amount of reprieve for the slaves. Lived space provided certain possibilities to the slave castes as they could continue with their everyday life even in cases of severe landlord oppression. In spite of this, they could evolve their own images and symbols. Oral narratives that are available in the communities in fact show the effective deployment of the strategies of inversion. Slavery and its critique form a significant element of the oral tradition (John 1998). Similarly we also come across the desire for family, an affective dimension of life that was denied under conditions of caste slavery. The slave's body and familial relations became spaces that were quite crucial. In fact, the almost naked slave body bore the marks of a system of domination and control exercised through corporeal punishment. Men and women lived with the deep scars of lashes that formed spaces evoking memories of slavery. The power of the caste society had denied slave castes access to public spaces such as markets, roads, courts of law and other institutions of governance. Needless to say, they had their sacred spaces of worship, which in most cases were sites of memory as they worshiped their ancestors there.

It may be appropriate to argue that, for slaves in pre-colonial Kerala, the primordial space was the site of domination and control, which began to change gradually by the mid-nineteenth century with the labor of the missionaries amidst them. With the transformational energies unleashed by the missionary labor, there developed new social translation of ideas and experiences as argued by Soja (1990). The social translation in this instance will have a deeper meaning as we come across substantial translations of religious concepts and categories that began to offer new experiences to the slave castes. Moreover, the slaves were also in a position to offer a critique of caste slavery as it existed in Kerala, and critically understand the changes taking place in their lives as they joined the missionary congregations.

Christian missionary intervention: Transformation of slave castes

In the mid-nineteenth century, the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society and London Missionary Society (CMS and LMS respectively) played a crucial role in the abolition of slavery, which was one of their major political interventions (Saradamoni 1980). They campaigned against slavery through their extant writings on the issue of caste slavery making common cause with the abolitionists globally. Imbibing the spirit of the abolitionists, they campaigned for the abolition of slavery in the native state of Travancore in the southern part of Kerala by submitting a memorandum to the native ruler putting across the most rational arguments for the abolition of slavery (*Petition of British Missionaries* 1847). Although they were

aware of the fact that lower caste slavery was very much a product of the caste system as it prevailed in Kerala, caste was left untouched. One fundamental reason for their mobilization against slavery was the hold that upper caste landlords had on slaves that prevented the missionaries from reaching out to them,

I wish to provide briefly the background to this missionary interest in the conditions of the slave castes in Kerala. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the CMS missionaries arrived in the Southern Princely State of Travancore, Kerala (1815), their idea was to work among the traditional Christians of Kerala, the upper caste Syrian Christians, to bring them within the Anglican fold and modernize them, purging them of what the Anglicans considered to be the corruption of the Christian faith. The political motive of the British Resident in Travancore State, Col. Munro, was to have a respectable body of Christian subjects connected with the mass of the people by a community of language, occupations and pursuits, and united to the British government by the stronger ties of religion and mutual safety (Hunt 1918: 57). This programme of interaction of the Anglican missionaries with the Syrian Christians went on well until 1836 when the Syrian Christians finally broke away from the CMS missionaries, proclaiming their desire to retain their eastern tradition of liturgy and other congregational practices. In fact, the missionaries had advocated the marriage of the clergy, the use of Malayalam in the services, family prayers and reading of the Bible. However, by that time they had already started English education and established the necessary infrastructure for their onward march towards "progress and development". After the break with the Syrian Christians, there was a period of relative lull in the activities of the CMS and they remained with a small group of Syrian Christians who remained with the CMS, adopting Anglican practices. There is no evidence of CMS working among slave castes in any substantial manner at this point. However, they started their work among the slave castes due to the interest of their Secretary in Madras, Rev. T.G. Ragland, who wanted the CMS to take up the case of the slaves. On one of his visits to the Travancore region in the late 1840s, Ragland was shocked to see men being forced to plough the paddy fields along with the oxen and buffaloes (Wilson Carmichael 1922: vi). This particular incident made him to ask the missionaries based in Travancore, such as John Hawksworth, George Matthan and others, to work among the slaves. However, they soon realized that the upper caste masters, both Hindu and Christian, owned the slaves, and that they would oppose any move of the missionaries to work among the slave castes. The next decade witnessed the historic work of the CMS missionaries among the slave castes in Travancore. They first started their work in a village called Kaippatta Mallappally and it is often referred to in the writings of the CMS missionaries as the Mallappally Movement. In fact the CMS had already established its presence in the village as a section of the Syrian Christians there had joined the CMS. The first group of slaves who came under the instruction of the CMS had some connection with the CMS Syrian Christians of the village as one of the catechumens, namely Thaiwatthan, christened as Abel, was a slave

owned by of one those upper caste Christian families. Thaiwatthan had occasion to listen to his master who used to tell him about Christianity. When the work among the slaves began, Thaiwatthan became one of the first slaves to attend catechism class regularly; the slaves were under missionary instruction for more than two years. However, when they were baptized, the missionaries in charge of the station found only eight people really qualified for it. Among them, Thaiwatthan was the first person to be baptized.

New institutional spaces

The nineteenth century also witnessed the creation of new institutional spaces in the context of colonial modernity that were theoretically open to everybody irrespective of their position in the caste society. It is also necessary to say that religion, especially missionary Christianity, was very much central to colonial modernity as it evolved in Kerala. Other institutions included schools, hospitals, courts, and markets, to mention a few, which became spaces of public interaction. However, access to these spaces was determined by the relative position of individuals and social groups in the caste society. The slave castes were not allowed in public spaces, including roads and markets, let alone other institutions. It was in this larger context that the protestant missionaries began to interact with the slave castes in the mid-nineteenth century. In the traditional society, nobody would ever go to the huts of the untouchable castes except the landlords' men to call the slaves to work. In many cases, the headmen of the slaves used to make sure that the slaves reported for work without fail.

It was the protestant missionaries who went to the huts of the slave caste masses with the purpose of interacting with them and teaching them. Such interactions led to the creation of new spaces of chapels and schools that came to be referred to as slave schools and chapels in the mid-nineteenth century. It was in these chapels and schools that the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society taught the slave caste people and subsequently baptized them. Many sources from the mid-nineteenth century refer to the fact that the missionaries had been teaching the slave castes. The prayers had a preeminent place in their teachings. It was through the learning of prayers that the slave castes of the mid-nineteenth century could acquire a new social imaginary (Taylor 2002). Reading of the scriptures and discussions would be followed by evening prayers in the slave schools. The missionaries were keen to discuss other matters of the congregation in such contexts. The significance of the prayer meetings lay in the fact that the people assembled for prayers had to violate the restrictions imposed on their use of public spaces. Coming together for prayers became instrumental in creating new social spaces. Similarly the ideas and metaphors that they have learned through prayers were fundamental in transforming their social and cultural practices. There were occasions when they used prayers to resist caste oppression and control over social and physical spaces.

The new space of the slave schools and chapels brought home a fundamentally different notion of organizing the social and everyday life of Dalits, which had the potential of threatening the traditional power structure of caste society. In the traditional order, slave castes did not assemble except for work or sometimes for ritual practices such as the worship of the ancestors. Colonial ethnographic accounts provide information on the religious practices including black magic that was resorted to in order to propitiate the ancestors and gods at the time of lived crises of individuals and families.

Slave schools and significance of prayer

With the coming of the missionaries, we observe the slave castes entering a new regime of time that began to be increasingly governed by the time of prayer. As mentioned before, evening prayers and reading of scriptures and learning in the slave schools became extremely important. What were the implications of such practices? The slave schools and chapels became new spaces of interaction for men, women and children of the slave castes where they learned new habits and practices (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 199). It is important to note the features of representation of the space of the slave school and chapel. They were conceived in the manner of the slaves' huts, yet, they were big enough to hold more people. In certain slave schools they were able to have benches while in most cases people sat on the floor. For a people who were not used to furniture the use of even a simple bench becomes significant, as it demanded the different bodily posture of sitting straight rather than sitting on the floor. The missionary as well as the reader would read out portions of the scriptures and prayers that the congregation assembled for prayer had to learn. A people who were denied the opportunities to learn began to have a new relationship with printed books and the vernacular instead of their caste-specific language. The process of learning the scriptures gave them a new orientation of mind and body, making them sit and listen to things which they had never before heard in their life. Such sessions of reading and prayers introduced to them new concepts and ideas that enabled them to evaluate their social life from a radically different perspective (Raboteau 2004). The location of the slave schools were usually spaces that were outside the normal spaces of the clean castes, therefore of the dominant culture. Referred to as spaces of evil and pollution, they had a only marginal significance even in the writings of missionaries committed to the cause of the slave castes.

While it is true that the missionaries used to interact with the slave castes and work among them, the modality of their work remains obscure even to specialists in the history of the Christian missions in India. However, the situation is very different in other missionary contexts where there is a welcome departure from the traditional historiography that enabled the historians to ask new questions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 1997, Robbins 2004; Kean 2007). As a result, there

is a great emphasis on the study of the change in the consciousness of the people who came into contact with the European missionaries.

The missionaries wrote extensively on the men, women and children who came to learn there. Usually they came after their work in the landlords' fields. Once the people were assembled, the meeting would start with a prayer and then the missionary would read the scripture and interpret the meanings of the readings. Generally, they encouraged the people to speak out and share their ideas with others assembled there. This, they found as a very useful means to understand how far the slaves had advanced in learning Christian principles. The missionaries had already introduced prayer books to them in Malayalam and the little fledgling congregation used these prayer books for the everyday prayers. They learned those prayers and repeated them with great devotion. In course of time we come across the examples of individuals who really became experts in saying extempore prayers, a quality that became really decisive in the life of slave caste people. In many congregations, people who could compose extempore prayers assumed leadership role in the community. The congregating together for prayers demanded a different orientation of the body and mind of the slaves. The people, who had never been oriented to listening to the readings, were, in a way encouraged to listen to the written word, which conveyed new messages to them. They learned new words and phrases that conveyed to them the ideas of salvation (Mudimbe 1988: 44–97). The very fact that they had to sit at a place for some length of time listening to readings as well as sermons introduced them to a new "soundscape" that was unfamiliar to them (White and White 2005: XIII). It could be seen in the case of hymn singing. Although many of the slaves could sing work songs as well as to propitiate their ancestors, the hymns introduced by the missionaries were different; the introduction of texts in modern Malayalam stands out as the significant event here.

Missionaries who worked among the slave castes in the village of Mallappally provided a very detailed "ethnographic" account of their encounter with the slave castes (The Church Missionary Intelligencer 1855 2005: 198–201). One of the things that assumed importance early on was the setting up of a slave school in the Kaippatta Hills, the settlement of the slaves in the village of Mallappally. The slave school soon became the center of the regular activities of the mission. The frequent meeting and prayers in the slave school led to retribution from both Christian and Hindu landlords who burnt down the Kaippatta slave school twice. When the slaves saw their thatched shed, which was their chapel and school, burnt down, they made a vow to rebuild the slave school and chapel on the same spot and they said in unison that it was there that they found their Lord and Savior and would worship him again there. That day, according the missionary, they had their worship and prayer in the ashes of the burnt-down chapel in spite of the missionary's suggestion to move out of it for prayers.

The community of slave castes in Kaippatta Hills demonstrated another interesting aspect of prayer. In one of the reports, the missionary provides a narrative of

the slaves repeating the Lord's Prayer. To his great surprise the missionary found tears rolling down through the cheeks of many people (Hunt 1918: 200). Up on his asking, they told him that the words "Our Father" made them cry, as they had never addressed any one with those words! In other words, in the thoughts of the people there was a strong allusion to a father who will be there to listen to their anguish and anxieties and the very thought of it made them cry. It appears that the new Christian prayers had provided them with a language for internal deliberation (Genovese 1976: 165). Another point that is noteworthy is that "Our Father" refers to a collectivity and its desires expressed through very simple words and phrases. We may refer here to the collectivity of family where the paternalistic elements would become important. Such a family form was the most desired one in the context of the impossibility of family in the context of slavery. It was such a collectivity that the slave castes lacked. As a result, the Lord's Prayer remained as a significant element constituting their new experience: the particular situation of slaves made the Lord's Prayer special to slaves and imbued it with several layers of meaning. It brought the image simultaneously of a worldly and heavenly father, both of which were new to the slaves. In a situation of poverty and oppression generated by the social structure of caste domination, the supplication, "give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive the trespasses of others" became very complex. This in fact takes us to a complex terrain of social and political negotiation of violence in the second half of the nineteenth century through to the first half of the twentieth century Kerala.

In a way, prayer became a very powerful weapon for the slaves to resist the aggression of the upper caste landlords. This practice of resistance to caste domination deploying prayer or taking refuge in prayer continued for a long time. There are reports of people coming for night prayers and classes facing great risk as the landlords were on the lookout for those slaves who were attending the slave schools.

> "Once a visitor came to a village called Kurumpanadam one day in pitch darkness, and found the few gathered in a house in great fright and on quietly asking about the reason he was told that their masters had heard that Gospel preachers were accustomed to come and instruct the people and they were therefore on the lookout to catch them and so he had to return after offering a short prayer very quietly. In the context of oppression some of them tried to do witchcraft against the oppressing landlords. They realized the futility of their traditional black magic as it failed to protect them from the cruelties of their landlords and over the years landlords also became less afraid of their black magic". (*Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Record* 1905: 42–43)

This incident is important when read against the fact that throughout the late nineteenth century there prevailed a huge contest between the missionaries and the slaves on the one side and the upper castes and the Travancore Government on the other regarding the *Uzhiyam* service that the slaves were forced to perform on Sundays. *Uzhiyam* is the customary labor that slaves had to do and it included work on Sundays without payment. The native state of Travancore was a

self-proclaimed Hindu state that possessed large numbers of government slaves. These slaves were employed in the public works of the government. Slaves owned by landlords were also supposed to work every day, just as the Government slaves. It is in this context that large numbers of slaves joined the protestant missionary Christianity, throwing up new problems for the state as they refused to work on Sunday, as it was the Lord's day. With the coming of protestant Christianity, the slaves developed a different understanding of the significance of the days, and Sunday became for them the day meant for the service of the Lord, which the landlords and the Government opposed. This became a substantial political issue bringing the nascent slave caste Christians against the state power. In many places, slave caste Christians faced physical violence as they refused to work on Sundays. We may note that, on such occasions, prayer and Church service became a substantial political issue which the missionaries were able to resolve using their political clout. However, until then in many places landlords let loose their henchmen to attack slave Christians.

Most missionary journals carried reports of the progress that the slaves were making in their learning of scriptures as well as prayers. In addition to this, evening gatherings offered them a space for coming together, which was impossible under conditions of slavery. Although male and female slaves could meet in the fields of the masters, the work arrangements and sexual division of labor rarely gave such an opportunity to come together. The new space of the school and Chapel created by the missionaries became instrumental in defining a new conjugality, notions of "family", womanhood, manhood, and head of household. Prayers played a significant role in this process as the people came together for prayers. Subsequently, the missionaries taught them the virtues of Christian family life that gave them new ideas of stable family that would not be destroyed in the course of the separation through the slave trade. Households became central, as there was the possibility of the continuation of family life in the wake of the abolition of slavery and the consequent separation of families.

It is possible to argue that the slave schools formed an early subaltern public sphere in Kerala. The space of the slave school remained outside the realm of direct caste domination although it was a marginal space. The slave school was central in providing a different worldview to the slaves and also the possibility of moving out of caste oppression. Therefore, the interactive space created by prayer in the school was important. In pre-colonial society, the slaves did not have access to any space except their huts and the fields of the landlords. However, the slave school provided them access, for the first time, to modern space. The practices in the slave schools such as listening to reading of the scriptures, and sermons, participating in prayers and proclaiming the testimonies of faith, listening to men and women speaking about new things based on their learning of the Gospel made it a different experience for those Dalits who attended it. In other words, contrary to the norms and practices of the caste society, they could express something new and different. They could also learn things beyond their usual work in the field, which was denied to them by the dominant powers.

It is also important to mention here how they used to come to schools for prayer and worship. Most people did not have proper clothes and, according to the missionary reports of that time, many of them had only leaves and twigs around their waist. However, the missionaries provided them with clothes and they would come to the school wearing those clothes and they appeared to the missionaries as "new creations" in them. In addition to this, a they also acquired a new body language that was to become very crucial when they staked their claim on public space. Soon the slaves had teachers from their own community and these teachers, we read in the missionary journals, were the first from the slave castes to challenge the restrictions imposed on them in the use of the public roads. Such practices of entering the public space reached a new height with the coming of the movements such as Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) that substantially worked out the space for prayer.

Invoking slavery through prayers: The case of the PRDS movement

Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha was formed in 1910 in small village called Eraviperoor in the out skirts of Tiruwalla town in the central Travancore region of Kerala. The founder of the movement, Poyikayil Yohannan (1879–1939), was born to slave caste parents who were labourers attached to Syrian Christian landlords. He learned reading and writing as a child and used to read the Bible and explain it to his friends as they were employed in herding their masters' cattle. Poyikayil Yohannan began his career as an itinerant preacher with various missionary organizations that he left one after the other because of the caste prejudices of the upper caste Syrian Christians prevalent in these Churches. Soon he mobilized Parayas, Pulayas, and similar Dalit castes to establish an independent religion of their own in 1910. This new religion combined ideas of sin, the resultant eternal damnation and eventual liberation of Dalits through repentance, leading to the project of salvation. His idea of salvation and the resultant spiritual progress was indeed essential for the realization also of social and economic development. The movement gave equal emphasis to spiritual and material dimensions of life especially in the context of Dalit communities that had come out of centuries-old caste slavery. Yohannan imaginatively created a hybrid religion by combining several elements of the Christian discourses and practices infusing them with the elements drawn from the Dalit life-world (Mohan 2015; Engelke 2007). It was the deployment of the elements of the Dalit life-world that enabled him subsequently to initiate an emancipatory discourse of history and the rememorialization of slavery as part of his project of salvation. However, from the early twentieth century up to Yohannan's death 1939, the movement remained within the Christian life-world even as it had a critique of the Bible. It may also be noted that the PRDS distanced itself from all other Christian denominations, especially from

the dominant Churches. This included Churches of eastern tradition as well as the Protestant and Catholic Churches. It may also be mentioned that the last decades of the nineteenth century as well as the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed the flourishing of a variety of churches due to Christian revival movements that earned a substantial Dalit following.

The PRDS remains unique as Yohannan had problematised the lack of written history for the Dalit communities that had experienced slavery for millennia. After Yohannan's phase, the community kept alive this concern with history as exemplified in the narratives of the history of the PRDS movement that are circulated in both written and oral forms.

The PRDS movement tried to engage with problems of caste hierarchy and exploitation, and strove to achieve social equality along with material and spiritual progress. The movement developed within the larger context of missionary Christianity but moved beyond the limits of the missionary project and offered a critique of it. The movement was an effort by Dalits to negotiate modernity by making equality their major concern. This particular notion of equality that the movement had articulated had purchase in religious, social, political, and economic spheres.

The PRDS movement developed its own ritual discourses and prayers in which the slavery experienced by their ancestors was developed into a theological category. The discursive notion of slavery is foundational to PRDS as faith in Jesus Christ is foundational to Christianity. Even during Yohannan's lifetime, the idea of the slave experience was very much present in discourses and preaching but it was secondary to faith in Jesus Christ. However, after the lifetime of the founder, the notion of slavery gained prominence and today the slavery of the ancestors is the most significant element in PRDS prayers. This is true in the case of the ordinary prayers in homes, memorial services, marriages, funerals and in all other life cycle ceremonies. What these prayers do is to proclaim to the world that the contemporary generation of Dalits are the descendants of slave caste people who died under the inhuman oppression. This particular idea of the oppression and suffering that the ancestors had experienced elevates their souls to a divine status. In other words, there is a collective apotheosis taking place that leads to the creation of the new idea of the divinity of their ancestors' souls. This, in fact, was qualitatively different from the ancestor worship that prevailed among Dalit communities. In the PRDS context, the image of the ancestors is re-inscribed with the experience of slavery. In the historic forms of ancestor worship that we noted earlier, we do not come across an engagement with issues of sin or salvation. Through these new discourses on slavery they aim at turning upside down the very idea of slavery. Similarly, they strive to proclaim the power of the discursive notion of slavery as a theological construct capable of offering salvation. It is in this context that we find the invocation of slavery in their prayers as a powerful construct that would be as authentic as the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer practices

In the course of our fieldwork, we came across extremely interesting prayer practices that the Dalit Christians had developed from early on. In many villages we heard the stories of people preaching from treetop. In another village, one climbed a tree and started preaching verses from the Bible, which enraged an upper caste Nair who threatened him with dire consequences if he repeated it. The Nair died a few months later which the preacher thought was the punishment of God. The practice of preaching from the treetops was very popular among Dalit Christians in many villages. It was reported in villages such as Kaippatta, Ottiyan Kunnu, among others. These villages are in fact far away from each other. There were also other practices of preaching from hilltops. There are instances of preachers having dreams or what they term as "revelations", prompting them to go to the hilltop and preach from there. This could probably have been due to the images drawn from the Bible itself. In one of the villages where, under the initiatives of Dalits, a Salvation Army Church was established, the leader of the Church, Subbedar Joseph, accompanied by one of his associates, used to give evening sermons every day, standing on a rock. These examples are in fact reminiscent of the practices of the ministers among the African-American communities who used to give sermons in the woods and also standing on stumps for the benefit of the people in the cabins, but away from the control of the masters (White and White 2005: XV).

While studying the life of slaves in the American South, Shane White and Graham White (2005) have introduced the notion of sound scape to analyze the history of sound in the context of slavery. Although research on the history of the sounds of slavery suffered from the paucity of sources, they have convincingly argued that one could talk about the sounds of slavery as preserved in the written sources. They have productively shown how to use the descriptions of sounds of songs, "work songs musical instruments of varying types, field calls, spirituals, prayers and sermons" to reconstruct the idea of soundscape of slavery. Taking a cue from them I wish to state that in the context of Kerala we have also come across singing by the slave men and women engaged in various works related to rice cultivation in the vast wet land tracts. There are several songs that have survived to this day that really recall the experiences of slavery and the resultant sufferings. The descriptions of the nineteenth century provide us narratives of the evenings in the huts of the slaves; the passers by hearing "wild shouts and cries"; they also hear the sounds of singing dancing and drumming. In certain cases it has been reported that there were sounds of drunken bouts. There were also field calls that were peculiar to slave castes as they called to their fellow workers in the fields or whilst moving in country boats along the canals. In the case of certain castes such as the Parayas it has been noted that there was a particular kind of language that was more connected to Tamil that would not be understood by others. It remained as a kind of "hidden transcript" that made their words appear mostly obscure to others, especially to the upper caste landlords (Scott 1990). With the coming of

missionary Christianity and the learning at the slave schools, the soundscape of the slaves' settlements began to change. Those who passed by the slave settlements began to hear sound of men women and children sitting together and reading scriptures and saying their prayers loudly. Many of our informants were of the opinion that they heard their grandparents saying that the sound of their prayers should reach the four corners of the their compound so that the evil spirits hiding there would run away on hearing the sounds of scriptures being read out and prayers recited. This observation may be noted along with the belief that many slave people had that any accumulated heaps of rubbish in their compound would provide a space for the evil spirits to haunt. Therefore, it was thought necessary to keep the space of the home and surroundings clean so that Jesus Christ could visit their huts and the surroundings.

