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## Sacred Music, Sacred Journeys : What Makes an Event Postcolonial ?

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## Sacred Music, Sacred Journeys : What Makes an Event Postcolonial ?

1 Thinking about what makes an event postcolonial involves two steps : first reflecting on events and then dealing with the postcolonial context in which the events take place. Hence, in the introductory part of our article, we will provide a definition of events and give some details about contemporary Switzerland as a postcolonial frame for the events that we analyse. In this regard, we ask what *religious* events have to say about the postcolony. In the second part, we take as examples two sacred journeys that can be considered as postcolonial and religious events : a pilgrimage to the relics of African saints in St. Maurice, canton Valais, and a pilgrimage dedicated to the Black Madonna, the Virgin Mary of Einsiedeln, in the canton Schwyz. Both have been invented for and by African Christians (clerics and laity) together with the leaders of the Swiss Catholic church.<sup>1</sup> We will ask how missionism, theology and religious practice have been adopted to the local and postcolonial context [Ela 1985]). We will argue that in the postcolony, organised religious events mask and unmask unequal power relations by mobilising cultural resources and religious metaphors in a stereotypical way. However, despite their planned character, pilgrimages have a contingent aspect that turns them into political and cultural arenas in the wider struggle for recognition.

### Thinking about events

2 Unequal distribution of resources and political power has led to the development of a new consciousness [Ela 1980] of the subaltern [Spivak 1988] and thus to strong political struggles. Even institutionalised, planned events can be transformed into unforeseen political arenas where people who usually do not have the possibility to express themselves publicly can stage their claims.

3 In this article, we focus on organised events and define them as follows : Organised events in the present context differ from everyday experiences, have a performative and interactive character and attract people who would not necessarily meet outside the event frame. Despite the planned character of organised events, a contingent aspect is always present; unforeseeable incidents can occur and change the course of action. It is important to note that different people interpret and appropriate the same event in different ways (Salzbrunn, forthcoming). In another research project on the positioning of Senegalese migrants in Switzerland, we have already shown how festive events can be transformed into arenas for political claims making [Salzbrunn 2013]. We observe a similar effect in the present cases.

4 Thus, we will see that in the case of both pilgrimages we focus on, the individual participants appropriate the event as a means of expression in the context of migration. As collectives, the groups and associations linked to the Catholic Church that organise the events also occupy public spaces in order to obtain a certain form of recognition [Fraser and Honneth 2003]. The study of social movements [Bennani-Chraïbi and Filleule 2003] has considered public demonstrations of (religious, ethnic etc.) belonging as part of the general struggle for recognition. In our case studies, religious events become a stage for a global postcolonial social movement even though the participating groups do not collectively make explicit claims linked to colonial history or influenced by postcolonial thinking. Rather, missionaries, clerics, and laity appropriate the notion of martyrdom to draw an analogy between saints and migrants, whom they see as suffering from a denial of recognition and humanity [e.g. Ilunga Nkonko 2011]. ‘Reverse mission’ [Adogame and Shankar 2013, p. 1] brings the colony back to the former colonisers – even to those without colonies. This process is carried out by evangelisation through events as well as cultural appropriations that question and partly challenge hegemonic relations in the postcolony.