There were instances of people also composing songs using Biblical themes that would be sung in the slave caste congregations. The novelty of such songs lay in the fact that they were composed using words and phrases that were exclusively used in the slave caste communities. For example, there were songs depicting the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in which God and Satan would be described using images very much familiar to the slave laborers. Satan could appear as a cunning person who walks around with the storage rucksack that was made of screw pine leaves. What is striking here is the vernacular rendering of the Biblical story that would become very popular in the community, sung regularly and loudly. This was one of the means by which the Biblical ideas and categories were translated in the slave caste communities. The singing of such songs really showed the ingenuity of their composers, and they remained very popular among the slave caste communities.

In the backwater areas of Kuttanad, Kerala, teachers from the slave castes used to preach whilst perching aboard the country boat. The space of the boat was interesting as it was in a way mobile and the upper castes could not easily raise the question of distance pollution as the county boat kept moving

The themes of prayer

Although we have been elaborating on the social dimension of prayers their spirituality is beyond doubt. In fact, in the examples quoted earlier we come across several instances of piety as well as examples of serious engagement with theological issues. In fact, many of our informants told us that they prayed for the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls as they began to have a new idea of sin. In most cases they would tell us that they prayed for their children, their families, and for a better future. In addition to this, in the teeth of the opposition to Dalits' learning, they used to pray for the slave school and Chapel lest they fall prey to the retribution of the landlords who would torch them. In one of the missionary reformist texts that speak of the experiences of the girl children in the boarding schools, we come across the prayer of one of the inmates from the

Pulaya community who excelled in extempore prayers and prayed for everybody, including those who sent their contribution from the abroad for the maintenance of the boarding school (Anonymous 1928). The text refers to the fact that she excelled in extempore prayers. Another interesting aspect of the prayer that the older generation remembered was the thanksgiving prayer for their liberation from slavery which was made a reality by the European missionaries. Liberation from sin and the promise of salvation along with social and spiritual aspects of liberation from caste slavery were articulated as the fundamental concerns of Dalit Christian prayers.

Conclusion

Dalit religion acquired significant political traction in the twentieth century India as a number of religious movements flourished in the context of colonial modernity. Among the religious movements that galvanized Dalit communities, Protestant missionary Christianity has a preeminent place, the history of which goes back to the nineteenth century. An analysis of its history shows the substantial involvement of Dalits, who were slaves in many cases. The missionary teachings provided a new world of ideas to Dalits that had multiple effects in transforming them into modern subjects. In the analysis presented here, we come across the complexities of the Dalit "conversion to modernity" through this religious process (van der Veer 1996). Social science knowledge as well as common sense perception in India failed substantially to understand Dalit religiosity, especially the question of "conversion" that led to derogatory phrases such as "rice Christians" that have purchase even among social scientists today. An analysis of the prayers and prayer practices of Dalit Christians in Kerala with a history of caste slavery shows that such stereotyping fails to understand the historical significance of emancipatory movements among the Dalits in the colonial context. This in fact shows the need for rethinking much of the social science knowledge on Dalits and Christianity in India. As the concern of this paper was to see how Christianity provided a new language of internal deliberations for Dalits in Kerala, I was concerned with the question of their consciousness, denied to them in the dominant social science knowledge in India.

The Dalit prayers that we have analyzed provide examples of multiple engagements with the problems that the oppressed sections of Kerala society had experienced. While the prayers provided a new social imaginary for the people, they also functioned as texts circulating in the communities. These texts opened up multiple possibilities of the creative articulation of ideas around which a community could be organized, a possibility that was denied them under caste slavery. It is necessary to ask what the texts of prayers accomplish. Various semiotic practices associated with prayer show that its transforming power was not just confined to the spiritual dimension of life. It always produced excess meanings and implied possibilities for the opening up of the spiritual and social dimensions

of salvation. These excess meanings in fact provided possibilities for the Dalits to claim religious and public space that was denied to them. In this, various prayer practices such as prayer from treetops, upon the hills and rocks, provided a new soundscape to a people for whom speech was denied by the caste society. One could imagine the power of the new soundscape and the panic it evoked in the upper castes from their violent response and the retribution in which people were killed and chapels burned down. The new sounds of hymns and prayers created a new social space for those who were denied access to public space.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRAYER AND POLITICS

Mimetic failure: Politics, prayer and possession

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ABSTRACT

In the micro-politics of community and neighborhood practice, formal Muslim prayer (*namaz*) frequently becomes juxtaposed to trance, possession or other dissociative states of consciousness. In the latter states, a subject becomes overwhelmed by an encounter with otherness and reacts on the basis of an economy of affect. In India such affective encounters are traditionally articulated allegorically in cultural forms that actively negotiate alterity. Specifically, the afflicted are considered "possessed" (*hajri*) and ritual specialists apply means of exorcism by naming the afflicting agent that has caused the disturbance. What happens, however, when a subject is overwhelmed by an encounter with an other, yet remains without any means to account for this experience? What happens when particular responses to feeling overwhelmed are no longer available or legitimate? Through ethnographic accounts of encounters, this paper first explicates encounters involving an overwhelming experience with difference in Africa and India in the 1950s that resulted in mimetic play, and then offers accounts of encounters of overwhelming experience in contemporary India in which alterity seemed absent and mimetic play failed.

KEYWORDS

Mimesis; possession; prayer; Hindu; Muslim; alterity

Finding oneself bewildered, overwhelmed, or caught off-guard remains an essential experience in encounter-based field research. This is apposite for a discipline whose method, ethnographic fieldwork, implies by design negotiation of and with social and cultural difference in human encounters that are neither prearranged nor can be controlled for. While many scholars apparently have overwhelming experiences, they tend to resist articulation of them in scholarship.

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On the other hand, the ethnographic record offers copious examples from every continent where those studied, when confronted with overwhelming experience, fall into sudden spells of possession, become what is locally considered ill, sad, insane, surprised, angry, arrested, speech impaired. They are disturbed by something or fall into trance, become effusive or engage in strange automatisms in act and thought, or, in psychological language, develop disassociative forms of behavior – which are hard to understand and sometimes even to describe.

In various local contexts possession phenomena are juxtaposed to prayer practices. The Pathan of Fatehvadi, a Muslim community in the suburban residential area of Juhapura in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, with whom I have been working for over a decade, are a good example for this dynamic. If formal Muslim prayer (*namaz*) invokes the idea of an orderly religious conduct and a properly disciplined body, states of possession (*hajri*) suggest forces that cannot easily be controlled. Whether considered mere acting, the effect of supernatural intervention, or the consequence of mental and emotional distress, the forces brought into play by possession are morally ambiguous and frequently malevolent. Cases of possession lead to embarrassment and disagreements among affinal and blood relatives, neighbors, friends and religious authorities. The moral nature of the afflicted is quickly put into question by one side compelling defensive postures by another side. The opposite is true for formal Muslim prayer, which, at least in public discussion, is always positively affirmed.

The Pathan are rural migrants working as informal laborers in the urban fringes of a booming urban economy. Many qualify Fatehvadi, the neighborhood in which the Pathan live, as a Muslim "slum." The suburban area of Juhapura itself borders an all-Hindu poor residential area to the East (Guptanagar) and a Hindu-dominant mixed-class area to the North (Vejalpur). The organization of residential space in these areas on the basis of aggregate categories of religious belonging are the product of recent waves of inner city migration resulting from communal violence. For the Pathan of Fahetvadi, the experience of labor migration accompanied by low social status is internal to the stark juxtaposition between *hajri* and *namaz*. The former is an embarrassing fact of everyday life, the latter a cherished ideal for a better future. Their arrival at the threshold of a city to which they do not entirely belong was accompanied by new moral imperatives questioning their standing as proper Muslims in Juhapura's wider Muslim society. They find themselves marred by marginalization, rejection and economic insecurity.

Their need to transform their own relation to Muslim injunctions disposes them to feel overwhelmed in their struggles at times, to fail in various ways, and hence to become possessed.

Neighboring Hindus in the area are not left unaffected by the overwhelming experiences of Muslim migrant communities. Hindus are in fact frequently positioned mimetically to Muslims. The particularly promising approach that concerns me here links overwhelming experience to mimetic behavior, sudden or routinized, to reactions that imitate what is perceived in ritual theaters or everyday

communication. I want to ask if two particular encounters of a Hindu and a Muslim man from my fieldwork, from 2003 and 2005, should be understood as forms of sudden mimetic behavior or, in fact, the opposite, a failure to imitate what seems nonetheless to overwhelm. What might such a determination mean? Both encounters concern a subject that is suddenly struck by a perception of something on the surface. They also left me puzzled and surprised, that is, overwrought but not possessed, by the dynamics of an intimate relationship that I came to witness and that I have since spent some time trying to understand.

A focus on the mimetic faculty allows me to dwell on the tension between simulation and assimilation. It provides a window into the workings of the senses in political fields that anthropologists Fritz Kramer and Michael Taussig, have astutely theorized for Africa, and Latin America. The Gujarat examples, which fix on surface detail, suggest cultural shifts in forms of sense perception. Before I present to my own ethnographic material, however, I turn to the African comparative perspective on possession phenomena. My own ethnographic material is usefully illuminated by looking to other material, preferably comparing those that are, to risk a paradoxical formulation, *somewhat similar yet entirely different.*

The wish to dance

A striking example of an overwhelming experience that resulted in a state of possession is given in the African field ethnography of Elizabeth Colson, published in the late 1960s (1969: 69–103). Colson, who worked for several decades among the Tonga of Northern Rhodesia, later Zambia, was confronted with an array of spirit possession cults that by the 1940s had partly disappeared among Plateau Tonga but were still active from the 1950s into the mid-1960s among the Valley Tonga of the Gwembe district. In possession dances called *masabe,* Valley Tonga women represented unprecedented figures of authority, various novel objects, or surprising machinery that caught their attention. Colson described a secondhand account of a woman, who, upon seeing an airplane flying over her village, spontaneously fell into a sort of swoon. The incident occurred around 1954, a decade before independence from the British:

> Dazed she fled to the bush, and had to be brought back to the village. She learned the demands of the spirit either in vision or in dreams: drum rhythms, songs, dance steps, the drama incorporated in phases of the dance, the articles desired by the spirit, and the plants required for treatment. At the first Airplane dance she was both patient and instructor, teaching drummers, chorus and attendants. After this the dance spread to other people, first in her own village and neighborhood and then to others in the same vicinage, flowing along the path she had made. Some were possessed when planes flew over but apparently received no new revelations that radically altered the form of the dance. (1969: 79)

This passage describes the first Valley Tonga woman entered by Airplane spirit. Important in the description is that the plane was the occasion for the experience of a

third that interjected itself between the woman and the airplane, what Colson for lack of a better term translated as "spirit." The woman was not possessed by an airplane, but by a *spirit* called Airplane. The Valley Tonga called possession dances by the same name as the entities that caused them. Airplane spirit – called *indeki* in the language of the Tonga–was a *masabe* spirit that caused Airplane dance. Following first-time possession, Tonga diviners suspected that others who dreamt of airplanes or became unwell were equally affected by the new entity and the conditions it caused. If the new treatment offered relief, it confirmed the spirit's presence and the medical imperative to arrange ceremonial dances. In these productions the Tonga enacted mimetically what possessed them in dance, with costumes and dramatic performance. In the cure, the afflicted became permanently identified with the afflicting agent, indicated by a colored wristband, until it became *tontolo*, that is, cooled (1969: 70).

Masabe spirits were new arrivals on the local dance scene. They were alien spirits, what Kramer called *Fremdgeister* (1983: 377–384), in contradistinction to other Tonga spirits such as the *basungu* (Colson 1969: 70–72). Jesuit missionaries mentioned the introduction of such new spirit phenomena explicitly in 1918 (1969: 94). Apparently, they emerged as a reaction to the introduction of the police and administrative post of the British colonial government, Christian missions, the railway, and the first European settlers. They caused the afflicted to fall ill, have recurrent dreams, feel sadness or apathy. *Masabe* were contagious and some spread like wildfire. Older Tonga possession dances resembling the *masabe* newcomers had primarily been the domain of male hunters and had involved dance imitation of animals (1969: 94–96). Now *masabe* were spirit of Motorboat, Train, Bicycle, Soldier, Police, the *Mazungu*, that is, the spirit of the Europeans and *Madance,* the spirit of European dancing.

The colonial encounter introduced momentous social transformations into Valley Tonga society, including a pronounced class differentiation (which distinguished Plateau and Valley populations differentially in access to resources), new cultural styles, tastes, and competencies. It introduced a distinctive transformation in the domain of gender among the Valley Tonga, and in the way women sought to attract the attention of men, who now travelled as migrant laborers for long periods of time to the foreign world of the cities.

In contrast to this new order, Tonga society before colonization was acephalous, non-stratified, matrilineal, and had been culturally homogeneous. The lack of political centralization meant that Tonga society had traditionally no means to accommodate strangers from other cultures without incorporating them intimately into local kinship and friendship networks, implying social and cultural assimilation (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940: 9–23, Kramer 1987: 25, 120). The experiences of transformation in the new order, however, made such assimilation impossible. Reactions to these new alien entities were thus particularly pronounced given the strong egalitarian ethos of traditional Tongan society that spanned the political (acephalous segmentary system) and spiritual domains, as well as gender relations (Kramer 1987: 120–125).

What is *spirit* here? *Masabe* are anonymous spirits and unlike other types of Tonga spirits have no individual names. When they are understood to be of human origin, *masabe* represent alien humanity known only by tribal and not by personal names (Colson 1969: 71). *Indeki*, Airplane spirit, is not the name of an individual airplane, nor its individual spirit as in what anthropologists used to call "animism." Rather, it is the spirit of a class of phenomena called Airplane, and as such neither equal to a particular plane, nor entirely divorced from association with it. The word that translates into "spirit," here, is *muuya*, which Colson renders as "breath" or "air," the essence that endows a phenomenon with its essential nature. "There is something which projects itself into humans and makes them behave in characteristic fashion, and this is called *muuya*" (1969: 72–73). Every single *muuya* is the essence of a class of phenomena which become manifest in each individual specimen of that class.

How have anthropologists understood these surprising productions? What started with an external address moved inwards, into the body, and became external again through dance, which as cure involved other parts of the community: the way neighbors, spouses, and friends address, oppose, and cooperate with one another. These productions appear as an occasion to relent to a compulsion to dance, to move the body. They give expression to visceral experiences and mental images on the basis of an economy of affect that are not elaborated narratively but mimetically enacted through bodily movements in combination with sound, smell, and dress (Kramer 2005: 133).

Everything seems to conspire to bring about and give expression to something that compels imitation, a likeness to a mental image that made an impression in the mind of the possessed. Ecstatic mimesis, such as Tonga dance possession, pronouncedly involves the field of vision. It focuses attention on one or several aspects of a particular object by elaborating on the perceived surface quality of things. The experience of being overwhelmed is predicated on a gaze from outside allowing a focus where isolated detail is elevated to suggestive image with an autonomous force (Kramer 1987: 63–69).

But the Tonga do not say that they act upon images, but rather that these images act upon them. In other words, the subject feels acted upon by spirits. That is why Colson called these productions "dance *possession*" (emphasis mine). Kramer called such productions, in reference to the work of Godfrey Lienhardt, "images of *passiones*" in order to employ a neutral word that could account for these experiences in light of their local conceptualization as caused by external powers (Lienhardt 1961: 151, Kramer 1987: 64). *Passiones* describes the "inverse aspect of agency" or activity ("*den inversen Aspekt des Handelns*"), for which we, roughly since the 17th century, no longer have a language except with reference to psychologically defined states (Kramer 1987: 64-67). Located somewhere between what we usually understand as ritual, artistic performance, possession, and figurative realism "the images of *passiones*" take seriously, as Kramer put it, the encounter with the other to one's own culture (Kramer 1987: 10).

For Kramer, ecstatic mimesis displays a form of artistic realism (Kramer 1987: 8). Realism, following Erich Auerbach, is understood as the interpretation of reality

(*Wirklichkeit*) through mimesis. Auerbach understood mimesis as literary *Darstellung* or *Nachahmung* – representation or imitation (Auerbach 2001[1946]: 515). Here, reality is confronted through mimesis in which the person moved (*bewegt*) aligns herself with what moved her (*angleichen*) and was the cause for the excitement (Kramer 1987: 73), which implies emotional states we have come to call "possession." What seems fantastic or monstrous to us reveals a decisive hidden dimension of *erfahrene Wirklichkeit* (experienced reality) to which the subject has yielded and in which she becomes mirrored (Taussig 1993: 45–47). In possession, an otherness within oneself is given recognition. Mimesis, here, is not a form of assimilation, but rather its opposite, an identification with an otherness within that resists undoing the powerful address of what has become internal (Kramer 1987: 7–11).

Muslim inside

Around the same time Valley Tonga women became possessed by the breath of *indeki*, Airplane spirit, Hindu men in Northern India became possessed by Muslim spirits. Between 1947–1957 the American anthropologist Morris E. Opler (1958: 553–566) led a team of researchers to a rural area in Uttar Pradesh, northern India. This is the period during and immediately after Indian Independence from British colonial rule, marred by partition, protracted tensions and violence between groups. In a classic text from the late 1950s, Opler offered a second-hand account of these cases. I have selected only one, making reference to others indirectly:

> A village boy of about thirteen years of age was staying in Bombay with his father and father's brothers who were working in the city as grain parchers and venders. The father went back to the village to visit, leaving the boy in the custody of the uncles. Soon after the departure of the father the boy's 'brain became hot.' He talked wildly and incessantly, saying that all people around him were evil and crazy. He repeatedly ran away. The unhappy uncles took the boy to shamans [i.e. exorcists] in Bombay, who told them the boy was possessed by three types of ghosts of deceased Muslims. They were not successful of inducing all three to leave the boy at once and so the boy did not fully recover. He was therefore brought back to the village and to his parents, where other ceremonies conducted by a religious practitioner of another village proved effective. (1958: 559)

Then, however, something strange happens. The news of the ceremonies to be conducted spread and a young man with similarly bizarre symptoms was brought for treatment. This man, too, was from a grain parcher's community. After his father's death his mother had asked the young man's married sister, who lived in Bombay, to take him in so that he could work in a city mill. The young man was thus forced to live in Bombay with his brother-in-law whom he did not like and did not get along with. One day he began making obeisance to donkeys on the street. He sprinkled himself with cattle urine and then with his own urine.

Showing symptoms of anxiety, the afflicted young man declared that a ghost was sitting in a nearby tree and was surely trying to devour him. He shouted that Pakistan was going to beat India, that Muslims are fine people, and declared that he would go and shoot Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Again, a

ritual specialist determined that the man was possessed by two malignant Muslim ghosts, one due to black magic — the result of his brother-in-law's work; the other had entered his body because he had stolen and eaten food which a woman had been carrying to a temple as food offerings to the Gods. It was the latter ghost that was responsible for extolling Pakistan through his medium, and voicing threats against contemporary Indian leaders.

In these two cases of possession by Muslim spirits, it is Hindu men– – in one case a boy, in another a young man– – who had moved from the village to the city and found themselves in unfamiliar urban environments immediately before becoming afflicted. In both cases, the shifting living and work contexts (mill factories and urban industrial areas) cause an alteration of behavior. Moreover, the ghosts which haunt the afflicted are explicitly called "Muslim," either by religious specialists or by the afflicted themselves.

In all the cases mentioned by Opler, the entities who become named as "Muslim spirits" make the Hindus behave strangely: they perform dirty or polluting tasks like sprinkling urine over the body. They demand food that should not be eaten, inclusive of allusions to cannibalism; the afflicted abuse close family members through an unspeakable language, attack them physically, and question local caste hierarchies. In the second case, mentioned above, the afflicted even threatens to kill prominent political leaders, such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. While the former was India's first Prime Minister at the time of possession in 1954, Mahatma Gandhi, the symbolic father of the newly independent India, had already been assassinated six years prior, in 1948. Surely the afflicted man must have been aware of this in one way or another.

How do we conceptualize spirit here? In India, one can attest to a broad analytical distinction between two types of possession: the "positive oracular possession" and the "negative disease-producing possession" (Smith 2006: 597). We are concerned here with the second type. Ghosts and spirits of the malevolent type are most often the residue of an untimely death: suicide, murder, a devastating illness. If Gods descend into humans in oracular possession, spirits ascend to humans in malevolent possession. The two types of possession invert the direction. Ghosts or spirits cannot be destroyed. While they are not considered immortal beings, they exist for the amount of time that is outstanding when their former lives were prematurely ended. They are wind or air, elemental beings, and they usually haunt the places where the events that led to their deaths took place. Being unprotected while in terrifying environments such as funerary grounds, the deep jungle ("wilderness"), factory workshops, the village water well, or empty isolated spaces in general are known to carry the danger of being haunted. Urinating, an activity carrying the danger of pollution, or incautiously calling out "*chalo chalo!*" (come, come!) in such a place is often used as retroactive explanation how a malignant spirit felt emboldened to enter the body of a victim.[1]

They have to be exorcized, either by transferral into other people, or to a vessel of some kind that imprisons them. Many spirits, however, are tamed by propitiation.

Little deities propitiated in roadside shrines or at the borders of villages are often understood to be former malevolent spirits, which is one of the reasons why the distinction between spirit and deity in India can be a rather fluid one, even if people themselves are adamant about distinguishing the one from the other.

Opler explicitly stressed the obvious political backdrop of these possession phenomena: tensions between Hindus and Muslims in urban centers in the aftermath of partition leading to the formation of two enemy countries, India and Pakistan. He mentions something that I have encountered in my own research as well, namely, that local Muslims living in the villages or areas from which the afflicted hailed (mentioned explicitly only in one of the cases) did not seem to pose a problem for the possessed victims.

There are, in other words, two kind of Muslims at work here: the Muslim neighbor in the village and the anonymous, aggregate Muslim of the city, the one who extolls Pakistan and wants to assassinate Indian political leaders. Apparently, an anonymous Muslim encountered in an unfamiliar urban center like Bombay, in factory workshops or mill areas, under a regime of competition for jobs and living spaces, caused an encounter with something overwhelming or distressing that left a mark and caused an affliction. It seems then that a new logic of national registers supplements an older one of caste complementarity, which was not based on integral communities confronting one another, but on forms of local familiarity, ritual separation, and routine interaction, that implied various forms of exchanges. The Muslim as such did not cause emotional distress; it was the novel theater of confrontation inclusive of a climate of intense ethnic tension and national division.

If the mental images brought on and elaborated in spirit possession are a form of bringing into play the other to one's own cultural world, then Muslim malevolent spirits differ from Hindu malevolent ones only in name. They both reveal a domain of potential evil that stands apart from society yet finds a way to enter, inverting moral norms and proper order. From the ethnographic record, it appears that these forces are equivalent. Muslim spirits (*djinn, jann, bala,* etc.) distinguish themselves only superficially from Hindu *bhut* (*chudel, pachalpari,* etc.). In Fatehvadi, for example, most Muslims will refer to both by using the word *bhut* irrespective of whether this concerns a Hindu or a Muslim context. And yet, the spirits mentioned in Opler are explicitly identified as "Muslim," a class of supernatural entities that were encountered in unfamiliar urban environments and in the context of communal tensions between national aggregate categories of population.

For Opler, the fact that these entities were conceptualized as "Muslim" in the material that he related was evidence for what he understood as unconscious "scapegoating" (1958: 665–566). By this he meant that various Hindus would express an opposition to Muslims in an indirect way, via the invocation of spirits. Thus Opler suggested that the conflict and opposition in the political sphere is transferred to the domain of spirits. The spirits then are a form of false consciousness expressing fetishistically what actually is the product of a political conflict. Here we encounter a problem. In all of Opler's cases, Muslim spirits did not really

make the victim act like actual Muslims behave, but rather, as Fritz Kramer would have it, as spirits act in the register of what is imagined to be the other to one's own culture. That other, as Opler's examples suggest, is not a real Muslim, is not actual Muslim behavior, but a Muslim *spirit*, mimetically enacted during possession.[2]

Actual Muslims do not sprinkle urine on themselves nor do they engage in cannibalism or abuse family members. Unlike in *masabe* dance possession, there seems to be no artistic realism at work as in the context of ecstatic mimesis in Africa. It seems to me that Opler, while intuiting what is interesting in these cases, proceeds too quickly and misses an opportunity for a deeper and more convincing interpretation.

In my comparison of Tonga dance possession and Indian spirit possession, an overwhelming experience leads to a spirit attack. The foreign element is experienced as cause of the affliction, a disturbance that demands recognition of its presence. The intruding entity makes its presence felt by possessing a body, by causing sickness, asking for gifts or offerings. In the complex exchanges with these entities, intimate matters of kinship, family relations, and hierarchy become expressed in the concrete social dynamics of possession. This happens in one case through the fact that *masabe* spirits can be passed onto others, and in the other case by Muslim spirits that cannot be eliminated but must be trapped, tricked, or transferred by an exorcist who employs the help of a deity that possesses him and thus defeats the malevolent entity.

Yet there is a complication in the Indian cases. While it seems obvious that *indeki* is an alien *masabe* spirit, a *Fremdgeist*, what is the status of the alienness of a Muslim spirit? And must one assume that Muslims were indeed *alien* to the people possessed? Is a "Muslim spirit" simply the spirit of a Muslim, or does the Muslimness of the spirit allude to something entirely different? This difficulty emerges because *masabe* dance possession realistically enacts the object through an imitation with the surface qualities initially perceived. In the Indian cases, however, the afflicted act the way spirits are expected to behave in general, and this expectation is shared with live Muslims. Muslim demons, too, demand blood, curse relatives, and question caste hierarchies.

Overwhelming encounters in the absence of possession

The event that provides the immediate context of my own research was an anti-Muslim pogrom in city of Ahmedabad in 2002, which resulted in over 1000 people killed within three weeks. The two situations I want to discuss occurred within a few years of that event. This ethnographic material differs from the data I have so far presented as it does not depict cases of spirit-possession. The comparison is on the level of sense perception, on that which comes to assume, it seems, an autonomous force over the perceiver, who is compelled to react with incomplete control and confused agency, similar but not equal to outright possession. For the sake of brevity, I shall focus less on what people say and more on what they do in a particularly salient moment. My focus is on bodily behavior in movement and arrest, on what exactly had a hold over a perceiver. Such an approach rests on my ability to offer a clear descriptive exposition of these two situations as they have come to pose a question for me.

In 2005, three years after the Gujarat pogrom, I organized a private dinner party for various friends and acquaintances in my apartment in a Muslim area of Ahmedabad. For me, it was a moment of reckoning, bringing together disparate characters of urban life that had informed my understanding of the city during prior research. I was nervous, acutely aware that any event with Muslims and Hindus together could easily become a semi-formal affair in which decorum and fine differences of status suddenly mattered. It took several weeks to decide how to solve one typical impasse for such a festive production. Gujarat is a dry state, and the prohibition on alcohol positions the Westerner in the awkward position to provide forbidden alcohol to locals, especially if the guests-to-be explicitly wished for it beforehand, as some did in this case.

Also, my Muslim guests expected a sumptuous meal, a meal with nothing missing. They naturally anticipated fancy meat dishes, saffron-colored mutton kebabs and reddish tandoori chicken roasted on the bone. Most of them could ill afford to indulge frequently in goat and chicken dishes. Announcing beforehand that meat will be served, however, was the safest way to discourage particular Hindu guests from attending the dinner, irrespective whether these individuals occasionally do more or less clandestinely engage in meat-eating or not. For these Hindus the problem was not simply the Muslim presence, with whom one might have engaged in these transgressions in more private or secure contexts. The fact that other Hindus were present made it important for Hindu guests to adhere to local ideas of propriety. They would not want to be caught engaging in improper behavior– – like eating meat –in front of people they did not completely trust.

After some deliberation, I chose alcohol over meat because drinks do not have to be prepared by actual hands or in actual vessels, which can then be seen as polluting to others. I decided to please my Muslim guests another time with meat dishes. These I understand to be the established conventions of inter-community interactions in the city. Polite as all my guests were, no one mentioned the matter or commented about the curious fact that prohibited liquor was served, while legally procurable meat was missing.

The party, perhaps not unexpectedly, became a strenuous affair for me. Yet, to my surprise only the two foreign female guests termed the stiff party a failure afterwards. The incident I shall relate occurred early on before we began eating. It seems minor on the face of it, yet remained memorable. It was the moment when Zakir and Bharat, a Muslim and a Hindu respectively, greeted one another, or whatever it was they thought they did.

Zakir, seen

Zakir, a middle-aged married man, was generally a silent character. If he found something that animated him to speak, he could occasionally talk for hours. Being

a member of the Mansuri community, his traditional trade was the selling of cloth in a local *bazaar* of the inner city. Attentive to his own surface appearance, he dyed his hair and beard with henna, even during the most dangerous phase of killings in Ahmedabad. In his absence, others regularly labelled him by a typifying nickname (*lal dadiwalla*) that referred to his reddish inclinations. He stood out in appearance from neighbors, friends, and kin. He repeated the dyeing procedures regularly with some acquired skill so that the red of the henna would be visible from afar. He perfected this locally very common practice, and also took a certain care to protect the smoothness of his skin, which he thought was in danger due to city pollution and the contaminated street food that he nonetheless liked to eat from time to time. Such red hair and beard was an unambiguous sign of being a Muslim, although the practice is often emulated by non-Muslims in times of communal calm. Usually it seeks to hide the white strains of hair that appear with age. Many Indians are shy about the visible signs of aging and some respond with a practice that celebrates red color. Zakir was a veritable "red head."

Always representing himself to me as a staunch Muslim, Zakir was indeed a firm believer, but when he visited Muslim shrines he insisted that he was engaged in a form of leisure activity. He firmly rejected ever prostrating himself in front of the central grave (*mazaar*) or ingesting rose peddles as magical medicine as many other visitors did when visiting these shrines whether Hindu or Muslim. For him, such behaviors were unacceptable, a form of *shirk* (polytheism). He enjoyed shrines as Muslim places of contemplation, prayer, and relaxation integrated into the urban landscape since centuries. He invited me to visit urban shrines with him, where he frequently slept after lunch for an afternoon snooze under a shading tree above the cooling water of the underground tanks. On these visits, initially more as an aside, he began telling me the miraculous stories of their emergence, the magical exploits of their Pirs and devotees, and other such narratives. And the more interest I showed for such stories, the more he seemed to be able to furnish them for me.

Once, after the pogrom, I invited Zakir to come to my apartment for tea. At the time I was living alone in an apartment located in a Muslim housing society in Shah Alam, in southeast Ahmedabad, far from the inner city. While we were drinking tea, Zakir suddenly appeared visibly uncomfortable. Putting his tea on the floor, he gestured me to stop talking, silently stood up, walked without comment to my desk, and then to my steel cupboards. There, he turned around on its face every single book cover depicting Hindu Gods and Goddesses. I was startled. His decisive action included a Gujarati children's comic book of the *Mahabharat*, the great Indian epic, which I had just bought a day before, and a small Gujarati *bhajan* songbook dedicated to Mata Ambaji, Gujarat's patron Goddess, who was depicted on the cover. Then he walked to the open door of my bedroom on which hung a *kutchhi* handicraft bag on to which were stitched a pair of Mother Goddess eyes – a ubiquitous sight in Gujarat. He turned the bag around so that the eyes were no longer visible. He ignored the statue of Ganesh made of clay, which I had acquired months earlier, perhaps because it was covered under a piece of cloth and stood silently in the kitchen. He knew it was there, under the cloth, but it could not see him.

In urban Gujarat the ubiquitous iconography of eyes– – usually understood to be depiction of the eyes of the omnipresent Mother Goddess– – on vehicles, walls, and other surfaces, unmistakably connotes "Hindu." I first interpreted Zakir's act as a spontaneous defiance by a Muslim a few months after the experience of being collectively punished in the pogrom. But he insisted in our ensuing discussion that he was uneasy at being exposed to all these gazes. The images of divinities had become a Hindu presence that he felt uncomfortable with, and in view of so many gazes, he seemed to feel exposed and did not want to go on talking to me. It was then that I realized that Zakir felt perceived by the same divinities he insisted did not exist. He called them "nonsense" ("*bakwas*"), merely based on "*stori*" (fairy tales, inventions). My contention that the stories of Muslim saints (Pir) sounded in every way like these ones, which he considered Hindu fairy tales, did not perturb him.

I had never before witnessed Zakir annoyed or disturbed by painted or depicted eyes, single or paired, of any kind anywhere in the urban landscapes that we frequented together. While at his most lively and verbose, Zakir was fascinated and enthralled by the legends and stories dealing with supernatural exploits of Muslim Pir circulating in print and by word of mouth in Ahmedabad and the surrounding rural hinterlands: the flying in *rath*s (magical vehicles), the fabulous healing powers of various shrines, exploits of turning wood into stone, sand into water, and battling demons underwater and in the unsettled wilderness (forms of exorcisms detailed in various legends). While he would not insist these stories were based exclusively on facts, he nonetheless related to them in an emotional register of affirmation. They were *Muslim* stories, and something about them must have been, or still was, true. To my ears, however, these stories sounded in every respect like those of Hindus, with the difference that Hindus talked of Gods, Goddesses, Brahmins, and world renouncers (*sadhus*) who, as sacred figures narratively employed, created social order, defeated evil or ignorance and helped the righteous in various ways.

My point here is not to say that from a scholarly vantage point there are no differences between Hindu or Muslim legends in Gujarat. There are many and they might be interesting to explore. Rather, what I want to point out is that in Zakir's elaborations, these differences were barely present. His peculiar insistence that "Hindu *stori*" were fundamentally different (because they are "nonsense") from the material he related as "Muslim" was to create a distance from his own fascination for exactly this genre of imaginative production. There was something artificial at work in this evaluation. Had he not been fascinated, that is, captured by these stories, he would not have celebrated with such energy the same class of stories with me. But since they were "Hindu" *stori* and not "Muslim," he did not find his dismissive attitude incoherent. The aggregate register allowed in language a reorganization of emotional attachment: Muslim stories are worth telling even if not based on facts, they entertain and are fascinating. Hindu stories are absolute nonsense.

If I am correct and Zakir did not really react to the nature or content of the stories he dismissed, but only to the fact that they were "Hindu," his behavior in the purview of Hindu eyes might suggest more than initially apparent. When

sitting in my apartment drinking tea, Zakir was actually *seen* by a Hindu Goddess. As Diana Eck (1998[1981]) has pointed out, the eyes of Hindu Gods never blink; they see you without interruption. Only a curtain can protect you. When Zakir so carefully and firmly covered every depiction of every divinity, every pair of eyes in my apartment, it was to prevent these entities from perceiving him, or perhaps us both. The eyes addressed him and demanded a response, which can culminate in a mutual exchange of gazes in which the interface between divinity and devotee is usually established in Hindu *darshan,* by far the most pervasive form of worship in India (1998[1981]: 4). Suddenly Zakir found this address, a form of proximity, simply unbearable, because, I speculate, he risked being confronted with the possibility of his reflection in the eyes of another, a Hindu other. What might this view from afar mean? Although he claimed not to have been in a Hindu temple for a long time, Zakir quite ironically acted like a *pujari,* a temple priest who draws the curtain at the beginning and after the *arti* worship ritual, which dramatizes the descent of a divinity into the *murti* (icon, statue). His silent acts contradicted his claim not to be bothered the least by these nonsense entities. By thus avoiding *darshan,* he confirmed the effect that the visual exchange with the divine has upon him. While in speech, he enunciated a radical dismissal of their existence as supernatural entities, his haptic uneasiness with the goddess' ever gazing eyes communicated the opposite. He had been perceived by them.

Bharat sees red

I now turn to Bharat, a member of a particular OBC community ("other backward classes"), whose members consider themselves of Rajput status. Unlike Zakir, who was born and raised in the city of Ahmedabad, Bharat was a relative newcomer to the city. He shared an apartment with me in 1999, in 2000, and we lived again together for about seven months between 2001–2002. In 2002, we experienced the cataclysmic event of the pogrom together. When Bharat initially moved to Ahmedabad from his village in Mehsana in the late 1990s, he was overwhelmed by urban life. He once told me the harrowing story, which I have published elsewhere, about how he collapsed in the presence of a raw plucked chicken that appeared before him in the Muslim meat market of the old city, not far from Dhalgarvad *bazaar* where Zakir sat at his shop (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012: 163). Bharat's academic advisor at Gujarat University, a Brahman and illustrious vernacular writer to whom he related as his guru, had identified in him a particular weakness: the Muslim. And he had encouraged him to overcome his weakness. This was one of the reasons why he was told to live with me, a foreigner sporting a Muslim name.

Although seemingly less superstitious than Zakir, Bharat suffered from what some locals call *alagi*, a reactive response of disgusted affection towards anything having to do with meat, sometimes even the mere mention, sight, or smell of the substance. While not unique to him, this particular sensitivity was rather pronounced in his case. This reaction I have interpreted as related to his ambitions of representing *the essence of the Hindu*, Hindutva, Hindu nationalism (Ghassem-Fachandi 2012: 154–184). It was mainly with him in mind that I had organized the meatless party in a Muslim housing society in a Muslim area of the city. Given the complicated deliberations beforehand, I had wanted to make sure that he would not cancel on me in the last minute just because meat was served at the party, or worse, suffer his affliction: an attack of *alagi* in the presence of Muslim guests. Like Zakir, Bharat placed much emphasis on his outward appearance: meticulously shaven, oiling and pressing into shape recalcitrant hair, proper clothes, pen in his shirt pocket.

After his arrival at my apartment, Bharat proceeded to greet the very mixed group already present consisting of various categories of Muslims and Hindus, middle-class Dalits, and Western women. Bharat felt forced to take Zakir's hand in a Western style of greeting, a man whom he had never met before nor heard of. Gujaratis, especially Hindus, usually greet one another in a formal manner through what Christopher Fuller has described for India generally: the *pranam* or *namaskara* gesture of folding the hands in front of one's face or body with the palms pressed together (Fuller 1992: 3–4, see also Babb 1975: 51–53). The gesture of salutation and the unique affirmative wiggle of the head, typical for Indians, is mimetic behavior and is often performed automatically.

Zakir, when approached by Bharat, however, seemed to instantly resist this mimesis. Yet he also did not choose the formal Muslim greeting, which would have consisted in raising the right hand to his face with the palm turned toward him. Instead he attempted to shake Bharat's hand in Western style, a haptic form known to everyone. Perhaps he thought that the gesture would dampen either the force of an entirely Muslim address or the implication of being internal to what he rightly believed was Bharat's conception of an exclusively Hindu Gujaratiness.

As Bharat took Zakir's hand, his body became a singular unmoving flexed muscle. With a slight forward bent, he looked at Zakir, who was smaller in height but stockier, as if aghast. His pupils dilated and he became locked as if in a stare-down with a mortal enemy. Bharat did not respond to Zakir's vocal greeting, but simply froze into this stiff posture for what must have been a few seconds but felt to me much longer. The *pranam* could have indicated submission, the handshake signified who knows what. The silent spectacle did not escape the rest of the company in my apartment. Zakir, however, while visibly uncomfortable, did not speak, nor did the scene seem to concern him later. He averted his gaze. "I don't like him" is all that he uttered to me afterwards. Bharat, in turn, largely ignored the other Muslims present that evening, and even smiled torturously now and then. Later, he was unwilling to remember the event, other than that his visit affirmed his Hindu self-confidence to have visited a Muslim locality of the city so soon after the pogrom (in fact, it had taken him several years).

What do we make of these two encounters? Both Zakir and Bharat were overwhelmed not by the difference of the other but by something on the surface that they perceived: Zakir was affected by the eyes of the Mother Goddess by whom he seemed caught; and Bharat by a red beard, a typifying attribute of the urban Muslim and that in bright colors. They were both arrested, for sure, and acted in an

unusual if not to say bizarre manner, but they did *not* fall into a spell of possession. The symptoms were intense and short but not easily made discursive afterwards.

Mimesis and alterity

Contemporary India is in many ways an apt contrast to an acephalous African society organized on the basis of segmentation and characterized by a form of cultural homogeneity that allowed for external elements to be confronted mimetically. For one, the heterogeneous in Gujarat is sociologically inscribed permanently into the social organization of caste, class, ethnic and religious multiplicity. We think of India as a complex mosaic of extreme differentiation. Yet, it is here where I believe Hindu nationalism in conjuncture with late capitalist modernity is changing the equation.

In the two ethnographic examples above we can see how these new rules have effects on both, a Hindu and a Muslim. Acknowledging this may change the usual analysis of Hindu nationalist ideology simply as a quality of and by particular Hindus. While the Muslim is heterogeneous to normative Hindu society, that heterogeneity no longer relates the Hindu or Muslim to an otherness within themselves. In caste society by contrast, as Dumont argued, each group had a being outside of itself, and thus there was an implicit recognition that each community cannot be full in itself but was dependent on the other (Dumont 1986: 460–464). That is no longer an exclusive case today. Increasingly, Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat tend to turn away from the difference of the other, unable to establish a stable outside in relation to this difference. The reorganization of the senses in the context of Hindu nationalism makes of Bharat a Hindu *seized by a sudden realization of a ubiquitous presence*: the red hair and beard of a Muslim. It makes of Zakir a Muslim *seized by the ubiquitous gaze of the Mother Goddess*: these eyes that see you from everywhere. What should cause no surprise to either of them nonetheless overwhelms them, at least for a moment. What should cause no bother, becomes a moment of arrest and strange behavior.

In Gujarat, the Muslim is not an other to his culture as are *Fremdgeister* in African ecstatic mimesis; and Muslim spirits, which frequently also affect Hindus, are only as alien to them as are other spirits, because they hail from an invisible domain that is not easily assimilated, whether by Hindus or Muslims. The otherness of the Muslim, in turn, is an artificial trope of Hindu nationalist discourse, with an equivocal value even within that discourse. This discourse insists that Islam is a foreign element to India, while all Muslims are illegitimately converted Hindus. The integrity of the identity category "Hindu" is superficially inclusive but at the same time remains vulnerable. It must remain unscathed and unperturbed, its surface unharmed.

Hindu nationalist discourse remains impotent to relate Bharat with a difference within himself, yet nonetheless effectively fills him with the *idée fixe* that Muslims are opposed to him. If mimesis is, as Michael Taussig theorizes from Latin American and other material, the capacity to other, Bharat's reaction of disgust should be seen as a veritable failure of mimesis (Taussig 1993: 19). Nor does the Mother Goddess represent to Zakir a form of radical alterity, when he unselfconsciously affirms her powerful visual address, yet denounces the validity of all things Hindu. While affected, he can find no position from which to acknowledge this fact.

In short, neither Zakir nor Bharat have an outside to speak from. Their mutual address is direct and unmediated by a third, unmediated by spirit, which might relate an internal alterity to an external difference. Traditionally this possibility was presented through the world of spirits, among other supernatural forces. Theirs is a raw and direct encounter, potentially extremely conflictual, because, while it superficially seems to be based on a form of "othering," it actually fails to recognize any difference in the other, anything that would have the chance to disturb the mutual confrontation. The otherness of the other is never fully established. What has been lost is the possibility that each respective side might become caught in the otherness of the other and yield to the address. No one becomes "possessed" as we have seen in the ethnographic example of Colson in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, or in Opler for Uttar Pradesh after Independence. Being caught, that is, falling into a spell of possession, would demand a pro-active negotiation and identification with that difference. Instead, after their encounters, they both recapture their composure quickly and carry on as if nothing had happened.

The instability that this mimetic failure causes is the reason why, as I have explained elsewhere, sacrifice and disgust are of paramount importance to understanding violent political form: sacrifice, in that destruction is a function of incorporation engendering intimacy with the victim through killing and taking out of circulation. In this procedure sacrificial destruction has the function to transform the discontinuity of life into the continuity of death (Bataille 1992[1949]: 45–77, Bataille 1986[1957]: 12–13, Ghassem-Fachandi 2012: 263). And disgust, which, while revolted by the object, strangely seeks proximity with it (Kolnai 2007[1929]: 13–20, Ghassem-Fachandi: 2012: 150–151). The affect of disgust, in this sense, is an instance of anti-mimetic behavior, or better, it is what happens when the alterity of a supposed other is either altogether absent or can no longer be fully mentalized. One can say: *the alterity of the other fails to leave its mark*. It is not properly registered. There is a failure to imitate. The desire is to assimilate and hence absolve oneself from the need to confront alterity altogether rather than to mimetically relate to it, which would imply a pronunciation of difference.

In contemporary Gujarat, at countless shrines, when Hindu women enact Muslim spirits that have locked themselves into their bodies, they indeed give recognition to a foreign element that has become internal. They yield to this element by engaging in various transgressions, like excessive bodily kinesis, voicing unspeakable desires, enunciating vile curses and offering clever puns. They behave in sexually suggestive and highly inappropriate ways. They frequently seek help from ritual specialists who happen to be live Muslims: shrine priests (*mujawar*), exorcists, healers. These live Muslims are not confused with Muslim spirits. There is even an occasional Mother goddess temple in which a Muslim temple priest (*pujari)* officiates. Affected by an intense personal dream in which the goddess appeared,

the Muslim has yielded to her address and become her devotee (*bhakt*). In such encounters, we still have a relation to difference that relates an external address to an internal alterity inside the subject. The results are various forms of mimetic play.

Notes

1. As I have often witnessed in rural Gujarat, it is customary to cough several times before urinating out in the open. The rational is that one should not risk angering invisible beings that might possibly reside nearby and that one might accidentally urinate upon.
2. Furthermore, there is no evidence that such cross-religious forms of possession occur only in the context of political and ethnic conflict. In fact, the opposite might be the case.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRAYER AND POLITICS

The Muslim response to the Pentecostal surge in Nigeria: Prayer and the rise of charismatic Islam

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ABSTRACT

The paper postulates the emergence of a charismatic form of Islam in Western Nigeria, indexed by new modalities of prayer, modes of worship and proselytizing, organizational features, and repertoires of devotion that closely approximate forms and expressions normally exclusively associated with Pentecostal Christianity. It is argued that this new formation of Islam, while apparently triggered by Pentecostalism's recent success in a competitive religious field, is not simply mimetic; but also reflects internal discourses and tensions within Islam, which unfold against the backdrop of political competition with Christianity in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS

Islam; Pentecostalism; prayer; Nigeria; NASFAT

Preamble: We shall fight on the highways . . .

Shortly after the Nasirul-Lahi-L-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) moved its regular prayer meetings to its permanent prayer ground at Mowe-Ibafo on the Lagos–Ibadan Expressway in 2000, it found itself in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Formed by a core of young, educated, Lagos-based Muslims who gathered for regular prayer at the house of Abdul Lateef Olasupo, a member of the group, NASFAT had begun on a small scale in March 1995 (Adetona 2012). But as attendance swelled, the group felt the pressure to move to a bigger space; and after its annual *Lailatul Qadr* drew thousands to the National Sport Stadium on the Lagos mainland in 2000, a decision was taken to relocate to the open and undeveloped piece of land the group had acquired on the Lagos–Ibadan Expressway (Adetona 2012). In 2001, at the conclusion of one of its weekly Asalatu prayers, thousands of NASFAT members took to the highway, creating vehicular chaos. NASFAT was not the first prayer group to cause misery for unsuspecting travelers on the 124-kilometer Lagos–Ibadan Expressway, arguably the busiest motorway in

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Nigeria; the reason its involvement attracted undue notice was because it was the first time that a non-Christian group had been the source of prolonged vehicular agony. If NASFAT's aim was to draw public attention to itself, it well and truly got its wish.