## Switzerland - a postcolonial framework for events?

- 5 Fanon, Senghor, and Ela took a radical stance in criticising the structures and mechanisms of power in hegemonic situations and relations between colonial subjects and colonial masters. In this respect, we are not concerned with the outcomes of colonialism ex-post but with the continuities and ruptures of this unequal relationship. Some entities, despite never having been visible as colonial powers, have created tangible and intangible power structures and mechanisms of domination. Switzerland does not have an official colonial history (and Germany's seems to end after 1916). Nonetheless, Swiss (and German) companies and migrants were and are part of the world's colonies [Zangger 2011]. Switzerland has created an empire of financial, natural and, recently, human resources that flow from Africa (e.g. by means of suitcase diplomacy) to the confines of its national prosperity. Swiss entrepreneurs, e.g. Henry Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, participated in colonial businesses by funding a financial society linked to the 'Compagnie genevoise des colonies suisses de Sétif' in Algeria [Pous 1979], and 30,000 Swiss citizens lived in Sétif around 1880 [*id.*]. The treasures of Switzerland and the "sweetness" [Mintz 1986] of its power are thus part of the tricky relationship between non-colonial subjects and non-colonial masters. They reflect the entanglement [Mintz 1986; Conrad and Randeria 2002] – meaning the relationships and interactions – of Swiss history with global political, ideological and economic movements linked to colonialism, and thus the continuities, shifts and reciprocal relations between Switzerland and some former colonies.
- 6 Not only were colonial expansions part of entangled and transnational movements, but contemporary expressions of racism are also part of the consequences of a common history [Purtschert et al. 2012, p. 3]. Expressions of racism are strongly linked to their counterpart : exoticising representations of the "other" [Purtschert et al. 2012, p. 36 sq.]. The staging of the exotic [Erlmann 1999] has taken place at spectacles like World's Fairs and Völkerschauen (exhibitions of foreign peoples). Its representations can be found in advertisements, youth literature and propaganda material [Purtschert et al. 2012, p. 36 sq.]. The critique of modernization theory [Alexander 1994] has shown that Western civilizations tend to define themselves as "modern" in contrast to others considered "backward", "traditional" or "savage". Sometimes, following Rousseau's ideas, the "savage" was also idealized as a pure representative of a preserved, ancient culture that had not yet been influenced by the dangers of civilization. However, the notion of the innocent orient was soon turned into a 'lost paradise'. Orientalism met evangelism when missionary organisations expanded into former colonies in order to spread the gospel without considering indigenous ways of thinking anything worthwhile that could be put on the same ideological level as Christian theology. Therefore, in his major work "Ma foi d'Africain" (1985), Ela calls for the necessity of inculturating Christianity in order to preserve or revive indigenous creativities [Ela 1985, p. 14]. He asks how it could be possible to "africanise" Christianity if 70% of missionaries come from Europe and North America [*id.*]. Ela's call for an indigenous Christianity nevertheless tends to fall into the trap of reifying Africanness, especially when he deplores that contemporary generations do not refer to ancient traditions [Ela 1985, p. 15]. Even though modernisation theory, which reinforces the distinction between "tradition" and "modernity", has been questioned for some time in the social sciences (Balandier 1986; Alexander 1994), critics like Ela continue to use these categories in order to recall a cultural heritage lost and/or destroyed by colonial and postcolonial intervention. This reference to tradition can be interpreted as a form of resistance, as Balandier has shown (1986). Likewise, the fact that African migrants play with the notion of "tradition" when they contribute to Swiss Catholic events can be interpreted as a form of resistance to incorporation processes. We will see below that the notion of 'tradition' is often equated with 'culture' and that the distinction between something "African" or "Black" and something "European" or "White" is a taxonomic order that signifies postcolonial relations in Switzerland. Nevertheless, the significance and application of these terms varies considerably according to the context. Therefore, ethnography and situational analysis will be applied

in order to understand the circulation of different messages within the political arena that constitutes the events we focus on<sup>2</sup>.

7 We can currently observe an increasing movement of people from African countries to the Swiss Confederation – although it is a movement strictly controlled by means of a restrictive immigration policy.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this process has shaped the social structure of the Swiss postcolony.<sup>4</sup> Pilgrimages and other events organised by Christian churches and missionary organisations reflect these immigration patterns. Eritreans, Congolese, Nigerians and Cameroonians make up the majority of the attendees of these events. Despite the fact that Africans only make up a small proportion of the overall immigration pattern in Switzerland, they have become the target of xenophobic attacks : extreme right activists try to disseminate stereotypes of drug dealers, black men who rape white women, etc.<sup>5</sup> In France and Germany, intellectual or artistic movements have attempted to question asymmetric power relations, as in the "Decolonize the City!"<sup>6</sup> event in Berlin in 2012 or the "Indigènes de la République" demonstrations in Paris. Even though postcolonial critics and claims against racism formulated by migrants are less visible in the public space in Switzerland<sup>7</sup>, individual pilgrims complained about observing general xenophobic behaviour targeting different groups in various places : French border employees in Geneva, German university professors in Zurich, immigrants from Africa and southeast Europe, etc.

8 If racism is a negative dimension of this fear of the Other and of postcolonial relations, orientalism is its positive counterpart. Both, however, construct images of an unequal Other. Several interviewees mentioned that their (supposed) differences are constantly the subject of remarks and that a certain form of social control constantly makes itself felt. Nevertheless, stereotypes about the cultural and social homogeneity of groups also concern members of the groups themselves. Frantz Fanon has reflected critically on the "colonisation of the mind". According to Fanon (1952), the population from the French West Indies and Africa as well as the French themselves have to overcome stereotypes created about the black population, and the latter have to free themselves from the whites' judgement by claiming universal values.

9 In the present contribution, we question what makes an event postcolonial : in other words, how are postcolonial relations negotiated in Switzerland? Following Purtschert et al., we assume that Swiss historiography is shaped by a "colonial imagery" [Purtschert/Lüthi/Falk 2012, p. 14], although explicit mention of Switzerland's implication in colonial history is extremely rare. Therefore, the present article deals with the implicit involvement of missionary organisations in the colonial enterprise, which leads to postcolonial continuities in recruitment and contemporary representations of the Other.