When I met Mustapha Adebayo Bello, the Assistant General Secretary of NASFAT, in Lagos in July 2013, twelve years had passed since that fateful "hold up". But I was still eager to know what had actually happened. For one, I had heard from other sources that the incident was premeditated. Secondly, I always thought it curious that, after that first time, NASFAT has hardly been implicated in traffic paralysis on the expressway, even though the frequency of such incidents has actually increased in the past decade. More religious groups have erected prayer camps along this particular Expressway, making it a spatial symbol of their fervent competition for influence, and a perfect metaphor for the country's degraded infrastructure.

To my surprise, Mr. Bello confirmed that the 2001 incident was in fact engineered. "We wanted them to know that they are not the only ones who can block the highway", he said. The "them" in his statement was a pointed allusion to, primarily, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and other Christian prayer groups whose regular activities have been a source of pain for the users of the expressway; the "we" was of course NASFAT. But "them", in a classic double entendre, could very well be a reference to Christians as a political constituency in the country, and the "we" their Muslim counterparts. For such is the structure of historical competition between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria that the latter possibility always has to be kept in view, even when there is no direct suggestion or immediate intention.

If the incident of 2001 was a "performance", staged to show that Muslims would not accept a subsidiary status in the larger scheme of things (whether on a "mere" highway or in the arteries of power), the feeling, particularly in Yorubaland, that Muslims continue to chafe under the yoke of what Alhaji Femi Abbas, a leading journalist and Islamic intellectual, described as a "Christianized public sphere" (interview, 24 July 2014) rankles.[1] Nearly all of my respondents shared Alhaji Abbas' sentiment that a "Muslim renaissance" (Alhaji Abbas, interview), of which NASFAT is the pre-eminent institutional expression, had become imperative.

This paper is an attempt to capture the origins, forms and dimensions of this renaissance. My basic postulate is that, in the western part of Nigeria, a new formation of Islam, which I call a Charismatic Islam, has emerged in direct response to the imperatives of Pentecostal Christianity. I use "Charismatic Islam" to articulate the marked visibility within this "new" Islam of practices, modes of worship and proselytizing, organizational features, and repertoires of devotion and prayer that closely resemble forms and expressions normally exclusively associated with Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. I also argue that Muslim appropriation of Christian evangelical forms, in particular stylistics, modalities and temporalities of prayer, while undeniably inspired by its interaction with Pentecostalism, is also a token of, and pointer to, ongoing reformations within Islam itself.

A few caveats are in order about my analytic intentions. First, though I postulate a nascent "Charismatic Islam" as one notable aftermath of the emergence of Pentecostalism as a social force in Nigeria, I do not suggest that Pentecostal influence is limited to Islam. Jesse Zink's work on "Anglocostalism" (2012) is an effective illustration of Pentecostalism's impact on the religious landscape in Nigeria.

Secondly, although I offer NASFAT as an institutional epitome of the emergence of Charismatic Islam, mine is in no way an in-depth study of the organization (for more on NASFAT, see for instance Adetona 2012, Ogungbile 2012, Sanni 2012, Soares 2009). On the contrary, NASFAT is used as an entrée into a theologically various religious community in which there is continuous contention, not just over the appropriate Muslim response to the Pentecostal challenge, but also over issues like gender, mode of dressing, day of prayer, strategies of inter-faith engagement, devotional protocols, and what forms of innovation are allowed or forbidden/un-Islamic. As a result, the general ebullience of Charismatic Islam often masks a profound internal heterodoxy, and it is not far-fetched to suggest that the emergence of Pentecostalism has, in some cases been even more of a prompt for an internal reordering of Islam than it has been for an alternative externalization. Thus, as Pentecostalism appears to have moved into pole position in a fiercely competitive religious marketplace,[2] triggering a response from Muslims and Islamic groups anxious to undo its influence or at least draw level with it, such groups have also been forced into a reevaluation of their own norms and praxes. I reiterate: Such groups are not simple clones of Pentecostalism, but proactive social agents who must act within a culture whose soundtrack is increasingly Christian charismatic.

Finally, for all its ostensible novelties, Charismatic Islam must be inserted in a historicity in which adaptation and dynamic change have been integral to the evolution of Islamic religious praxis in Yorubaland (see for instance Akinade 2014 and Gbadamosi 1978; compare Soares 2014, Uthman 2005, Kobo 2012). Far from imbuing Islam in Yorubaland with any singularity, it in fact puts it within a sub-Saharan matrix of "periodic waves of renewal, particularly in West Africa where missionaries with purified beliefs often acquired in Saudi Arabia have systematically preached reform, often combined, as in Northern Nigeria, with the construction of new political systems" (Ellis and ter Haar 1998: 243).[3] By the same logic, the Pentecostal explosion is the latest episode in Yoruba Christianity's own spectacle of stagnation and renewal.

The rest of the paper is divided into four sections. In what follows, I analyze the social, cultural, theological, and global factors driving the success of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. This section is necessary as a way of providing the sociological context for the Muslim response. After that, I examine Pentecostalism's specific impact on Islam and Islamic movements, leading to the emergence in western Nigeria of what I have described as "Charismatic Islam". In the third section, I identify and analyze prayer as both the site and driver of the struggle for Muslim-Christian supremacy. The paper ends with a brief concluding section.

The Pentecostal surge

My analysis is underpinned by the assumption that the astounding success of Pentecostalism – measured by, among other indicators, its imbrication with every facet of life in Nigeria – is a major driver of Islamic charismatization. In addition to Nigeria, rapid Pentecostalization is witnessed in Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Congo-Zaire, Kenya, Angola and Uganda, countries where Pentecostals and charismatics represent more than 20% of the national populations (Pew Research Center, 2006). Studies of the Pentecostal boom in Latin America and Asia (Anderson 2004, Coleman 2000, Freston 2001, compare Van de Veer 1996) offer confirmation that this is not a phenomenon that is exclusive to Africa – though care must be taken not to discount the diversity within "global Pentecostalism". My references to Pentecostalism are strictly to its Nigerian incarnation.

In Nigeria, Pentecostal ascendance is widely evident: in the sheer explosion in the number of Pentecostal churches;[4] the boom in tertiary institutions founded by Pentecostal churches; the increasing popularity of the Pentecostal elite (Obadare 2006); the steady infusion of Pentecostal habits into the fabric of everyday life; the growing popularity of religious spectacles; the transformation of Pentecostal pastors into secular sages with license to pronounce on love, law and economics; and last but not least, the injection of Pentecostalist forms into the popular culture, for instance popular music and Nollywood videos. The ubiquity of Pentecostalism warrants that explanations be sought within cultural, historical, sociological, economic, and political frames. My explanations combine elements from Nigeria's specific socio-political milieu, and Pentecostalism's internal doctrinal assurances and ritualistic techniques.

A first explanation is the way Pentecostalism appears to simplify and reduce complex social, economic and political situations and struggles to a one-on-one relationship between the worshipper and God, in which case all that is expected of the believer is to make certain personal sacrifices (see Kalu). This reduction is enabled in part by what appears to be Pentecostalism's generally conservative view of, and attitude towards, politics and political activism. Despite undeniable divisions among its leading lights as regards attitudes to politics, it is safe to say that Nigerian Pentecostalism is, in sum, pro-state by inclination. The symbolism of Pentecostal leaders' influence on, and unfettered access to, the state cannot be overemphasized in a country where the religious and political stakes are ever so high. In a February 2011 interview with the Cable News Network (CNN),[5] Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), and easily the most sought after Pentecostal leader, provided an interesting insight into the Pentecostal political imagination. Responding to a question about whether or not the "new generation" churches were making congregants politically docile, he argued that it is better for people to come to church than take to the streets where they'd most likely be shot. Pentecostal politics is no doubt a complex subject which cannot be encapsulated without untold violence

to its many parts. It is also constantly evolving. For instance, one dimension of the traffic between Pentecostal pastors and politicians is the way in which the former provides succor, if not ideological validation, for the latter, for instance through favorable interpretations of Biblical texts, homilies and prophesies. An extensive analysis is outside the purview of this paper. What needs to be emphasized, taking a cue from Pastor Adeboye's statement, is how Pentecostal churches provide a place of security – hermeneutical and, quite often, literal – away from the danger and anarchy of politics and the streets.

A second reason why Pentecostalism has had such a great impact on the Nigerian public is that it apparently "works", meaning that the proof of its social guarantee that those who accept "the good news" and surrender their life unto Christ will shed their rags for untold riches (spiritual as well as material) is in the pudding of real-life examples of people who "received their anointing" and became wealthy literally overnight; or whose personal circumstances otherwise manifestly, if unexpectedly, changed. Among Nigerian Pentecostals, stories of the "next door neighbor" who found riches mingle with testimonies from people whose bank accounts were apparently miraculously credited without having engaged in any business transaction.[6] As one of my respondents, a worshipper at the upscale City of David on Victoria Island said, "It's like mathematics", by which I assume he meant that you can "prove" it and, as he said, "you can see contemporaneous proof of what happened in the life of the patriarchs thousands of years ago". Again, I should insert a caveat here that the specific phenomenon captured by Asonzeh Ukah as "the economics of Pentecostal activism" (Ukah 2005, compare Lindhardt 2009a), or more generally the philosophy of "instant dividend", deserves more elaborate treatment. The latter is probably bound up with the Yoruba notion of "*owo ojiji*" (sudden wealth), which can only be harnessed via some form of supernatural power, and goes to confirm the often ignored basic coincidence between the Pentecostal and African Traditional religious metaphysics (see Peel 2008, compare Odozor 2014).

For Paul Gifford, this overlap is neither accidental nor casual, but must be embraced as an opportunity to establish the enchanted dimension of Africa's Christianity. According to Paul Gifford, "not to give this enchanted worldview its due weight is to misunderstand religion in Africa" (2014: 123). Rosalind Shaw, who takes guidance from the work of Joel Robbins (2004) and Birgit Meyer (1994) respectively, seems to agree, suggesting that part of what we see at work is Pentecostalism's "capacity to adapt itself to local social concerns and cosmologies" (Shaw 2007: 70).

At any rate, we cannot dismiss the social significance of prosperity in the context of poverty and social destitution which is a key dimension of the sociological aftermath of military rule and a legacy of continued economic mismanagement under civilian leaders. In his work on Ghanaian Pentecostalism, Paul Gifford locates a similar trope, and suggests that Ghanaian Pentecostal churches "flourish mainly because they claim to have the answers to Ghanaians' existential

problem, economic survival" (Gifford 2004, ix). In a wobbling economy, the fact that Pentecostal churches, apart from promising economic success, are themselves *de facto* transnational business empires with thousands, if not millions, of employees, is absolutely crucial. As Akinola notes, "the explosion in Pentecostal evangelistic activities has opened up employment as well as business activities, however modest, especially in an economy that has virtually collapsed" (Akinola 2004: 3).

Scholars like Birgit Meyer (2010) and Ruth Marshall (2009) have urged serious consideration of the extent to which (African) Pentecostalism is a religion of the senses. For Meyer, "one of the most salient features of Pentecostal/charismatic churches is their sensational appeal; they often operate via music and powerful oratory, through which born-again Christians are enabled to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit with and in their bodies, wherever they are, and to act on such feelings. Sensational may well be understood as both appealing to the senses and the spectacular" (2010, 742). Pentecostalism's sensuousness, its appeal to the senses (via music, dance and other kinds of bodily animation), is definitely a point of attraction for many young people for whom the mainline churches can be too stodgy, staid and conservative (Morgan 2011). Gospel music especially deserves more than a casual mention, but must in fact be seen, pace Vicki Brennan, as "a central part of how Pentecostal Christianity has "gone public" in Nigeria" (2015). And such is its power to "grab" (Brennan 2015) the listener that, as I gathered from my respondents, it seems to have put pressure on Muslim leaders who were anxious not to lose their younger demographic to the hypnotic spell of Pentecostal music, especially on Sunday mornings when, ordinarily, Muslims are not otherwise devotionally engaged. Operative here, too, is "the ways media technologies shape the character and practice of Islamic movements, while not being subsumed by the language of rupture this promotes" (Larkin 2015: 67).

Additionally, it would seem that part of the attraction of Pentecostalism lies in the opportunity it provides for individual social agents to acquire a new social identity, at times complete with a new name. It is true, as I have discussed above, that a corrupt bureaucracy and a state otherwise in full retreat from society plays into ordinary people's decisions about surrendering to God in Pentecostal churches. What is equally interesting is how new converts, exiles from a grueling economic battle, either modify old names or take up completely new ones as part of an attempt to distance themselves from the "old" "demonic" cultural order and assume a new identity. For the "born-again", a new name is a totem of a new individuality, though within the framework of a new community; an emblem of the power of a fresh anointing, and, for the sociologist, to review a sample of such names is to open a window into a specific social consciousness. From an ever growing list: Miracle, Laughter, Pray, Praise, Praise the Lord, Prayer, Success, Testimony, Living Testimony, Prosper, Prosperity, Yuletide, Independence, Worship, Answer, Favor, Jesus Is Coming, Light, Pillar, Rhapsody, Hallelujah, Good News, Divine, Ministry, Rapture, and last but definitely not least, Pentecostal (Obadare 2013).

In the next section, I examine Pentecostalism's specific impact on Islam and Islamic movements and the ensuing Islamic revivalism centered, *inter alia*, on a new organization of Islamic prayer.

The rise of Charismatic Islam

As a way of setting the context for the discussion in this section, I make three prefatory observations on the Muslim–Christian struggle in Nigeria.

The first concerns the importance of power (Yoruba, *agbara*) and how the struggle to acquire and keep it drives competition – and convergence – between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria at large. Power in this sense is first and foremost economic, as the inter-faith struggle and need for power have intensified against the backcloth of economic disempowerment, driven by the emergence of new global economic arrangements which have disarticulated states and societies in the global South. Secondly, power here is political power, the struggle for whose possession unfolds against the background of mutually intertwining national and transnational political competition. Thirdly, power is ultimately spiritual power, and many Pentecostals show their sensitivity to the subject with their frequent references to the text of Ephesians 6:12 ("For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rules of the darkness of this world"). Pentecostalism is significant in this regard because it takes power very seriously, not only because of its emphasis on spiritual power, but also its presentation of power as something that can be accessed democratically by every believer, without, instructively, recourse to any intermediating secular or religious authorities (see also Peel 2009a, compare Marshall-Fratani 1998; for a Latin American comparison, see Lindhardt 2012).

A second observation is that contemporary Muslim response to the Pentecostal surge in western Nigeria cannot be divorced from what Sanni has described as the longstanding "apprehension of Yoruba Muslims about the sustainability of their own model and ideals, particularly in the face of what was considered to be the Christian warfare in the religious, educational, and political spheres well before the country's political independence in 1960" (Sanni 2012: 158). For him, the Muslim Students Society (MSS) (established 1954) is among the "earliest and viable responses" and its sole mission was to" retain the impressionable young Muslims within the fold of Islam and protect their interests in the face of Christian conversionary tendencies and manipulation" (2012: 158).

Thirdly, Christian–Muslim struggle in Nigeria is also, fundamentally, about the nature of the Nigerian state. It is true that Nigerians generally have mixed feelings about the character of the state inherited from the British at independence. Many feel that it is a caricature of the real thing, and partly blame its faulty scaffolding for the problems that continue to dog the country five odd decades into political independence. At the same time however, there is a specific and lingering Muslim grudge about the ostensible Christian pedigree of the same state, one that, it is

often argued, gives a tacit edge to their Christians compatriots. For instance, Muslim intellectuals in Nigeria continue to debate what is called "the Friday question" (Akintola 1993), which is about whether or not Friday (the Muslim day of worship) should enjoy the status of Sunday as a recurring public holiday in the country. In fact, the adoption of Sunday as a day of prayer by Islamic groups in western Nigeria is one of the fallouts of internal debates about "the Friday question". As I learned during my conversation with Mustapha Bello, the decision to start prayers on Sunday was arrived at after it was realized that the political mood, at least temporarily, does not favor what is certain to be a long-drawn battle to have the Nigerian federal government declare Friday a recurring public holiday. Hence, having prayers on Sunday, apart from "maximize[ing] favourably the leisure time that exists amongst Muslims who laze away Sunday mornings"[7] was seen as the best way to challenge Christian symbolic appropriation of the same day; which is why, as I later learned, Muslims also decided to cause traffic congestion on the Lagos–Ibadan expressway, the way Christian Pentecostal groups (the RCCG being the most notorious) have in the past – and in fact continue to.

In effect, what I call "Charismatic Islam" ensues as a by-product of four intermixing currents: inter-faith competition for power; Christian conversionary impulse; independent internal discourses and tensions among Muslim intellectuals; and a variety of institutional and individual transnational agents who have played a key role in the forging of Muslim identity in Nigeria. Arguably the most visible symbol of Islamic revivalism is the phenomenon of Muslim youth prayer movements, many of which, presumably, have been established to provide the kind of organizational equivalent that would stop the hemorrhaging of young Muslim men and women to Pentecostal groups. Such organizations have drawn on the nous and organizational savvy of "literate and upwardly mobile Muslim professionals and businessmen; many of whom could not be accommodated by any of the existing Muslim organizations like the MSS, YOUMBAS,[8] etc – which, in any case, were not equipped to solve the problems of life cycle, (mis)fortune in business, or the destructive machinations of the (sic) evil forces – issues that new generation Christian churches, titans of the new power-for-prosperity market, were providing their patrons and clientele" (Sanni 2012: 160).

In addition, new Islamic movements/prayer groups appear to have stepped into the vacuum created by the shrinking ranks and changing fortunes of Muslim clerical healers. Courted aggressively during the military era, they (Muslim clerics) have seen their public influence on the wane, partly as a result of the power shift at the national level from the North to the South, and hence from a Muslim to a Christian President. The sudden rise and rapid decline of Alhaji Haruna Maiyasin Katsina (popularly known as Sarkin Shasha), who reached the apogee of his influence during the military regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–1998), perfectly illustrates this shift. As one of General Abacha's many "spiritual advisers", Sarkin Shasha had his advisee's ears, and his "palace" in Ibadan was a political Mecca while their relationship lasted. Sarkin Shasha's parlayed his status as Abacha's

counselor into political brokerage and, for generous financial compensation no less, is reported to have smoothed the way for those seeking access to the corridors of power (Odunlami 1999, Wakili 2008). In a revealing parallel, under Goodluck Jonathan (2010–), an avowedly Christian leader, the influence of the Pentecostal clerisy, in their role as the sociological identikit of Abacha's marabouts, has soared.[9]

NASFAT is the most prominent and arguably the most influential of these new Islamic movements, the organizational exemplar of Muslim determination to forge social, professional and spiritual solidarity as a basic reaction to the thrust and spread of Pentecostalism, but also in response to real intra-faith stimuli. Since its establishment in March 1995 as a prayer group with a handful of people (see Preamble), NASFAT has rapidly transformed into arguably the most socially significant Islamic movement currently operating in Nigeria. In true "Charismatic" fashion, NASFAT espouses an ebullient theology whose overriding ethos is to "develop an enlightened muslim (sic) society nurtured by a true understanding of Islam for the spiritual upliftment and welfare of mankind".[10] The organization, to be sure, does not exhaust the totality of Muslim reaction to the Pentecostal surge in Nigeria, and as I mentioned before, I merely invoke it as an illustration of a reformist impulse in Nigerian, or more precisely Yoruba Islam, dictated largely – though not wholly – by the undeniable emergence of Pentecostalism as a distinct and increasingly formidable cultural force in the Nigerian society. Examples of other Islamic social/prayer movements similar to NASFAT in focus and overall sensibility are: Al- Fathu Qareeb Muslim Organization (established 1999), Jamatul Ar-Risalatul Islamiyyah of Nigeria (A.K.A. Islamic Message Group of Nigeria, IMGN) (established 2000), the Islamic Platform Society of Nigeria (established 2007), Aqibat Lil Mutaqeen Society of Nigeria (established 1999), the Fadlullah Society of Nigeria (established 2006), and the Ahbabud-Dinil Islamiy Society of Nigeria (established 2002). At any rate, the Muslim response to the Pentecostal surge is itself an evolving phenomenon, an evolution indexed by continuing debates and disputations within Muslim groups over how to contain Pentecostalism, over imitations of Pentecostal rituals and symbols, and over interpretations of Quranic injunctions. I have already cited disagreements over Friday as a day of Muslim prayer. There is also, vitally, an ongoing debate over the status of women, a debate that has been invigorated, if not complicated, by the emergence of women in leadership positions. I return to this subject momentarily.

In the meantime, in what could easily pass as a symbolic nod to the accomplishments of Pentecostal groups whose tentacles have spread into every recess of the culture, NASFAT aims not only at "the spiritual development of muslims" and "their welfare"; it is also dedicated to the kind of proto-secular, trans-denominational, soul-winning strategies that have defined Pentecostalism in the modern era, and most certainly in contemporary Nigeria.[11] Hence its involvement in provision of free legal services to prison inmates; social philanthropy; evangelism through social media; education (through the establishment of schools, including a university, Fountain University, Oshogbo, Osun State); medical

support; and various social empowerment schemes. Perhaps most tellingly, NASFAT has two feet in the market through its TAFSAN enterprises, which currently have business interests in beverages, travels and tours, and investment, "an arm of NASFAT saddled with rentals" and "printing of . . . publications".[12]

Although NASFAT members are proud of these achievements, they seem to take special pride in the group's statement-sending praying ground on the Lagos–Ibadan expressway, a determined and symbolically rich presence in a space otherwise dominated by a chain of mega Christian churches, including the RCCG's Redemption Camp. Part of the latter's niche in the market (and something that Muslims find privately frustrating) is that, in large part because of the popularity and social standing of its General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, it has always attracted prominent Muslim politicians. At various times, late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010), Chief Bola Tinubu, a leading chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and incumbent Lagos state governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola, all Muslims, have attended "Holy Ghost Services" at the RCCG's sprawling Redemption Camp.[13]

One is not saying that NASFAT is politically unsuccessful. Far from it: the group, for one thing, is able to claim many prominent politicians and members of the business elite as members. Soares notes that its services in Abuja, the Nigerian Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are frequently attended by "middle-class professionals, businessmen, civil servants working in government ministries and educators" (Soares 2009: 190). At the Lagos State Secretariat Mosque, Alausa, I was introduced to some of these middle-class professionals, successful and highly-respected individuals in their own right, and quiet facilitators of NASFAT's reported background role in shaping or influencing major political decisions, especially in the southwestern part of the country. Notwithstanding, unlike the RCCG, for instance, NASFAT has so far been unable to boast of the kind of star "cross-over" or ecumenical (as in trans-faith) congregation that the former hosts quite regularly. This, plus the aggressive wooing of the leading Pentecostal pastors by politicians at all levels, is proof of the influence of the leading Pentecostal churches and pastors on the one hand, and the "deregulated" nature of Pentecostal services themselves.

Even as it contends locally with creeping Pentecostalization, NASFAT has been persistent in its own internationalization, and currently boasts several branches in different parts of the world, including Europe and the United States.[14] At the same time, having defined the media as a battleground of ideas from early on, NASFAT is gradually shaping up to challenge Pentecostals' clear digital hegemony. In this regard, NASFAT Woolwich UK-Live TV[15] seems to be leading the charge.

Instructively, though iconic of transformations within Islam in western Nigeria, NASFAT is at the same time proof that what I have called "Charismatic Islam" is, as I have already implied, far from homogenous. As such, while arguably at the spearhead of changes in Muslim identity and Muslim revivalism, NASFAT is also having to contend with its own internal tensions and contradictions. For example, "A number of its missioners are falling out of line to establish splinter or independent groups, apparently in reaction to the absence of a definitive welfare or employment structure for its operatives" (Sanni 2012: 163).

More broadly, the broader debate on Muslim identity and disputes over what is acceptable *Biddah* versus unacceptable *Shrik* have intensified as female Muslim preachers have moved into the forefront as faces of the new Islamic charismatization. From a small but increasingly assertive cohort, Hajia Kafila Hamadu Rufai in Ibadan and the Ilorin-based Alhaja Khadijat Imam Olayiwola easily stand out. Both are legitimate entrepreneurs who, using the power of the media, disrupt seemingly settled norms around gender relations, hierarchy, authority, and Quranic interpretation. In their capacity as preachers and women of economic means relatively independent of male domination, they emerge not only as social role models, but possibly the latest iteration in the historically significant emergence of a "female Ulama" (see Umar 2004).

Prayer as battleground

It is on the subject of prayer that the Muslim battle for influence with Pentecostals – a battle that is simultaneously political, spatial, economic, and sonic – finds its most potent expression and driver. This is not altogether surprising, given the centrality of prayer to the essence and public identity of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Such prayer could be tame, loud, spontaneous or, as I have shown elsewhere (Obadare, forthcoming), even violent. What is beyond disputation is prayer's importance as the centerpiece of the overall Pentecostal devotional system, and in a national context in which the state is well and truly disconnected from ordinary people's lives, prayer has become pivotal to the rearrangement of personal and inter-personal regimes, and to the composition of ordinary people's selfhood.

Several studies have recognized this growing essentiality of prayer to Pentecostal practice and social life in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, David Maxwell's study of the Pentecostal movement in Zimbabwe (2006) takes prayer as an inalienable element in the transformation of Pentecostals into a community of believers, and the means through which "their struggle for betterment is acted out" (2006: 197). Other studies have addressed: prayer as "a means of reconstructing nationalism as a spiritual obligation" (Oha 2005); ritual prayer as a means through which Pentecostalism creates modern consumers (Meyer 1998, Meyer 2008, Lindhardt 2009a); prayer as one of Pentecostalism's many "sensational forms" (Meyer 2010); prayer as a tool of deliverance from "occult forces" (Lindhardt 2009b); prayer as an instrument of democratic mobilization by a resurgent civil society (Obadare 2012); and prayer as a generator of "a sense of individual and collective effervescence which produce[s] a feeling of great potency among otherwise powerless people" (Maxwell 2006: 111).

Within the framework of the competition for political pre-eminence in Nigeria, prayer is a conduit for the channeling of Pentecostal power, and a practice to make Pentecostalism's incursion into the domain of the state legible. We see the

latter on display in the incident of 19 December 2010 where President Goodluck Jonathan, in a display of "conspicuous modesty" (the term is from Daloz 2006), knelt before Pastor Adeboye for prayer.[16] Incidents such as this, and the "state visits" which I referred to earlier, encrust Pentecostalism's *bona fides* as the state (or in fact the statesmen's) religion.

It comes as no surprise therefore that prayer (and prayer grounds, as we saw with the battle for the Lagos–Ibadan Expressway) has become a devotional-cum-political battleground. For Nigerian Muslims, or at least for Yoruba Muslims, prayer is the evidence for Pentecostals' nascent supremacy, and therefore a rallying point for their symbolic counter-offensive. It is the bull's eye of Muslim challenge to Pentecostal dominance, as well as Islam's own felt internal imperative to "charismatize". Being a "strong prayer group" is the first (and it would seem most important) of the eight "distinguishing competencies" listed in the NASFAT prayer book (NASFAT 2006: 2), while Sunday prayer and "observance of Tahajjud (midnight remembrance of Allah and prayers) on the first and third Fridays of every month from 10:00pm till the observance of Subhi prayer" are the first two of its nine "Da'wah activities" (2006: 2).

In regards to prayer, the Muslim strategy seems to be the adoption of devotional forms and repertoires seen as crucial to the gradual ascendance of Pentecostal churches. Evidence of this is seen in at least the following areas:

(1) The growing popularity of the phenomenon of Muslim "all-night prayer sessions," a practice that, until recently, appears to have been the preserve of Pentecostal Christians;
(2) A new dramaturgy of prayer, involving, but not limited to, changes in the fervency, length and time of prayer sessions. Included here is the convoking of "prayer cells" and special "prayer warriors";
(3) What seems like a change in the substance of prayer, including, notably, a radical emphasis on "evil" and the occult, indexed by repeated inveighing against "evil", "demons", witchcraft, and various supernatural forces. This should be understood in the context of Pentecostalism's obsession with "spiritual warfare" and "satanic forces" (for example, see Hackett 1998);
(4) The increasing incorporation of prayer requests and prayer testimonies from worshippers into the structure of devotion;
(5) The emergence of Sunday, instead of Friday, as a day of service, and more precisely, the growing acceptance, within this format, of special weekly prayer sessions. NASFAT currently holds an Asalatu session every Sunday from 8:30am–12:30pm; and
(6) A renewed emphasis on "signs" and "miracles", seen for example in the rash of recent newspaper reports on babies born clutching the Quran.[17]

That said, we should be careful not to over-determine these "adoptions", or to see them as uncomplicated examples of unmediated Muslim borrowing or incorporation of Pentecostal practices. For one, prayer, as I have maintained, is just one window into a history of competition with many aspects and dimensions. Peel has been careful to stress, in this regard, that while both Islam and Christianity have remained competitive, their struggles have unfolded in the looming shadow of a never static Yoruba "tradition" (Peel 1990, 2000, 2008, 2009a). On the whole, even though he recognizes that "because Neo-Pentecostalism has so largely set the agenda within a competitive religious situation, it has found imitators on the Muslim side" (2008: 21), Peel favors a reading of both as "global" traditions now thoroughly striated with Yoruba *Orisa* essence. Taking guidance from Peel means one thing: that debate over primacy among Muslims and Christians is itself pre-empted, if not nullified, by the insertion of both faiths in a Yoruba imaginary which assigns pragmatic criteria to religious value (see Danmole 2008).

Conclusion

In his classic study of "complex society", Abner Cohen surmised that the increased intimacy of apparently exclusive ethnic or religious communities tends to create "primary moral relationships . . . under new values, norms and symbols" (1976: 103). This seems to be true of the relationship between Pentecostals and Muslims in western Nigeria, as I have outlined in the foregoing. In this affair, the most recent iteration of which is apprehended through the lens of transformations in prayer, we see a revitalized Islam forging a response to a surging and increasingly hegemonic Pentecostalism. This revitalization, which ostensibly involves the incorporation of the demonstrably successful aspects of Pentecostal prayer is, nevertheless, not simply mimetic. As I have argued, what we in fact see at play is a dynamic reformulation of Muslim identity, against (1) the "external" pressure exacted by Pentecostalism, and (2) internal prompts which more closely echo a historical cycle of decay and renewal.

In this "spiritual economy" (Rudnyckyj 2010) theological differences are not necessarily dispensed with. Quite the contrary, they are "articulated" (Rudnyckyj 2010: 114), even as both faiths transgress boundaries to appropriate the other's devotional and conversionary strategies. Within this ecology of competitive amity, prayer is both weapon and battleground of an often fierce contestation, the spoils and parameters of which are determined by the exigencies of regional, national, and transnational politics.

Notes

1. Christians dispute this by pointing to what they see as evidence to the contrary. For instance, that (as of January 2015) four out of six incumbent governors of the core Yoruba states are Muslim. These are Babatunde Fashola (Lagos), Ibikunle Amosun (Ogun), Rauf Aregebesola (Osun), and Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi (Oyo). In truth, this is not an easy matter to adjudicate. More significantly, "enumerating" influence in this manner obviates the extent to which, among the elite, class often trumps faith, and

generally, the interpenetration of both religions in every aspect of Yoruba quotidian life. For an analysis of how religious affiliations are negotiated within a larger pan-Yoruba politics, see Adebanwi (2009).

2. The idea of the religious field as a marketplace where worshippers are consumers is brilliantly developed in Ekelund Jr., Hebert, and Tollison (2006).
3. For more on transformations within Islam in Africa, see Brenner (1993) and Clarke and Linden (1984). Compare Umar 2001.
4. I don't have an exact figure (which must run into thousands), but the increasingly exotic names of many of them suggest the need for distinction in a crowded field. See http://forums.ssrc.org/ndsp/2013/08/29/the-new-name-its-a-prayer/
5. The full interview can be found here: http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/15/nigeria.enoch.adeboye/
6. Suffice to say, such claims of instant wealth by ordinary parishioners should be taken with a grain of salt. Instead, the sociologist's gaze must be fixed on pastors' accounts, which in fact are regularly credited, if not necessarily miraculously.
7. http://www.nasfat.org/index.php/about-us#about-us
8. Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters of Nigeria. Motto: Model for the Righteous (established 19 April 1974).
9. One major difference, and a point of frustration for some of my respondents, is the success of some Pentecostal churches in attracting a trans-religious audience. For instance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG's) Redemption Camp is frequently attended by prominent Muslim politicians.
10. http://www.nasfat.org/index.php/about-us#about-us
11. http://www.nasfat.org/index.php/about-us#our-mission
12. http://www.nasfat.org/index.php/about-us/tafsan/tafsan-beverages
13. In the cases of the latter, apart from the obvious political calculations involved, it must be noted that their spouses – Senator Oluremi Tinubu and Dame Abimbola Fashola respectively – are practicing Christians. Another reminder of the intricate meshing of both faiths in Yorubaland.
14. See http://www.nasfatmanchesterbranch.org/
15. Available at http://www.ustream.tv/channel/nasfat-lecture
16. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsBmugKjFkY
17. Reports of two recent "sightings" in Ibadan and Lagos respectively can be found here: http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/19526-baby-born-in-ibadan-clutching-holy-qur-an/19526-baby-born-in-ibadan-clutching-holy-qur-an, and here: http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2013/06/19/another-baby-born-with-quran-in-lagos/ These stories must be regarded in the same manner as Pentecostal testimonies of miraculous deposits in bank accounts, i.e. as highly improbable.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRAYER AND POLITICS

Destroying arguments and captivating thoughts: Spiritual warfare prayer as global praxis

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on contemporary charismatic Christian practices of spiritual warfare and its techniques of warfare prayer. The paradigm of "global spiritual warfare" with its apocalyptic visions, violent language and its obsession with enemies, appears as a particularly polemical instance of Christian supersessionism and expansionism. Drawing on material from Nigeria and the United States, I briefly explore two related axes in order to bring to light the centrality of prayer conceived as a form of political praxis. First, the ways in which charismatic Christianity self-consciously and antagonistically constructs itself as a global force. In this global expansion, prayer as an embodied form of inspired speech is central both to the construction of militant subjects and the occupation of public space. Secondly, since the violence of spiritual warriors is mostly effected through their prayers and testimonies, we are led to question the place of an activist, pragmatist, or even performative model of truth for a political problematics of emancipation and democratization.

KEYWORDS

Pentecostalism; politics; spiritual warfare; political theology

The church holds the balance of power in world affairs . . . Even now, in this present throbbing moment, by means of her prayer power and the extent to which she uses it, the praying church is actually deciding the course of world events. (Billheimer 1982, in Jacobs 2009: 215)

> There is a raging battle going on day and night between two opposing forces. You may not believe it. But whether you believe it or not, you are involved in that battle anyway. This battle is going on between negative and positive powers, evil and good, the real thing and the counterfeit, light and darkness, right and wrong. Even if you do not like to talk about wars and bloodshed or violence, you have no option when it comes to spiritual wars because you are already involved. (Olukoya 2013a)

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Focused on the struggle to realize the "Kingdom of God" through evangelism, conversion and the persisting in faith of the saved, charismatic Christians across the world today know they are locked in an epic end-times battle with the demonic – "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6: 12). Satan and his demons are real, and they constantly intervene in the material natural world to nefarious ends. Holding sway over entire nations or territories, satanic powers seek to thwart the Christian at every turn, especially in their goal to realize the evangelization of the entire world, a necessary condition for the return of the Messiah. The ends of spiritual warfare are a radical transformation of individual and collective existence through the piercing of the phenomenal veil of a material, fallen world with the knowledge acquired by the power and inspiration of Holy Spirit, the charismatic gifts promised by God to the repentant convert and announced by Peter at Pentecost. Thus the "balance of power in world affairs", as well as the everyday lives and ultimate destinies of individuals, peoples, and nations, are suspended upon the struggle in the noumenal realm between God and Satan, light and darkness, good and evil, Truth and the lie. Whether we know it or not, we are all involved in this battle.

While a conception of evangelism, conversion, and Christian life as a form of spiritual warfare (a struggle against the flesh, sin and death; a purification in and through the Spirit and the blood of Christ) is central to a long apostolic tradition, nonetheless, globalized charismatic Christianity, with its now half a billion adherents (and still growing exponentially), has taken it from the margins of contemporary Christian orthodoxy to the mainstream of Christian practice, especially across the Global South. It has also reinvigorated the figure of the militant Christian subject. Prayer is the weapon of this warfare, and thus the central means of redemptive praxis. One does not become a spiritual warrior, or indeed a charismatic or Pentecostal Christian, simply through a decision or ritual act of conversion, rather, charismatic faith is an active, engaged commitment, whose very performance brings about the "new creature" (Marshall 2009). Putting on "the whole armour of God" thus involves a process of de-and re-subjectivation, whose dynamics I have analyzed elsewhere (Marshall 2009; 2010). Today, such subjectivation can take the literal form of the "spiritual boot-camp": the body and soul are intensely worked upon to produce a new militant and empowered Christian subject ready and able to "wage war" (McAllister, this issue).

This paper will focus on the most specific and recent iteration of spiritual warfare and its techniques of warfare prayer and consider some of the various ways in which they should be understood as *polemical*. The question is more complex than an easy pun on the etymology of polemics might imply (*Polemos*, the Greek term for war, was used by Plato in the *Republic* (469) to refer to war against barbarians, or non-Greeks, as distinct from *stasis* – civil war, or internecine strife). First, religion itself

is a *polemical* concept (Anidjar 2009; Marshall 2014a) and Christianity is especially so, insofar as it functions as the origin or archetype of the concept of religion, and dominates the semantic and institutional space in which all other religions today "take place" (Marshall 2014a; Derrida 2001: 74). The paradigm of "global spiritual warfare" with its apocalyptic visions, violent language and its obsession with enemies, appears as a particularly polemical instance of Christian supersessionism and expansionism. I briefly explore two related axes in order to bring to light the centrality of prayer conceived as a form of political praxis.

First, the decisive ways in which charismatic Christianity self-consciously constructs itself in the latter part of the twentieth century via relations of antagonism that we could gloss, just to fool with my Platonic reference, as both *polemos*, antagonism directed to a "barbarian outside", on various scales of time and space, and *stasis*, struggles that would be internal to and indeed participate in the ongoing construction of an evangelical Christian tradition. This image of war has implications not captured by the theological distinction between apologetics and polemics, insofar as this antagonistic construction is not principally occurring at the level of theology, but of embodied, discursive practice. Indeed, although the apostolic texts make several references to spiritual warfare, the classical Greek word *polemos* is never used in this context. Rather, the term deployed by Paul in the famous verse of his second letter to the Corinthians concerning the nature of "the weapons of our warfare" (2 Cor. 10: 4) is *strateias* which he also uses in his exhortation to Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6: 12), a term which translates as (military) campaign, or expedition, and which is used figuratively by Paul to describe the apostolic career. While understanding charismatic spiritual warfare does mean paying attention to its theological content, this theology is less a set of doctrines or dogmas than an ensemble of practices, the political valence of which depends on the ways in which in any given context they become operationalized as a pragmatic, strategic, concerted campaign.

Secondly, a cursory consideration of the ways in which militant forms of evangelical Christian subjectivity are constructed today, or present themselves, as posing a problem for modern democratic politics. Specifically, I'm interested in how the problem is construed in terms of an opposition between reasoned debate, consensus and discourses on toleration, freedoms of conscience and speech on the one hand, and, on the other, an insurrectional speech operating on the register of the performative, the rhetorical, or the propagandistic, and a politics of agonism, antagonism, intolerance or even violence. In this opposition, the relationship between language and truth is crucial, not least since the violence of spiritual warriors is mostly effected through their prayers and testimonies. It leads us to ask the question of the place of an activist, pragmatist, or even performative model of truth for a political problematics of emancipation as well as a deeper democratization.

Developing an overview of the place of spiritual warfare and warfare prayer in the practices and piety of some half a billion people is a task I obviously cannot

attempt here. Indeed, one of the most fascinating aspects of the globalization of charismatic Christianity today, but the most difficult to conceptualize, track and analyze, are the concrete, material ways in which specific discourses and practices emerge at the interface of the local and global. As a redemptive faith, charismatic Christianity entails a concerted local engagement with a fundamentally global, transcendent orientation. The latter is figured theologically through the idea of a return to an apostolic origin, a return whose soteriological thrust is realized through a polemical engagement with local cultural forms, idioms and histories that stages a *break* with them, rather than through a process of translation or acculturation, thus creating "an uprooted local culture engaged in spiritual warfare with its own roots" (Casanova 2001: 437). Specifically, "spiritual warfare", directed against forms of "pre-modern" local culture or "postmodern" cultural decadence, as well as competing faiths or ideologies – mission-based Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, communism, secularism – deliberately undermines the extant organizing divisions or distinctions of social life according to the Pauline model "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free" (Gal. 3: 28). In particular, as I have argued previously, the charismatic deployment of language as *performative* stages conversion as that which deactivates or suspends the naturalized or juridical properties that define or categorize the believer. The transcendence of the limits of situated existence is also materially constructed through the self-conscious cultivation and rhetorical projection of an ever-expanding spatial and temporal presence, connecting believers across virtual networks of shared aspirations and concerted actions (see Coleman 2000; 2006). What is most striking in this construction is the central role of embodied forms of inspired speech – tongues, prayer, praise, prophecy – both in the construction of militant subjects and the occupation of public space.

Militant machine gun prayer

> Violent prayer coupled with violent faith gives you uncommon breakthroughs . . . It is adamant prayer; stubborn prayer; enough-is-enough prayer; unapologetic prayer, that is, prayers you pray without regret; bold prayer, that is, fearless with courage to demand a response; unwavering prayer; steadfast prayer. It has just one goal: ELIMINATION OF THE ENEMY. (Olukoya 2013a)

Dr. Daniel Olukoya is a Nigerian pastor and the General Overseer of the Mountain of Fires and Miracles Ministry (MFMM), founded in 1994.[1] MFMM characterizes itself on its website as a "do-it-yourself gospel ministry where your hands are trained to wage war and your fingers to fight". It also claims (falsely) that its headquarters, located on the expressway between Nigeria's southwestern cities of Lagos and Ibadan, is the "largest single Christian congregation in Africa" "with attendance of over 100,000" [or 200,000, depending on which website you're on] in single meetings.[2] Olukoya's ministry specializes in "deliverance" from demonic oppression, and those attending MFMM's prayer headquarters often spend several

days, or even weeks at the site, subjecting themselves to exhausting three-day sessions of fasting, all night prayer vigils, and extremely intense sessions of deliverance prayers full of violent, aggressive language. Believers are exhorted to "dip their fingers in the blood of Christ" and "poke out the eyes of their enemies" and violent words like "die", "break", "destroy" and "fire" are repeated like bullets fired in rapid succession. It is literally "machine-gun prayer" that is "heaven bombarding" that gives "God no alternative but to answer". It is intensely physical, and often induces violent shaking, vomiting, writhing on the ground or complete loss of consciousness (see Butticci 2013; Ugwueye & Uzuegbunam 2013). The "prayer points" presented at MFMM's "Power Must Change Hands" service held in London UK on 30 June 2013, called for the death and destruction of "oppressors", "flying wickedness", "satanic armed robbers flying in the heavenlies", "power bases of wickedness in my family" and anybody "plotting against my destiny". In his *101 Weapons of Spiritual Warfare* (2013b), Olukoya refers to the "Angel of Death" as a "powerful weapon of deliverance". Citing 2 Kings 19: 35,[3] he argues that death is one of God's "diverse weapons": "Beloved, some of these weapons are fearful and intimidating. There are seasons when God reveals His veracious power. God has the capacity to deal with the enemy mercilessly, decisively, and in a tragic manner. The Bible declares that the Lord killeth, in other words, God is a killer. Deut. 32: 39". Through their warfare prayers, believers can call upon God's messengers, the "angels of death" to deal with their enemies. One of the most powerful weapons, which nonetheless "cannot be understood or used by amateur students in the field of spiritual warfare," is the "Mystery of Substitution": a "weapon" that "will turn the table against your enemies and make them die in your place" (Olukoya 2013b: n.p.).

MFMM has become surprisingly successful in the space of the past decade, spreading across Africa, Europe and Asia, a success I attribute principally to this aggressive style of prayer warfare. Although deliverance ministries and deliverance practices are important in Nigerian Pentecostalism, MFMM's obsessive focus on evil spiritual forces, spiritual war, death and destruction, distinguishes it from the most successful Nigerian ministries, most of whom have a more positive, prosperity-oriented message. The omnipresence of evil also works to undermine some of the central claims of both classic Pentecostalism with its focus on holiness (concerted self-abnegation, control of bodily desires, sexuality, humility) as a means of accessing grace, as well as the so-called "neo-Pentecostal" prosperity or faith doctrine, with its promise of worldly healing and prosperity through inspired faith. For Olukoya, divine gifts such as healing or prosperity, are constantly at risk of being lost not only because of a lack in the believer (a faith that is too weak, a refusal to fully renounce sin) but principally because of the activities of satanic "conspirators" and "enemies" who seek the ruin and destruction of the believer at every turn. How can a Christian know if they need deliverance? (non-Christians don't need to ask). If you have any "blockage" or frustration in your life that prevents you from realizing your "full potentials" – health, wealth, children, a successful professional and family life – then you need it, which thus potentially includes around ninety per cent of the country's population.

However extreme and even paranoid Olukoya's deliverance ministry may seem, even to many Nigerian Pentecostals, nonetheless, many of the basic assumptions about the nature of the spiritual warfare, the reality of demonic forces, and the power of a Holy Spirit inspired prayer to defeat them are shared by charismatics throughout the world. In Nigeria, Pastor Tony Rapu, an urbane medical doctor who was once RCCG leader Adeboye's "favoured son", confirms the reality of the struggle in the spiritual realm, even as he denounces Olukoya and others' resort to imprecatory prayer. Speaking as he does to an upper-middle class, educated Nigerian audience who appear to require convincing that secular and scientific paradigms are a veil preventing the believer from seeing the Real of the spiritual world, and with the exception of references to Nigerian institutions, his words could easily have been lifted straight from a book by one of the American proponents of "strategic level spiritual warfare" such Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs or Chuck Pierce:

> Often times, our secular framework of thought prevents us from receiving truth as clearly revealed in scripture. Many naïve and uninformed Christians may dismiss the phenomena of angels and other spiritual entities as imaginary because they may not fit well into secular and scientific paradigms . . . It is thus important to understand that the geopolitical and cultural systems of a nation consist of more than the people, the structures and institutions. There is an attempt by these princes or ruling spirits over nations to exert a negative influence over schools, churches, companies and organizations. We are presently caught in a conflict of forces. The failure to recognize this territorial dimension of the spiritual realm is making many Christians ineffective in fulfilling their purpose. Every sub structure of human society has a spiritual dimension seeking to control and influence the individuals, its economic institutions and the political order. Behind the systems of this country, behind NPA, NEPA, the Nigerian Police Force and the institutions of politics is a raging war! (Rapu 2002)

The specific references to "territorial spirits" in preaching and writing by Rapu, Olukoya, and many other prominent Nigerian pastors in the early 1990s, along with specific claims about the means of perceiving and dealing with them reveal if not a direct reliance on, at least a familiarity with, a new "doctrine" of spiritual warfare emerging principally within a small group of American evangelicals in the 1980s. The complex processes of globalization at work in the elaboration and circulation of this fairly heterodox interpretation of apostolic spiritual warfare provides a fascinating insight into the dynamic and almost haphazard way in which charismatic Christianity grows and spreads. Rather than a specific doctrine or doctrines, one finds a *bricolage*, a living, moving corpus of ideas, scriptural interpretations, images, discourses and techniques developed and circulating across a range of personal, institutional and virtual networks and engendering an elastic, undisciplined and pragmatic processes of inspired creations, borrowings, combinations and adaptations.

Spiritual warfare as global mission

Intimately associated with the project of global evangelism, developed using the "anthropological" methods of the evangelical Church Growth movement of the 1950s, spiritual warfare as a distinct doctrinal paradigm and evangelical technique was articulated as the basis of a new missiology from the late 1970s by American evangelicals reflecting on their mission experiences amongst peoples of the global south. Popularized by Frank Perretti's *This Present Darkness* in 1989 (3.5 million copies sold), its central premises and arguments were elaborated between the late 1980s and the turn of the millennium. First developed by evangelicals C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber (founder of the charismatic Vineyard Movement), who tested their ideas in popular (and controversial) course taught on "Signs and Wonders" at Fuller's School of Missions between 1982–1985 (Wagner 1987), their ideas were elaborated and applied over the following twenty years by a core group including George Otis, Charles Kraft, Ted Haggard, the Argentinian evangelicals Eduardo Silvoso, Luis Bush, and evangelical initiatives such as Youth With A Mission, and the AD2000 movement. These were some of the central movers behind the charismatic "third wave" that crossed the denomination boundaries and bitter divisions between Pentecostalism and mainstream evangelicalism (Holvast 2009; Wagner 1988; Wimber 1984).

For Wagner and his co-travellers, the confessed primary object was a more effective evangelical strategy, which took seriously the knowledge and insights of the "cosmologies" of the local peoples. Their approach was developed from the Church Growth movement, and its anthropologically inspired concept of "unreached people's groups" which recommended missionaries acquire a deep cultural knowledge of such "peoples" and their "cosmologies" so as to better "sow the Word" and "reap the harvest". No doubt these missionary evangelicals were also influenced by the growing success of Pentecostal Christianity, with its tongues, signs and wonders and practices of deliverance from evil spirits in Latin America, Africa and Asia – witnessed directly by Wagner, for example, during his time as a missionary in Bolivia during the 1970s (Wagner 1986). While the ontological and epistemological premises of spiritual warfare and deliverance appeared relatively novel for mainstream American Evangelicals, they had been central to the Pentecostal tradition from its inception, and had found various expressions not only in early twentieth century American Pentecostalism, Pentecostal missions to Africa and elsewhere, but also in a range of indigenous Christian prophetic and millenarian movements in colonial Africa in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Olukoya has often called Joseph Babalola, the founder of the indigenous Nigerian Aladura ("the ones who pray" in Yoruba) movement that started in the late 1910s the most powerful spiritual warrior that Nigeria has ever had (see Peel 1969; 2000; Fields 1985; Butticci 2013).

While explicitly refusing to be identified as Pentecostals, nonetheless, Wagner, Silvoso, Wimber and others borrowed freely from the tradition in developing

their demonology and their focus on conversion as a "power encounter" with the Holy Spirit. Unconcerned with academic theological debates, or any systematic justification of their scriptural hermeneutics, cobbling scripture together with insights and methods from the social sciences, "testing" new ideas and methods and evaluating them principally in terms of their "results", they claimed that spiritual warfare and warfare prayer was not so much a theological doctrine as an evolving, popular, pragmatic "experiential theology" in which warfare prayer was a kind of *techne,* a means conceived and adapted in ongoing ways to their new "revelations" concerning the nature of the evangelical struggle in the "end-times" (Holvast 2009; Kraft 1989; 1994; Wagner, 1991; 2009[1992]; 1996; Otis 1993).

The appeal to taking local knowledge seriously, referring in their accounts to shamanic knowledge, Native American spiritual lore, and African testimonies of witchcraft, was not merely a form of pragmatic missionary parochialism. Rather, it can be seen as a re-articulation of the longstanding anti-modernism of premillennial fundamentalists of the 1920s and 1930s (Sutton 2014), with a new global twist. Both Pentecostalism and "savage philosophy" (Bracken 2007) were seen as retaining what America and Europe had supposedly sacrificed on the altar of a decadent Enlightenment philosophy and disenchanted liberal humanism: the reality of the spiritual realm and the absolutely nefarious designs of the demonic spirits inhabiting it, against which no reason or science could hope to prevail. Wagner and others insisted that Western Christendom in general, and mainstream American evangelicals in particular, had been misled by the blinders of Enlightenment reason and scientific naturalism, and hence failed to see the reality of the spiritual realm and its constant interaction with the material world, insisting that a radical "cosmological" shift was required in order for Western Christians to see and engage with the spiritual Real, an engagement upon which not only their salvation, but that of all creation, depended.

The doctrines and techniques systematically developed by Wagner and his partners were disseminated from multiple sites in a diffused fashion through the movements of individuals and networks from the late 1980s on. Spiritual warfare was an important theme in the second global congress of the powerful, ecumenical global organization on evangelical missions inaugurated by Billy Graham in 1974, The Lausanne Movement, in Manila in 1989, and was explicitly included in its Manila Manifesto, which stated: "All evangelism involves spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, in which only spiritual weapons can prevail, especially the Word and the Spirit, with prayer" (Lausanne 1989). In 1993, the movement published an official "Statement on Spiritual Warfare" based on discussions and consultations by an official working group they had convened on the question, the aim of which appeared to a warning against the possible misuses or negative consequences of a focus on demonic spirits. Yet their account of the discussions reiterates the civilizational logic of missionary work, while subverting the civilizing mission's debt to European modernism and Enlightenment. It also

crucially underscores a new, albeit ambivalent role and influence for evangelicals from the global south.

Besides their almost obsessive focus on demonic spiritual entities and the need to "take the war to Satan", the most controversial ideas were expressed in spiritual warriors' demonology, which identified three levels, scales and hierarchies of demonic activity and control which thus called for different levels and techniques of warfare prayer. The lowest level of spiritual warfare was "ground level", directed against forms of personal sin or affliction (the "evil spirit" of sickness, poverty, masturbation, disobedience, greed etc.). The next was "occult level", whose targets included New Age spirituality, Wicca, or any historical or contemporary practices, people, even landmarks or symbols associated with "paganism" or "idolatry", and other "false" spiritual or religious traditions. Finally, the most important, "cosmic level", or as it later came to be known, "strategic level" spiritual warfare, whose purpose was to "to bind and bring down spiritual principalities and powers that rule over governments" (Wagner 1996: 21–21; see also 1993; 2012; Otis 1993; Jacobs 2009 [1993]).

For many American evangelicals and even Pentecostals, the spiritual warriors had gone too far: accused of being theologically heterodox and scripturally ungrounded, the doctrine was seen as leading to an unhealthy and paranoid obsession with demonic enemies, absolving the individual of personal responsibility for sin, and most egregiously, elevating believers to an almost God-like stature not only by according them the power to take the war to the demons, but in their claims that Christian prayers (or their lack) would have a determinate role in the outcome of the end-times cosmological battle between God and Satan (see Holvast 2009: 231–38). Even as it was increasingly questioned, the evangelical necessity and efficacy of warfare prayer was reinforced by voices from the global south, leading the Lausanne Movement, despite its misgivings, to reluctantly endorse their most controversial technique, spiritual mapping, in a statement in 2004: "Spiritual mapping . . . involves . . . superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world . . . [It] is a means by which we can see what is beneath the surface of the material world; but it is not magic" (Lausanne 2004). The hierarchical territorialization of demonic spirits is best exemplified in the technique of spiritual mapping, and called for an epistemological shift in the ways believers should understand the ethico-political and spiritual valence of any physical entity, collectivity or space; from individual persons or objects, landmarks, neighourhoods, towns and cities, to entire cultural areas, nations and geo-political regions. It also led to the development of specific "techniques" for tackling the new reality, which included archival work and anthropological interviews as forms of "research" into local histories and cosmologies, in order to identify the demonic spirits holding sway over the area; walking the city with teams of "prayer warriors" able to deploy the charismatic "gift of discernment" (a sort of spiritual "inner eye" that can detect demonic presences); identifying and gridding "demonic landmarks" and "lay lines"; researching

and identifying the proper names of demonic spirits in order to more effectively bind them, deploying juridical tropes of "legal" or "illegal" "rights of occupancy".

More importantly, it marked a shift in the conception of the ends of evangelism; no longer solely a matter of individual redemption, conversion came to be seen as the principal means for the ethical, social, and political transformation of entire societies. It was no longer enough to simply plant churches and fill them with converted and "rapture ready" souls: evangelism had to effect measurable societal transformation and realize the Kingdom now. The Manila Manifesto of 1989 not only recognized spiritual warfare, it also emphatically insisted on the need for a social gospel, dedicating an entire section to the "The Gospel and Social Responsibility" and a call to action against structural inequality, poverty, corruption and human rights abuses (Lausanne 1989). These dual emphases found their expression in the concept of the 10/40 window, coined in 1990 by Argentinian Luis Bush (a partner of Wagner and International Director of the AD2000 movement), which claimed to be based on the "observation" that the greatest number of "unreached people's groups" correlated with the "greatest degree of human suffering", in a rectangular window between the tenth and fortieth latitudes, comprising Sahelian and North Africa, the Middle East and Asia: All territories under the sway of "demonic powers" ("paganisms" and "animisms" past and present) and satanic "false religions" (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism). In order to evangelize these areas, "strategic level" warfare prayer was required to bind the satanic forces and strongholds in order to free these spaces for the penetration and reception of the gospel (see Bush and Pegues 1999; Otis and Brockman 1995).

Dominionism, restorationism and the reverse mission

The indictment of American evangelicals' failure to "see" and engage with the spiritual real enabled the spiritual warriors to tie this ignorance to the current state of American cultural decadence, political weakness and moral perdition, thus tapping into a powerful, 150 year-old tradition of apocalypticism and militarism in popular American piety. For the new spiritual warriors, urgent repentance and militant spiritual revival through the power of the Holy Spirit offered the only salvation for an America facing imminent moral, economic and political catastrophe (Sutton 2014; Frykholm 2004). The technique of warfare prayer thus became a central means of urgently redeeming a fallen nation and especially reviving a failing American Manifest Destiny and imperial force, through a muscular engagement with the nation's "enemies". This implicit, or indeed explicit, imperialist rhetoric had paradoxical effects. In some ways, Wagner and his co-travellers were amongst the first "reverse missionaries", providing, perhaps unwittingly, additional resources for a southern Christianity impatient to reject its subaltern global position as a mission field rather than a leader of missions (Escobar 2003; Benson and Heltzel 2008). In the growing paradigm of "reverse mission", subaltern southerners, from a position of spiritual strength deriving from their strong

revivalist faith and advanced knowledge of the demonic, would reintroduce a reinvigorated "good news" to a fallen West.

Many Nigerians were quick to develop the theme of such "spiritual election". In his booklet, *Satanic Diversion of the Black Race*, Olukoya (1998) responds to a question he claims was posed to him following his conversion in the mid-1970s – "why are you so interested in something the white man brought and he is no longer interested in, that is, Christianity?" – by defining Christianity not as an imperial imposition, but as an originally African religion subsequently abandoned for idolatry, a universal sin as old as the world and the Prince who dominates it. The "strange stories" told about the black man – a long list of statistics and facts about the current poverty, corruption, violence and abjection of Africans – are countered by a tendentious Afro-centric reading of prophetic scriptures in the Old Testament, and references to the great North African figures of early Christianity. Africa's prophetic and central role in the history of Christianity thus explains the "Satanic rage" against the black man: "the enemy does not oppose anything that does not pose a challenge to his Kingdom. You do not waste your buckets on a corpse". This "rage" not only accounts for past and current African abjection, but also Africa's divinely appointed role in the "end-time harvest of souls" and the consummation of a "cycle of the spread of Christianity" which originates in Asia and Africa, then spreads to Europe, America and the rest of the world, coming full-circle in these "last days" when "Africans and Asians will take the gospel to Europe". Africa represents "the spiritual eyes of the nations", whom "the Almighty has always relied on in times of crisis", such that "wherever God wants to start a new move, a black man has come along" (Olukoya 1998: n.p.). For Olukoya then, it is "no wonder there is a wicked satanic rage to stop the black man from fulfilling his divine purpose and destiny". Nigerian pastors have consistently exploited the spirit behind this sort of claim for their own national and continental version of Manifest Destiny (not to mention the increased visibility and fortunes of their specific ministries), redeeming a history of abjection and exclusion through a historically unprecedented mission as the vanguard of a redeemed humanity. Turn Africa on its side and "Africa is like a gun that God will use to deal with His enemies, and Nigeria is located in the position of the trigger" (Kalu 2010: 12; Wariboko 2015). Reversing a common trope of a divine generational curse as the source of African abjection (the famous Hamitic thesis expounded by missionaries, and still repeated by many Pentecostals today), Olukoya nonetheless situates the means by which this "satanic rage" has created its effects of abjection, violence and destruction in the continent: "idolatry" and "sin", "demon worship", "sacrifices to dark powers", "the spirit of polygamy", "sexual perversion", "dead churches", "polluted land" (territorial or ancestral curses) and "foundational demonic possession" transmitted in the womb or during traditional naming ceremonies. After expounding on these various demonic strongholds that "satanically divert" the black man from his divine destiny, Olukoya asks "WHAT DO WE DO NOW?" His answer is simple: "You are going to pray".

The new "American nightmare"

Nearly a decade ago, the political theorist Wendy Brown wrote about the contemporary constellation of neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, and right-wing religious radicalism that constitute the "American Nightmare" of a dangerous de-democratization (Brown 2006) Christian "fundamentalists", often typified by Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series, have been indexed for their political dangers by other political theorists, such as Connolly (2008), Zizek (2010) and Habermas (2008). Patent in these engagements by prominent political theorists is a singular lack of understanding of, or even interest in, the ongoing evolution and diversity of views and practices that are glossed as "fundamentalist" or evangelical. While it's worth considering how these various analyses founder on this lack of understanding or attention, here I will simply note that this attention in the past decade or so responds to the clear sense that militant evangelical Christianity has become, after playing a founding and decisive role in the construction of American democracy from the Puritan founders, to the abolitionist movement and the struggle for civil rights, a clear and present danger to its future (Hedges 2007). Brown's analysis retains my interest insofar as she locates the de-democratizing force of evangelical Christianity principally in its declarative model of truth and a "combination of belief, submission, and fealty" to this truth (Brown 2006: 708).

As recent studies underscore, American evangelicalism has always been theologically, sociologically and politically diverse (Worthen 2014; Miller 2014); a complex discursive community that "flourishes on difference, engagement, tension, conflict and threat" (Smith 1998: 121; 2000). Far from the caricature of anti-modernist irrationality, evangelicals are revealed in Worthen's compelling study as "apostles of reason". Nonetheless, a dominant intellectual trend in response to the political problem of religious radicalism takes the form of calls for an "Enlightenment reloaded" (Toscano 2010: xviii) that would "restore sanity to our politics" (Heath 2014). These calls for a return to "reason" refer not so much to the power of an intransigent, militant, right-wing Biblical moralism; indeed, on key issues such as marriage equality, the culture warriors appear to be losing. Nor does the demand "for sanity" focus on the ways in which the Christian Right has been incredibly successful in organizing and mobilizing, developing powerful networks and an overwhelming media presence, and shaping policies across a huge range of mainstream institutions from school boards to state legislatures to Walmart (Worthen 2014: 260). Rather, this concern focuses on their ontological assumptions, epistemologies and cognitive modes, insofar as they not only appear utterly impervious to reason or science, but destroy the democratic foundations of reasoned deliberation (Brown 2006). This psychopathologization of charismatic or inspired religious speech has a long pedigree, and finds its corollary in the culturalization of "fanaticism" as a form of infantile, pre-modern or barbaric unreason.

Worthen shows how the crisis of evangelical authority has divided the evangelical landscape, yet does not discuss the connections between some of the most

strident twenty-first century evangelical voices on the Republican Tea-Party far-right and the charismatic turn centered on the new formulation of spiritual warfare and associated with new forms of restorationism and dominionism as expressed in Wagner's New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) (see Wagner 2002; 2007). Whatever their relationship to the specific doctrines and techniques proposed by Wagner and the "third wave", the idiom of spiritual warfare dominates the public declarations of a whole range of religious, but also political leaders. A brief visit to Right Wing Watch provides numerous examples of a vitriolic, homophobic, Islamophobic, racist and paranoid religious right in apocalyptic rhetorical overdrive. For many on this extremely vocal and activist fringe, Obama is "a foreigner", "a Muslim", a "Nazi", "an enemy", "less than human", even "the anti-Christ", and their extensive media networks are saturated with a constant flood of paranoid fantasies: a Muslim Brotherhood take-over, a fascist homosexual plot to destroy marriage and the family, a concerted persecution of a beleagured Christian minority through the war on Christmas, Obamacare, and secret plots to detain Christians in FEMA camps with a view to their extermination. There has also been an increasingly publicized use of imprecatory prayers against Obama by range of religious leaders and elected officials, prayers whose political force is not entirely captured by analyses of hate-speech that do not fully account for the politically performative force of language: words can kill.

When saying becomes a doing and a making

In her evaluation of the anti-democratic effects of a "fundamentalist Christianity" on an American public discourse, where truth based on "facts" has given way to what Steven Colbert wittily calls right-wing "truthiness", Brown (2006) flags its "declarative and revelatory model of truth" whose rhetorical force inheres not in reasoned argumentation, but the performative power of speech. "God said, let there be light" is exemplary of an "original recognition that a saying can be a doing and a making, that an utterance can bring its truth into being and thus literally make and re-make reality. Brown claims that evangelical truth as experienced in "the personal moment of conversion" corresponds with a dominant neo-conservative modality, "truth from the gut"; both forms of inner conviction and certainty that share "a common indifference and imperviousness to interrogation, deliberation, and facts" (2006: 707–8). Her discussion of the politically problematic character of evangelical modes of truth, and the power of performative speech could be seen as especially pertinent to charismatic spirituality, and practices of spiritual warfare and warfare prayer in particular, as inspired speech used to "destroy arguments" and "capture thoughts".

> "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war in the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. (2 Cor. 10: 3–6)

Paul's war is evangelical, spreading the good news in the face of persecution and unbelief, destroying the "strongholds" of the devil, presented as "arguments" (*logismous*, or reasonings), affects ("proud obstacles") and thoughts, in short, the hubristic claim to the authority or self-sufficiency of human reason or any knowledge that would not be "of God". This is what Nigerian pastor Adeboye calls the "traditions of men" or Wagner and Olukoya identify as false gods and satanic idols. Spiritual warfare is thus waged through language, through the performative and rhetorical force of speech (which are not identical, but which both refer to an order of truth beyond the order of the predicative or constative). This is particularly significant when we consider the dominant mode through which the Holy Spirit empowers the believer and charges her prayers with their life-transforming, world-changing force: the model of Pentecost. The story is well known: the descent of the Holy Spirit signaled by "cloven tongues as of fire" above each apostle in-filled by the Spirit and thereby giving utterance in "other tongues", the bewilderment and marvel of the crowd "out of every nation under heaven". This scene can be interpreted as a supersessionist inflection of the Old Testament figure of sovereignty: the relation between logos and divine power is no longer that of the sovereign command that descends in a single strike, but rather that of the immanent division and dissemination of a spectral divinity through language and diaspora: a tongue of fire on every head, prophecies in the mouths of every man and woman, free and slave (Acts 2: 4–8; Norton 2011; Marshall 2010).

Nimi Wariboko, a brilliant Nigerian theologian, philosopher and Pentecostal pastor, presents Nigerian Pentecostal political theology as a "grace-filled warfare": a praxis of radical individual and societal transformation enacted "through a special mode and mood of prayers, fasting, speaking in tongues, confession of sin, spiritual mapping, deliverance, and prophetic utterances calculated to initiate the new, usher in freedom and promote human flourishing" (Wariboko 2015: 158). He contextualizes warfare prayer in Nigeria, as does Olukoya, albeit in very different terms, as a response to the struggle for life under a postcolonial necropolitics, a battle to emerge from under the crushing weight of poverty and blackness, which thus leads to an "[u]nusually intense quest for power via conversion and salvation in which the stakes are so high that they are approached with the dedication of war; hence, the constant language and practices of spiritual warfare" (2015: 35). I'm particularly compelled by his argument that the Acts 2 event inaugurates spirituality as an *act*, a practical intervention into the order of being, in the ways it connects being and language; God revealing himself to the world, and language struggling to order this appearance of unsayable presence (2015: 49).

As I have argued elsewhere, the charismatic model of truth as performative and veridictive, coupled with a democratic access to the grace that reveals it, constantly deconstructs from within any attempt to institutionalize any given version of it, any fixed or dogmatic sense, and undoes the idea that any saint can monopolize saintliness or anointing (Marshall 2009; 2014b). My study of charismatic political theology suggests Brown gets the problem wrong on at least two counts:

The first is the implication that one can draw a clear line between a declarative, rhetorical, performative model of truth, and a fact-based, or at least verifiable model of reasoned truth. Both Derrida and Arendt show how such a distinction is especially untenable for the political realm (Derrida 2003; Arendt 2002 [1967]). Public speech in general, even the most reasonable and reasoned, always performs in a rhetorical register. Secondly, for Brown, religious "truth" does away not only with deliberative autonomy, but deliberation itself, insofar as religious belonging valorizes submission to religious truth and "to the authority that speaks or wields it", a relationship of submission to God and community she tellingly calls "fealty" (Brown 2006: 708). With the choice of fealty, rather than fidelity, the polemical, rhetorical, partisan thrust of her own position comes to the fore: evangelicals don't constitute a church, and there is no Evangelical or charismatic Pope! It is rather the evangelical *inability* to impose a single truth, or to command full obedience and submission that is the problem: the post-foundational uncertainty at the heart of its political theology that saves charismatic spirituality from the theocratic risk is also what makes it so dangerous. Nothing can ever guarantee that one has correctly "discerned the spirits": as one Nigerian believer told me, "people think they are speaking to God in the air, but they are really speaking to another power". The believer must constantly struggle with doubt and uncertainty that no institutional authority or scriptural hermeneutics can resolve. Wariboko recognizes that this instability in identity means "there is always the difficulty of distinguishing enemies from friends" (Wariboko 2015: 120). The exigencies of a Christian idea of retributive justice anchored in the body give discernment its urgent, overdetermined character. The bodily suffering involved in deliverance as observed in MFMM follows a logic in which "the punishment of the visible cleanses the invisible, settles the debts that enabled Satan to enter the body. In all this it is not always clear whether the minister is enjoying . . . freely venting his power over another subjugated body (often female) or whether the devil is getting his pound of flesh". No wonder then, that the "believer endeavors to acquire as much power as possible to prevent her falling into the rank of debtors". Wariboko argues that this "accountant's view of cosmic justice explains the friend/enemy dichotomy of Nigerian Pentecostals' idea of the political" and the need for constant vigilance in order to discern enemies, "who are conspiring to push believers into violation or demanding payments for previous (ancestral) offences" (2015: 121).

Putting feet to the prayer: Dominion over everything?

This omni-present uncertainty gives the question of the enemy an extraordinary political valence, and the free gift of God's anointing acquires a huge premium, such that the search for divine power gives rise to an economy of distinction and election. We can illustrate the dangerous ways in which the question of anointing and authority can be conscripted into a new understanding of "apostolic election" at the heart of the dominionist "reformation" based on "kingdom theology"

that seeks to realize the Kingdom on earth. This is articulated clearly by Wagner in a 2012 article in *Charisma* magazine, which exhorts taking "dominion over everything".

> Now I take the Great Commission more literally when it tells us not to make as many individual disciples as we can but to disciple whole social groups – such as entire nations. This is kingdom theology . . . It still includes healing the sick, casting out demons, saving souls, multiplying churches and feeding the hungry, but it goes far beyond these activities. It is putting feet to the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray: "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" . . . The battle will be ferocious, and we will suffer some casualties along the way. However, we will continue to push Satan back and disciple whole nations. (Rev. 11: 15)

Wagner may have forgotten Jesus' claim that "my kingdom is not of this world", but he has no doubt about who the "we" is: an elite group of apostles who are training disciples around the world to take on a new strategy that dominionist Lance Wallnau explains in his book *The 7 Mountain Mandate*. The "7 mountain mandate" is a concerted and coordinated campaign of dedicated, extensively networked (and increasingly well-connected) apostolic individuals striving for excellence and ascendency in the seven key areas of social life: business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion" (Wallnau 2009: see also Enlow 2009; Wallnau and Johnson 2013). This loose group of new dominionist/reconstructionist leaders has developed loose associations and relays within right-wing Tea Party populism and Christian activism. "The Response" – a massive prayer rally to launch the presidential campaigns of Governors Rick Perry in 2012, and now Bobby Jindal in January 2015, is organized and funded by many of the leaders and activists of the charismatic wing: Alice Patterson, Doug Stringer, and Jim Garlow, who headed the campaign for the anti-marriage equality Proposition Eight in California, Samuel Rodriguez of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference as well as Wagner and other apostles or prophets. This year's Response featured prophetess Cindy Jacobs, one of the front-line figures of territorial spiritual and strategic level warfare prayer. Jindal himself, a Rhodes' scholar and a Catholic, published in 1994 in the *New Oxford Review* an account of a friend's deliverance entitled "Beating a Demon: Physical Dimensions of Spiritual Warfare" (Jindal 1994). "The Awakening" is a similar movement to the Response, and at this year's conference speakers included many GOP hopefuls, and the themes focused on "spiritual warfare" against the demonic manifestations of "militant Islam", "militant homofascism" and progressives who would establish a "secular humanist caliphate". (Blue, 2015). A series of other figures and groups indexed for hate-speech by the Southern Poverty Legal Centre also embrace the tenets of the spiritual warfare paradigm. Many of these individuals, along with think-tanks and groups like Tony Perkin's Family Research Council which organizes the "Value Voters Summit" in D.C. every year – a nightmarish who's who of right-wing religious bigotry, paranoid hatred and Tea Party extremism – appear to have joined forces with many of the old-guard of the evangelical right as well as

the oligarchs, such as the Koch brothers, and a crowd of other free-marketeering libertarians, mobilizing simply astonishing amounts of capital (see Tabachnick, Wilson, and Clarkson 2010): an alliance several degrees unholier than the nightmare vision Brown referred to less than a decade ago.

And yet, there are other apostles and powerful evangelical leaders in Africa and Latin America who are reading the social manifesto of Lausanne and spiritual warfare in a different light. Activist charismatics especially in Latin America, such as Samuel Escobar, are elaborating a new charismatic "theology of liberation" taking up the cause of migrants' rights, denouncing a new American imperialism, and generally mixing up all the coordinates of the divides we take for granted between leftist activism, neo-liberal capitalism and conservative Biblical moralism and evangelicalism. The afterword of a new book taking up this Southern perspective, *Evangelicals and Empire*, was written by no less than Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. (Benson & Heltzel 2008) In Nigeria, the confirmed "apostle", Pastor Tunde Bakare ran in the April 2011 federal election as the Vice Presidential candidate with the (now newly-elected) Muslim strongman Muhammadu Buhari. He was also the Convener of the "Save Nigeria Group", a broad-based civil coalition of pro-democracy groups set up to encourage popular political mobilization prior to the 2011 elections, and he spearheaded the Occupy Nigeria Movement in early January 2012, which organized successful demonstrations against the removal of the oil subsidy. Bakare took the tribune with a collection of left-wing labor leaders and leading intellectuals such as Nobelist Wole Soyinka and Niyi Osundare (see Osundare 2012). His use of the pulpit to rail against the corruption of Goodluck's government earned him a visit from the State Security Services, who warned him to "tone it down" ("SSS" 2012). He has nonetheless repeated the offence regularly over the past three years, whilst being a violent critic of the current Nigerian Pentecostal "Church", its miracle mania, prosperity focus, empire-building and pastoral personality cults (Marshall 2014b).

Spiritual warfare is theologically ambivalent. On the one hand, as Wariboko argues, spiritual warfare means "cutting the chains of captivity" of given social existence, "returning the light of Being" to the poor on the edge of nonexistence, and sustaining an alternative world of freedom (2011: 159). There is no doubt that a militant charismatic faith has a great power of mobilization and transformation, and even when it fails to materialize the dreamed-of miracles (as it so often does), living in hope is better than living in despair. But, and for me this is the decisive issue, prayer as "the weapon of our warfare" also means the vicious imprecations of prayer warriors "hauling fire bombs to targets"; a prayer language that "drip with blood and violence" (Wariboko 2015: 121) Even the most reflective, responsible and deeply ethical voices within Pentecostal or charismatic Christianity today – such as Wariboko, or Amos Yong (Yong 2003), another brilliant theologian whose theology of the Holy Spirit seeks an active embrace of and respect for all faiths and a clear refusal of the Manichean distinction between friend and enemy so

patent in spiritual warfare talk – ultimately come up against a limit. Charismatic truth is only truth because of its performative, engaged, committed and *partisan* position, as a decision for Christ. Without this, it has no radically transformative power at all.

While it is conceivable that "taking sides" does not have to lead to declaring "dominion over everything", I am not encouraged by the direction taken by today's most militant charismatic spiritual warriors, to say the least. Derrida cites Alexandre Koyré's warning from 1943 on the nature of totalitarian truth:

> Pushing to their limits the biological, pragmatist, activist theories of truth, the official philosophies of the totalitarian regimes deny the inherent value of thought. For them thought is not a light but a weapon: its function, they say, is not to discover reality as it is, but to change and transform it with the purpose of leading us towards what is not. Such being the case, myth is better than science and rhetoric that works on the passions preferable to proof that appeals to the intellect. (Koyré 1943, in Derrida 2003: 59–60)

I fully concur with Derrida's emphatic insistence on "an unfailing vigilance" in guarding against the totalitarian dangers denounced by Koyré, while also endorsing Derrida's crucial qualification that the denunciation of all "pragmatist" and "activist" interpretations of the truth is too all-encompassing: "This suspicion can touch on everything that exceeds, in more than one direction, the determination of truth as objectivity, as the theme of a constative utterance, or even as adequation; at the limit, it touches on any consideration of performative utterances . . . even testimony" (Derrida 2003: 60) As Derrida argues, performatives, in their power to institute a new reality, are neither legal nor illegal, and they are always a form of violence. When performatives succeed, especially in the domain of politics, the power of their truth can sometimes impose itself forever. However, if we want to maintain any idea of a justice beyond the law, the possibility of a revolutionary, or even transformative politics, then we cannot do without them. "For better and for worse, this performative dimension makes the truth, as Augustine says" (Derrida 2003: 51).

There can be no *a priori* guarantee or reliable safeguard against the worst, against the very real dangers inherent in any militant partisanship, any attempt to suture Truth to Being. Yet to deny any place or power to activist theories of truth, in which a saying would be a doing or a making, would seem to run the risk of disqualifying any radically transformative or emancipatory project in advance. As we reject quasi-hysterical intellectual apocalypticism, we still need to pursue further, and with increasing vigilance, the question of whether we can safely allegorize today's charismatic or evangelical prayer warriors, in particular those proposing "Dominion over everything" through the global dissemination of a missionary paradigm explicitly modeled and operationalized as a militant spiritual warfare against every power, belief, custom, practice or value that does not count as "Christian", fueled by the demonization and denunciation of enemies. I find it increasingly difficult to see how such iterations of Christian faith have anything

whatsoever to do any longer with New Testament ethics or liberal values that are still worth fighting for.

Notes

1. He points out on back cover of each of his over 300 books (all available from Amazon.com) that he "holds a first class Honours degree in Microbiology from the University of Lagos, Nigeria and a PhD in Molecular Genetics from the University of Reading, United Kingdom" as well as "over 70 scientific publications to his credit".
2. MFMM is located not too far from the international headquarters of Nigeria's (and Africa's) largest Pentecostal church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The RCCG's annual Holy Ghost convention has been known to host over 6 million believers, and its Holy Ghost arena, over 1 km long and half a km wide, can welcome over 800,000 worshippers.
3. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses".

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The militarization of prayer in America: White and Native American spiritual warfare

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how militarism has come to be one of the generative forces of the prayer practices of millions of Christians across the globe. To understand this process, I focus on the articulation between militarization and aggressive forms of prayer, especially the evangelical warfare prayer developed by North Americans since the 1980s. Against the backdrop of the rise in military spending and neoliberal economic policies, spiritual warfare evangelicals have taken on the project of defending the United States on the "spiritual" plane. They have elaborated a complex theology and prayer practice with a highly militarized discourse and set of rituals for doing "spiritual battle" and conducting "prayer strikes" on the "prayer battlefield". The work draws on ethnographic fieldwork at an intensive spiritual warfare boot camp organized by a group of Native Americans who have founded a training base in Oklahoma dedicated to training recruits in the theology and practical strategy of spiritual warfare. Despite their hyper-aggressive rhetorical and ideological stance, members of this network in fact practice self-sacrificial rituals of fasting, holiness, and submission to the Holy Spirit. Native prayer warriors are using spiritual warfare prayer to assert a privileged place for themselves in Christian life as heirs of God's authority over the stewardship of North American land and as central to the project of repairing sinful pasts both on and off the reservations, reconciling present racial conflict, and defending the land in spiritual battle against new immigrant invasions by foreign, demonic forces.

KEYWORDS

Aggressive prayer; militarization; evangelical; spiritual warfare; Native American

This essay extends the literature on the militarization of everyday life to argue that contemporary military metaphors and practices have become a generative force animating the sphere of Christian prayer. The wars of the twentieth century and the corresponding process of militarization have affected almost every aspect of social life all around the globe, and prayer is no exception. In the United States, "the capillaries of militarization have fed and molded social institutions seemingly little connected to battle" (Lutz 2002: 724). Of course the Bible is full of violent battles and scenes of war, and religious actors have drawn on these images in countless periods throughout history (Niditch 1995: 4). Today's Christian militarization is simply the latest iteration in a long partnership between Christian missions and military expeditions, tropes, values, and logics. Yet in the twentieth century the militarization of daily life in the United States reached new heights and has expanded into new sectors, including research, technology, border patrol, immigration, humanitarianism, education, leisure, aesthetics, and fashion. It is time to examine how militarism has come to be part of the prayer practices of millions of Christians, especially in the charismatic networks that are on the rise across the globe.

This means examining side by side two spheres that are rarely considered together. In popular opinion, prayer is considered personal, holy, moral, beneficent, submissive, and even sacrificial. Militarism, on the other hand, is about dominating through force, and it is collective, violent, and combative, a top-down affair of highly disciplined and aggressive troops and their weaponry, funded and controlled by nation-states. Yet my research shows that prayer has become increasingly militarized during the last several decades.

To understand this process, I focus here on the articulation (Hall 1986) between militarism and aggressive forms of prayer in the case of evangelical warfare prayer developed by white and Native North Americans.[1] I use the term *aggressive forms of prayer* here as a conceptual, second-order category that encompasses both spoken addresses to the Christian God (or other deities and spirits), and ritual action, conceived to be part of the work of prayer, that aim to harm, debilitate, remove, or weaken another party or to impose the speaker's will onto another party, an institution, or series of events. It is not the case that aggressive forms of prayer are merely a "reflection" of politics or of the broader culture. One of my assumptions is that through prayer, in both written/formal and oral/improvised forms, people actively produce meanings that in turn shape the world – individual identities, congregations, networks, political actors – in a dialectical way (see also McAlister 2001: 5). This lets us see clearly that secular and religious spheres are entangled and produce one another.

In what follows, I discuss an evangelical network that practices a militarized form of prayer its members call "spiritual warfare".[2] Spiritual warfare is a precise term in evangelical and charismatic networks, and it is a theological orientation that runs through churches as well as para-church organizations. People who subscribe to this idea understand the whole of human history as a consequence of the cosmic battle of Satan against God. They offer a legalistic account beginning with the idea that God gave earthly dominion to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. When Satan's temptation of Eve in Genesis 3 leads to the Fall of Man, "legal" spiritual authority extends to Satan and explains why life on Earth is fraught with suffering.

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According to God's law, Satan gains the legal right to be "prince of this world" (John 12:31), and he commands an army of demons who maintain "strongholds" – geographic and spiritual bases of demonic power. After Christ was crucified in payment for the sins of all of humankind, Satan was dispossessed of his dominion on Earth. However, Satan's strongholds did not melt away. Instead, Satan and his demonic army hold on to what power they have cultivated through social vice and sin: violence, idol worship, sexual iniquity, poverty, addiction, abortion, and more. People's sin functions as an "invitation" for Satan's demons to enter and begin legal operations.

Most scholarship on this movement focuses on the personal forms of spiritual warfare that individuals wage against personal demons – such as lust, envy, alcoholism, and even mental illness. But less attention has been given to the ways spiritual warriors understand national and global politics. The battle against demonic strongholds is waged against specific evil entities in both local and national spaces. Wrote theologian C. Peter Wagner, "I have come to believe that Satan does indeed assign a demon or corps of demons to every geopolitical unit in the world, and they are among the principalities and powers with whom we wrestle" (Wagner 1989: 47). Spiritual warfare evangelicals have elaborated a complex theology and prayer practice with a highly militarized discourse and set of rituals for doing "spiritual battle" and conducting "prayer strikes" on the "prayer battlefield". Warfare prayer can take place in church, at large revivals, at semi-public conferences in hotels, or in private spaces such as homes. Spiritual warriors are aggressive prayer intercessors who can pray openly in "prayer walks" through public spaces, often in urban neighborhoods where poverty and crime are rife. Advanced warriors can also do "covert actions" in public spaces when they are "on assignment" from the Holy Spirit, in which case they might pray in small groups at key "demonic strongholds", such as massacre sites, masonic temples, or abortion clinics. The goal is generally not to cause harm but to impose change onto another party or group (such as Muslim mosques, or abortion clinics) by causing them to go bankrupt, leave a territory, or, ideally, convert to Christianity. The aggressive intent of the prayer, its imagery of violence and war, and its premise of a cosmically violent stage on which Christians must act, supports the case for "a special affinity between Pentecostal prayer and violence" (Obadare 2015). The movement is political in that its intercessors imagine they are part of an elite group of God's agents, participating in a massive social transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God.[3]

A researcher in religious studies, I have attended numerous conferences, seminars, and prayer groups on spiritual warfare and revival, and have followed the movement as it extended from the US into the Caribbean (McAlister 2012, 2013, 2014). I wondered how it was that evangelicals came to understand themselves as prayer warriors, and in particular, how they trained for the most grueling, "territorial-level" assignments. At one prayer conference I met a Native American apostle who led a spiritual warfare boot camp in Oklahoma dedicated to training Native

American recruits in the theology and practical protocols of spiritual warfare. The leaders of this boot camp were Native Vietnam veterans, who brought their experience of military training and discipline to bear on prayer. The Christians who engage in this high-level warfare are on a mission to transform territories, institutions, nations, and the land itself. Native Christians involved in the movement focus also the vexed issues involving massacres, land theft, broken treaties, and ongoing social injustices that include poverty and addiction on reservations. The apostle accepted my application to participate in this training, geared for tribal members but open to other ethnic groups, with the understanding that I am a social scientist researching and writing about the movement. This article would serve as a case study on the Native American strand of spiritual warfare. They had received the message that it was part of God's plan that I attend, and write, in an effort to understand their mission better. Excited and nervous, the same day I was accepted I bought a plane ticket to Oklahoma.

Spiritual warfare boot camp

It was before sunrise and we fifteen recruits were assembled in five rows in an open field in the Oklahoma countryside. The dew was wet under our feet on this dark and chilly October morning in 2013. We had moved quickly from our bunk beds to predawn prayer and into our assigned formation before the drill sergeant could blow his whistle, because we already knew that any lateness, any infraction, any deviation from the proper pose "at attention" – head up, chest back, eyes forward, hands at the sides – would attract the embarrassing attention of one of the three caustic drill sergeants. All Vietnam veterans, they were giving us a crash course in military discipline. We wore matching uniforms of a boot camp T-shirt, black cadet's beret, and ID lanyard. One by one we were inspected, looked up and down, and given either a correction – "eyes forward" – or a barked question – "What is General Order number four?" The correct answers were all from the Bible: "I will report accurately, by the spirit of truth, all enemy formations. John 16:13, SIR". Eleven General Orders had been assigned for exact memorization, and we were being tested. Again a drill sergeant barked the loud question: "What is General Order number five?" "I will stand at my post until we all come into the unity of the faith. Ephesians 4:13, SIR". Soon we were joined by the three prayer warriors who had been chosen to walk the perimeter of the camp, looking for signs of enemy activity.

After we were tested on our General Orders, it was time for marching drills. "AttenTION. Forward MARCH!" Around and around the large field we marched, halted, about faced, and marched again, until the sun was rising and it was time to go to the dining hall for a home-cooked and nutritious breakfast. We lined up single file there, this time first by rank and then by age. We recruits were last, after platoon sergeants, staff sergeants, first sergeant, and then, at the highest rank on base, the generals, who are also apostles of the Lord. Virtually all of the

higher-ranking officers were Native, and more than half the recruits were Native as well, including some from reservations in the West and Canada. Among our group were Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Apache, Cherokee, Navaho, Oneida, Tlingit, and two descendants of famous Lakota warriors who had fought at the Battle of Little Big Horn, and whose families had converted to Christianity.

After prayer and breakfast, it was time to take our seats in the church sanctuary, which doubled as a schoolroom for the week-long training. We sat at tables in rows and listened to a well-organized series of talks from about eight speakers in the area who were recognized as "carrying the anointing" for conducting and teaching spiritual warfare. Throughout the week a corps of staff sergeants supervised us within a set of strict disciplinary guidelines. When a ranking officer entered the room we were instantly to stand at attention and wait for his or her "at ease" command. We were to take careful notes, pray together, perform work jobs, and obey the rules of the base. We also attended morning and evening flag-raising ceremonies. I was honored to be chosen to be one of four recruits to perform this solemn ritual, which was carried out to a strikingly poignant recording of a Sioux battle chant. And somehow, between rising at 5 a.m. and going to bed at midnight and doing all of this, we were expected to find the time to memorize our General Orders.

All of this military discipline, taken straight from the leaders' experiences as soldiers in Vietnam, was to teach us the principles of honor and authority, which would become the foundation for our lives as victorious prayer warriors. As the week went by, I realized that the tough military discipline the officers were subjecting us to was a veneer covering a deep sense of Christian love and affectionate caring. Formal commands gave way to moments of emotional bonding in prayer on several occasions. The leaders explained that they were disciplining us as a loving gift, so that we would be strong enough to follow the protocols, focus, and lines of command that spiritual warfare required. Submission to spiritual authority was central to both the political project of the training, and to its methods of enactment.

For the next week we were taught – with the aid of a pre-prepared workbook and PowerPoint presentations – the principles and protocols of effective prayer warfare. The speakers related the underlying narrative of Satan's war against God in its particular relevance to both the United States and to Native tribal groups in fascinating ways, which will be elaborated below.

"Everyone who comes into the Kingdom of God comes into spiritual warfare, whether they like it or not", said the leading apostle on the first night of the boot camp. It turned out that for our apostles, "Warrior means 'one who keeps peace'". Our battles would largely be staged in what they called the "spiritual" or "supernatural" realm. Many of them would be self-sacrificial and involve fasting and prayer, and there would be no training in arms handling or physical combat. "We are here to crucify the flesh", they said. As for me, I was working to understand the relationship between the Christian mission these spiritual warriors felt they have been assigned to carry out and the military practices they were deploying to enact their mission. As we circled the field over and over, learning military marching, proper salute forms, and other commands, I found myself wondering how it had come to pass that this ethnically mixed group of charismatic evangelicals had taken literally the idea of being an "army of God", and performed this long-standing biblical metaphor in uniform, with actual drills and practices of the US military.

The militarization of prayer in America

The history of any nation can be told as a military history, and crucial for the case at hand, the United States was first colonized through warfare against Native peoples. War consolidated the nation through a revolution against Britain. With its Protestant majority, the nation's military activity during each conflict was expressed using biblical scripture and rhetoric that became increasingly inflected with evangelical tropes and cues. The twentieth century saw the rise of both US military power and evangelicalism, both of which reached an apex in the speeches of George W. Bush. (In his 2003 State of the Union Address preparing the country for war, Bush said the nation must "confound the designs of evil men" because "our calling, as a blessed country, is to make the world better".) Major moments of increased militarization included the world wars against fascism in Europe and the establishment of the national security act in 1947. After the Cold War, the United States emerged as the first global superpower, and American military spending, even before the massive increases after the September 11 attacks, was as much as that of the next twelve largest national militaries combined (Lutz 2002: 729).

Concurrently, militaristic imagery grew more pronounced in evangelical communities. In 1951, Bill Bright found an institutional means through which to harness military values to evangelical outreach when he founded Campus Crusades for Christ, which remains today a strong presence in many universities and high schools. The organization's mandate was to instruct young evangelical "warriors" on codes of moral discipline that were articulated in military imagery: members were encouraged to enlist, rally, advance, campaign, and blitz (Martin 1996, cited in Johnson 2010: 344). In the 1970s, against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, evangelicals began to export a militarized vision into a project of aggressive missionary expansion abroad. The US draft ended in 1973, and the armed forces became all-volunteer at the same time that the Reagan administration set in motion a program of neoliberal economic reform and market deregulation, together with an increase in support for the military through spending, and a campaign for volunteer enlisters to "answer the call" of duty. Evangelical discourse in books, conferences, and sermons articulated a new paradigm of free choice, strategy, efficiency, technology, statistics, and goal setting that came to flow across the fields of business, sports, and the military.

In this neoliberal evangelical vision, biblical, organizational, and military language formed an energetic new view of how American Christians could best

convert others across the world (Rynkiewich 2007: 232). Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, already a powerful evangelical institution, in the 1970s grew into an influential center of academic mission study where professors drew on sociological research to bolster a militarized sensibility. Missiology courses identified "target populations" that could be better reached with the assistance of sociological information during "strategic missions". The resulting Church Growth Movement which began at Fuller would gain momentum among global evangelicals at the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. There, missionaries consolidated statistics concerning population, GDP, and degree of "reachedness" in what some derided as an exercise in "statistical Christianity" (Han 2010: 188). The appropriation of technology, social science, and military thought was a powerful mix for these evangelicals, and the advent of affordable air travel had made it possible to meet face to face with fellow missionaries from many different countries. Fuller professor Ralph Winter went on to found the US Center for World Missions in 1976, referring to it as the headquarters for missionary research and "a Pentagon for mission agencies around the world" (Han 2010: 190).

This overarching ethos of purposeful mission, volunteerism, and strategic goal setting was part and parcel of the militarization of everyday life of American civil society, Protestant churches, and missionary thought, and moral education became articulated with warfare in explicit ways. In the 1980s, the military began to support evangelical proselytizing and worship among troops. Conservative evangelical leaders like Paul Weyrich (who co-founded both the Moral Majority and the Heritage Foundation) "advocated for an increased military presence in inner city school districts to provide discipline and moral instruction so as to 'save' the poor and, ostensibly, the nation" (Cowen 2006, cited in Johnson 2010: 345).

Evangelicals met again in 1989 at the Lausanne II conference, where they explicitly connected militarism to the sphere of prayer. They ratified spiritual warfare as a legitimate activity in world evangelizing: aggressive prayer was needed to fight evil directly in the invisible realm. They took up the view that there are levels of evil and corresponding tactics of warfare necessary to combat evil, since Satan is essentially a commander-in-chief from whom legions of lower-ranking demons take orders. "Ground-level" spiritual warfare prayer can take the form of casting out evil through deliverance prayer, in which the Christian exorcizes demons from another person under the authority of Jesus (as depicted in Matthew 10:1). These can include the demons of addiction, depression, perversion, and the like. "Occult-level" warfare operates against "mid-level formations" such as shamanism, astrology, or Freemasonry. More ambitiously, Christian prayer warriors can engage in "strategic-level" or "territorial-level" warfare. Territorial-level warfare means to "pray down" powerful demons with broader military jurisdiction – those who have taken over entire areas of geographical territory such as a city or a whole nation. Victory over these "strongholds" will result in the revival and flourishing of Christianity in a given area or place (Wagner 1991).

The concept of spiritual warfare has a particular genealogy in the Third Wave Movement headed by American Peter Wagner, who taught at Fuller Seminary from 1971 to 2001. (He also founded Global Harvest Ministries in Colorado Springs, where I attended a seminar on spiritual warfare.) Wagner embraces a fivefold ministry view that sees the legitimate offices of the church to be those listed in Ephesians 4:13, that is, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (In contrast, the ranks of apostle and prophet are seen by traditional Protestant denominations as having been dispensed with after the earliest period of Christianity.) Wagner teaches that humanity has entered a new age in which God is calling prophets and apostles to become intercessors and usher in the return of Jesus and the Kingdom of God through warfare prayer. While there is no orthodoxy in this loose international network, generally speaking, divinely "anointed prayer warriors" understand themselves to be called to do battle in the spiritual realm with Satan's high-ranking demons.

These Christians take their understanding of this war from Ephesians 6:12: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places". Christian intercessors stress to one another that they are praying against the spiritual evil of Satan himself, not against people. Physical violence against people or property is anathema to the teaching and the practice of spiritual warfare, and practitioners are not connected to terrorism or armed militias, for example, in any way (although some take credit for God having caused the downfall of another as the result of their aggressive prayer). The violence of spiritual warfare is discursive and yet is part of a cultural and ideological politics supporting evangelical Christians in becoming more invested and more influential in all sectors of society.

In order to make missionary outreach more successful, evangelicals at Lausanne II appropriated geoscience technology and began to generate datasets with the help of GIS specialists like Global Mapping International. They produced maps of ethnic/racial "people groups" and coded the globe according to degrees of reachedness in an attempt to make precise the goals and strategies of missionary activity. They noted "gaps" or territories that are ruled by "spiritual wickedness". They coined terms like "missionmetrics" and "evangelistics" and spoke of the "deployment" of missionaries in "teams" for "strategic missions" (Han 2010: 196). It was at Lausanne II that Argentinian-born pastor Luis Bush developed the image of the "resistance belt", an area of the globe presenting a challenge to spreading the gospel. He concluded that "successful church planting in the Pacific, Africa and Latin America has largely reduced the world's prime evangelistic real estate to a swathe of territory from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north latitude, running through Northern Africa and Asia, known as the 10/40 Window". Bush noted that the parameters of the 10/40 Window include the Middle East and encompass "the core of the Islamic region" (Bush n.d.), and Peter Wagner pointed out that the area

is also the center of other "demonic" religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Taoism (Wagner 1992: 143).

In the 1990s, Peter Wagner and others "promoted explicitly geographical and geopolitical analysis with a renewed emphasis on strategy and expertise". During the First Gulf War, spiritual warfare missionaries emphasized "Iraq and the Garden of Eden as the seat of Satan on Earth" (Holvast 2009: 229). In 2003, some months after the US military withdrawal from Somalia, Lieutenant-General William Boykin was filmed lecturing in churches wearing his military uniform, showing a slide of a Black Hawk helicopter in Mogadishu. Pointing to a black mark in the sky, Boykin opined, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your enemy. It is the principalities of darkness. It is a demonic presence in that city that God revealed to me as the enemy". In another talk, Boykin said that terrorism "is our spiritual enemy that will only be defeated if we come against them in the name of Jesus" ("A Tale of Two Faces" 2003). Clearly, Boykin was invested in the spiritual warfare world view and its understanding of cosmic reality. This view, developed by theologians at Fuller Theological Seminary, informed his military service. In turn, he brought that theology back in testimony to churches at home – a stark example of the ways that evangelicalism and militarism were constituting one another.

Spiritual warfare and Christian tribal sovereignty

Spiritual warfare theologians and pastors were not only mapping international geopolitical spaces, they also concerned themselves with American domestic space. The spiritual warfare movement shares with other branches of Christian conservatism a sense that America is a chosen nation with a righteous, Christian identity (an identity that is under attack by evil forces in the form of immorality, liberalism, and secularism). So as I prepared to attend the spiritual warfare boot camp I was curious to see how Natives would find ways to reconcile this narrative with the US government's extreme violence against tribal groups. What I found was a radical revision of evangelical Americanism and an insistence on tribal nation sovereignty.

Indeed, the teachers at the boot camp told a straightforward story of government mistreatment of Natives. One evening the lecture recounted the history of the "ratification of 371 treaties with the Indian Tribes of America". They explained that "the United States government has broken all 371 treaties", which resulted in the outright theft of millions of acres of land. As if this were not bad enough on its own, our teachers considered this history cosmically significant as well, amounting to a profound original or "root" national sin. They cited four scriptural passages in which God instructs people not to move property boundary lines or break covenants, including Deut. 27:17: "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark". This disobeying of God's commandment has resulted in opening the land and its inhabitants to the effects of God's curse. The American government broke its own land treaties, and so white American "immigrants" and their nation

are living out God's punishment. The message was that God abandoned his chosen American "New Israel" because of its government's sins against tribal peoples.

But in the speakers' view, the Native Americans had also committed a deep and enduring sin of their own, and this is partly why the US government was able to steal so much Indian land. The Old Testament is full of legal agreements, covenants with God, and people breaking the covenants. Our teachers applied a logic of diplomatic protocol to the biblical story, in which Christians hold authority over demons, land, and all of Earth's creation, through their salvation and brotherhood with Jesus. The only catch is the obligation of full obedience to the living spirit of God. Biblical scholar Regina Schwartz (1997: 54) writes of how, in the Old Testament, property rights are contingent upon obedience: "A self-enclosed circular system is thereby instituted: to be 'a people' is to be God's people is to inherit his land, and if they are not the people of God, they will not be a people, and they will lose the land". Idolatry is the biblical sin most often responsible for the Israelites losing their land or failing to repossess it. It is also the sin by which Native Americans, in their relationships with ancestral spirits and spirits of the land, created the spiritual conditions for losing the battle with white settlers. This theology casts the ancestral spirits of indigenous people as demonic and demands they be rejected – itself a form of symbolic cultural violence that traditionalists and others vigorously denounce. This situation means that Native people have to get to work confessing and repenting. Said one of our teachers, "My father and my forefathers, Lord, we screwed up the land before the white man came. You see, I'm included in that". This puts in Indian hands the responsibility but also the possibility for improving things. Because of these deep iniquities of both Natives and immigrants, all Americans continue to experience problems and social ills in society, and God's Kingdom is not yet a reality.

In the spiritual warfare view developed by Native leaders, tribal peoples (and all others) have an indigenous identity that connects them through their ancestors to the geographical land of some nation or nations on the Earth. It is part of God's plan for people to exercise effective dominion in some spot of land in the Earth (Chosa 2004: 92). Incorporating new research on the human genome, the teachers laid out the view that genetic factors, written in the DNA of our physical cells, "become a historical and spiritual record of what our blood lineage experienced over the generations". Spiritual DNA can carry a curse from generation to generation through a family's bloodlines, such as that from having a murderer among one's forebears. But spiritual DNA also carries authority over territory – the people who have lived on any given land the longest have rightful spiritual authority over that land. And this is a spiritual authority that is still legally in effect for Natives according to biblical law, since immigrants who broke their own treaties stole the land from them. One teacher explained how Indians had a special duty to be stewards, both of the spiritual ownership of the land and of God's mysteries. In effect, Native peoples were meant to function as "heavenly minded hosts". It is this principle that should put indigenous people at the center of the

Christian project anywhere in the world, and especially in the US. "We need to awaken to this simple principle of spiritual protocol for the righteous execution of indigenous authority. The church must work towards a true relationship with Native believers and honor them as the host people of this continent. Extending forgiveness without extending the right hand of fellowship yields only a short-term work of reconciliation and produces no lasting effect in the spiritual landscape" (Chosa 2004 : 105). To be sure, no whites have turned over land to tribal groups as a result of Christian fellowship. Whites and other groups do attend to Native land issues when they prepare spiritual warfare missions, and search the historical record for massacres or broken treaties as possible sins leading to demonic activity and requiring repentance.

Indigeneity thus works as a strength in spiritual warfare. As a result, both mission work and spiritual warfare are most effective among those who share ethnic and spiritual DNA. Said one teacher, "As we mature in our heavenly and earthly identity as a warrior son of God, we can progressively exercise indigenous authority in the Spirit to launch frontal attacks upon the net and web power-grids of darkness and their tether points in our indigenous territory". This means that Cherokee people will work best against evil in both Oklahoma and, say, North Carolina, while an Anglo and Scots-Irish person such as myself will be most effective on prayer missions in New England or in the British Isles.

As for the US as a nation, God has given Natives sovereignty over tribal lands and withdrawn his favor towards the United States because of government violence against Natives. "The Native believers are the only ones who can permanently deal with any and all ancient issues of iniquity affecting the spiritual and natural landscape", explained our teacher. In their fine tuning of spiritual warfare theology, Native Americans are central to the work of God's Kingdom.

The spiritual battle to defend the land

It turns out that to participate in spiritual warfare prayer is to assume a role in an elaborate, cosmic drama. And to be an actor in this drama is to understand one's place in history, and see how one's spiritual DNA creates weaknesses (through generational iniquities) that must be cleansed through confession and repentance and seeking healing from God. Spiritual warriors also understand that their spiritual DNA affords them strengths, such as the ability to minister to certain ethnic groups or to address "root issues" of historical significance. (For example, someone whose family owned slaves might be called to repent for the sins of slavery and anti-black racism.) Even more crucially, being a prayer warrior means understanding that one must be led by the Holy Spirit. Prayer warriors should live in holiness (which is to say, live in accordance with biblical principles, and in constant prayer). And prayer warriors, or intercessors, stay alert to the ways God is talking to them, having developed what Tanya Luhrman calls "attentional learning", which allows people to "school their minds and senses so that they are

able to experience the supernatural in ways that give them more confidence that what their sacred books say is really true" (Luhrman 2012: xxii; see also 254–66).

In reading scripture, praying constantly, and paying attention to the world around them, intercessors might come to the understanding that the Holy Spirit is calling them to an "assignment". They bring this feeling to the spiritual authority who provides them "covering", and discuss the validity of the sentiment. The other members of their prayer group will pray about and discuss the assignment together, and remain alert for signs that might confirm the calling. While I have participated in spiritual warfare prayer in churches, in trainings, and on behalf of individual people in domestic settings, I have not been given the opportunity to join many covert mission strikes myself. What follows is a description of such a mission by one of my teachers. I chose to describe this mission, despite my own absence, because it is a particularly interesting example of how aggressive prayer is articulated with militarism, geopolitics, and ethnicity. It is also perhaps a bit unexpected: it is a case of thwarting a demonic invasion by none other than His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

My teacher read in the newspaper that the Dalai Lama intended to go to Toronto in 2004 and perform his "Kalachakra for World Peace", an eleven-day program of Tibetan Buddhist rituals during which monks created a large multi-colored sand mandala. At issue was that according to the Buddhists themselves, the mandala contained the Kalachakra deity and 721 surrounding deities, drawn into the sand. As we might suspect, some evangelicals considered the deities to be demonic, and the drawings to be the demons materialized. The prayer warriors researched the ritual and learned that at the end of the proceedings, the monks would sweep up the sand and pour it out into a nearby body of natural water. In this case, the Dalai Lama would deposit the sand into the waters of Lake Ontario. According to the Canadian Tibetan Association, this would be "an act of blessing the surrounding" and would "serve as a universal prayer for the development of the ethics of peace and harmony within one's self and humanity"(Harrington 2012: 147). But according to my teacher, the sand drawings were demons, and the Dalai Lama was going to try to "dump the sand mandala that is now inoculated with the virus of these 722 spirits, into the lakes, and then it opens up the lakes to these 722 spirits".

Historian of Buddhism Laura Harrington writes that despite the view of much current research within university walls that embraces Buddhist modernism as a worthy partner in rationality and ecumenisms, evangelicals view the religion as "a belief in spirits and demons, secret sexual practices, [and] occultism" ruled by a "God-King". What is more, spiritual warriors discern the Dalai Lama as a "spiritual master with geographical roots in the 10/40 Window, and a powerful adept with dominion over a wide range of Tibetan spirits" (Harrington 2012: 159–60). Especially galling to evangelicals are the constant appearances, prizes, and favorable publicity he receives as the rightful head of state of an occupied Tibet and a proponent of universal human rights and world peace. While the rest of America remains ignorant, Tibetan Buddhists are competing for global

religious domination. While evangelicals and *their* public prayer are pushed out of the public sphere by hypocritical liberals, the Dalai Lama parades around doing elaborate public religious ceremonies, even in 2011 in Washington, DC, to the outrage of spiritual warfare communities. The Dalai Lama was working to gain a legal-spiritual foothold in North America and advance his position toward transforming the world into a "universal Buddhocracy", the Kingdom of Shambhala. The Kalachakra mandala would amount to "a Trojan Horse introducing into American territory the very demons the Spiritual Mappers seek to destroy" (Harrington 2012: 160–61).

To respond to this threat, the apostle told me, "we collected a team together; we trained them first for three days. And the Holy Spirit gave us specific instruction". He recounted how his team went up to the shores of several of the Great Lakes and prayed in certain ways that were asked of him by the Holy Spirit while the mandala was being drawn. And here is where my teacher's knowledge of spiritual protocol, combined with his spiritual DNA as an Ojibwe whose ancestors lived in the Great Lakes region, became a powerful part of his spiritual warfare tactic. According to spiritual protocol, he told me, "if the mouth of the indigenous spirits of the lake cannot invite them [the Tantric deities], they cannot enter". Just as a person may only legally enter another's house upon invitation, so too must forces in the spiritual realm operate according to the rules.

My teacher continued: "So we just shut their mouths. With the authority and dominion by God as an Ojibwe I commanded the spirits of the lake to shut their mouths in the name of the Holy Spirit. So the spirits of the lake could not invite the Tibetan spirits into the lake, so they could not enter. Native people understand this. It's protocol". He went on to explain that when the Dalai Lama dumped the sand into the water, he knew the deities did not enter. The Dalai Lama has his own "spiritual eyesight", and he knew he had to take his spirits home. The mission was successful, and the Native prayer warriors, in a small elite team on a specific mission strike, had honorably defended American water and American land through a covert aggressive prayer strike.

Firsting, hosting, and the warrior tradition

There are many paradoxes in militarized Christian prayer, and opening them up for analysis goes a long way to understanding why this world view might appeal in particular to Native people. For charismatics, the Holy Spirit can send new revelations to individual prophets and this means that popular theology is always subject to new understandings. Ethnic and racialized communities' revisions can serve them for their own purposes. In general this theology both reproduced and resignified negative images about tribal peoples. The complicated historical interpretation that our Native teachers laid out for us at the Oklahoma boot camp revisited negative mainstream tropes about Native people and simultaneously reworked the tropes into new shapes.

For example, nineteenth-century literature and mass media perpetrated a myth that Indians cursed the nation, leading to America's social, political, and economic ills, and later to the loss of their own land (Caterine 2014: 38). However, the version of this story told by my teachers – that God abandoned America because of settlers' sins of violence towards Natives – reinstated both primacy and agency to the Natives in a Christian register.

Spiritual warfare theology also renarrates settler colonialist tropes of the prehistoric Indian who "vanished" during the Anglo takeover. At the same time, this theology allows for Native people to occupy a central role in American history and the American future. They in effect reclaim the process of "firsting" that Jean O'Brien (2010: xii–xv) writes is the settler account that "asserts that non-Indians were the first people to erect the proper institutions of a social order worthy of notice". The "vanishing Indian" faded away just as Europeans built settlements and towns. Local histories wrote these "firstings and lastings" narrating the modern European founders and the "last" non-modern Indians in a region. By placing themselves as "heavenly minded hosts", Natives present a new account of "firsting" whereby they are divinely situated to belong to their ancestral lands and to the US as a whole in the spiritual, ultimately most real, realm. Now, it is arguable that by refirsting themselves, these Natives appeal to problematic logics of origins and ties to land and the natural world that essentialize indigenous identity. Yet by insisting on their spiritual authority over the stewardship of the land and on other Christians approaching them first in any diplomatic missions, they take up the central problem of the "recognition" of Indians that, in its most basic sense of the word, local and federal actors have long denied them.

There is another paradoxical historical dimension of the militarization of prayer for Native Americans, particularly those who fought in Vietnam or other US wars. Although it has been romanticized by outsiders, there does exist a warrior tradition in many tribal groups, where warrior societies protected the community and acted as the keepers of the tribes' spiritual power in warfare. Moreover, Europeans developed a policy of conscripting Native Americans, such that the older warrior tradition melted into a later tradition of service in European armies (Holm 1996: 69). Native American historian Tom Holm (1996: 21) in interviews with Native veterans found that "while they sometimes talk of serving their country, they more often associate being in the armed forces with a much older tradition – that of being a warrior in the tribal sense, with all the responsibilities, relationships, and ritual that go along with that status". At the time of the Vietnam War, American Indians made up less than one percent of the US population, and yet they comprised more than two percent of the troops.

In traditionalist communities, warfare has been a way for men to gain status and honor and maintain their spiritual powers (Holm 1996: 40). Evangelical Natives, learning from those who served in Vietnam, bring the same gravitas to spiritual warfare that their traditionalist ancestors once did to physical warfare. Like the warrior societies, they emphasize spiritual preparation and coming into the proper

relationship with the supernatural world. Like traditionalists, evangelicals pray, fast, and practice abstinence, seeking vision and revelation – only they seek it from the Holy Spirit rather than ancestral spirits. This particular reinscription of the Native warrior tradition into evangelical spiritual warfare may partly account for the literal and material expressions of spiritual warfare taking shape as a militarized boot camp.

The figure of the Native Christian warrior is an ironic one, since Native intellectuals have argued that the twin forces of Christianity and militarism were the primary causes of ruination for tribal groups (Deloria 1973). It is true that Christian Americans viewed Native communities as being rife with witchcraft and needing salvation from whites. Yet spiritual warfare is paradoxically invested in a native politics of sovereignty. More recently Native Christians have argued that taking on the project of missionizing to their own communities can be a strategy to stop Anglos from missionary activities, often inflected with racism, and to take up Native leadership themselves (Smith 2008: 98).

This essay has argued that the late twentieth century intensification of the militarization of everyday life has extended to the prayer practices of some charismatic Christians, has described the case of a Native Evangelical Spiritual Warfare boot camp, and has offered analysis of the paradoxical appeal spiritual warfare has for tribal group members. A Native spiritual warfare counter-narrative to American chosenness is emerging in which God has abandoned and punished the US because of its violence against tribal groups; Native nations insist on God-given political sovereignty that must be federally respected; and indigenous peoples are at the center of the Christian project. Yet the fact that tribal groups join white evangelicals in recasting ancestral spirits as demonic, only to take up leadership in that project and to struggle for primacy and recognition, is also a symptom of profound dispossession.

And yet, the majority of spiritual warriors in the US are white. And while the warfare in question takes place in the invisible realm, the agenda of the movement is undeniably political for all ethnic groups (see Marshall 2009). Unlike, for example, the Salvation Army, which is also organized through militaristic images but is focused on social gospel projects and on saving souls (Winston 2000), the Spiritual Warfare movement is part of a teleology of transformation where a vanguard of spiritual elites help usher in a collective radical rebirth behind the scenes. This Christian revival will result in a final era where the Holy Spirit transforms the imperfect and fallen world into the Kingdom of God. Not a system of nation-states or democratic republics, the Kingdom is figured as a restoration of an eternal original Eden where a heavenly court maintains perfect justice. In this masculinist vision, men have dominion over women and humans over animals just as in the Genesis story. Spiritual warriors will be honored soldiers in God's army even and especially in the Kingdom. However, the details of the eternal Kingdom are rarely elaborated by warfare thinkers and teachers. Much more important is the present political condition of warfare with unseen spiritual evil, and the mapping of spheres of demonic activity – personal, cultural, and geopolitical. In this politics, people live out individual and collective lives in the tension between obedience to both divine and human authority and the aggression of their vision, intention, and language in spoken prayer.

Notes

1. I use the term *articulation* in a particular fashion, after Stuart Hall 1986 who theorized that elements of culture, while usually tied to class, can recombine in various ways into new patterns with novel meanings or connotations. This is useful in understanding how cultural spheres as seemingly far apart as militarism and prayer can be linked together both in theory, theology, and practice, and come to create new meanings, rituals, and identities, which in turn influence politics and diplomacy, missionary projects, and even humanitarianism.
2. This network is known variously as the Spiritual Mapping Movement, the Transformation or Revival Movement, the New Apostolic Reformation, and the Third Wave Evangelical Movement.
3. As focused as they are on bringing revival and transformation in a kind of "end times" sensibility, spiritual warfare theologians avoid delving into doctrinal debates about premillennialism, the rapture, and other features of apocalyptic thought that might cause disagreement and factions. The focus of their energies is on the present moment, when their prayers can bring humanity to the verge of a "breakthrough" of Christian revival led by the Holy Spirit.

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