10 As the Catholic Church in Europe sees itself confronted with a declining number of seminarists, qualified personnel are increasingly moving from African countries and India to Western Europe. In addition, Catholic communities are losing more and more members. Therefore, European Catholic churches seek assistance by employing personnel from Africa and India and by integrating performative elements such as music, dance and tales into their services, assuming these make them more attractive to their congregations.

11 Cultural representations in religious events are mediated in a particular way. As Durkheim (1912) has suggested, the collective experience of action creates moments of passion, effervescence and social cohesion. The pilgrimages and choirs that are at the centre of our study are built around collective musical performances and prayers, which are combined with other symbols of cultural reference such as costumes and food. Some of the colourful clothes have icons representing Jesus Christ, the cardinal Monsengwo (archbishop of Kinshasa) or the Virgin Mary ("Notre Dame") printed on them. Names of groups as well as where they come from are printed on other pieces of clothing, for example "Association Chrétienne Camérounaise de Saint Joseph" (in Lausanne). In this way, cultural symbols and social action signify home and belonging in a context of displacement and migration. While these references are presented as quintessentially "African", it appears that the former hegemonic structures are reversed by the concerned African agents who appropriate religious spaces, transform them into social, economic and cultural meeting points and introduce new religious practices (like moving and dancing during mass) in Europe. By doing so, those who used to be dominated are

currently rebalancing religious power structures and transforming European societies. Can we see an African theology [Ela 1980] at work here, or does this foreshadow a way of returning the white mask [Fanon 1955] to the hegemonic powers? A reversal of hegemonic relations can indeed be observed on different levels, as we will show below.

12 In the following section, we give a brief historical overview of the pilgrimages dedicated to the Saints of Africa in Saint Maurice and to the Virgin Mary in Einsiedeln.

### **‘African’ pilgrimages in Switzerland**

13 The "Pèlerinage aux Saints d'Afrique" took place for the first time in June 2001. It was initiated by Père Fridolin Zimmermann (1946 - 2012), a Swiss man who was part of the group Missionaries from Africa (White Fathers) (Ilunga Nkonko 2012 : 6) and had spent many years in Tunisia. The White Fathers were founded in 1868 in Algiers by Mgr. Charles Lavigerie, archbishop of Algiers<sup>8</sup>. He considered Algeria to be the entrance point to the African continent and sent missionaries first to Timbuktu and later to Uganda in 1878. In 1892, 278 missionaries of five nationalities were working in Tanzania, Tunisia, Congo, Zambia, Uganda and Algeria. As the White Fathers also consider Europe a place to be reconquered for the Catholic Church, they now engage in missionary work here. Their experience in African countries has led them to engage with migrants in Europe. Thanks to his work in Tunisia, Father Fridolin Zimmermann established contact with Tunisian students in Switzerland. He was also in touch with African choirs through a connection to the 'Ecole de Foi' in Fribourg [Ilunga Nkonko 2012, p. 6]. These contacts gave him the idea of creating a pilgrimage dedicated to African saints. The 'Groupe de coopération missionnaire en Suisse romande', Missio (Les oeuvres pontificales missionnaires), the missionary laity and the Federation of Missionary Centres of the canton Valais supported his idea. The first pilgrimage took place in June 2002 and led pilgrims to the Abbey and the Basilica of the Saint Thebans Martyrs in Saint Maurice. Since then, the pilgrimage has taken place every year in the month of June. Since 2007, the event has begun at the martyrs' field in Vérolliez, two kilometres from the abbey where Maurice and other Roman Christian soldiers from the region of Theben (in today's Egypt) were killed at the end of the 3rd century because of their refusal to persecute other Christians. A century later, in 380, Saint Théodule, the first known archbishop from the canton Valais, brought their remains to a mausoleum in the area. It was the beginning of religious life in Saint Maurice, which is today the oldest continuously inhabited abbey in Northern Europe. The story told in speeches during the pilgrimages reports that this narrative symbolises the first link established by Swiss Catholics to African martyrs. However, on official documents and websites of the abbey, Maurice is mentioned as being from the region of "Theban in Egypt", but not explicitly as being "African". Therefore, the emphasis put on Africa as a whole sounds slightly artificial<sup>9</sup>.

14 The second narrative concerns the geneses of Catholic martyrs in Uganda and their transfer to Switzerland. The White Fathers have been conducting missionary work in Uganda since 1879 (the time of Kabaka (king) Mutesa). However, Kabaka Mwanga, the son and successor of Mutesa, persecuted Christian converts, viewing them as a menace to his authority. On his order, 22 Catholics, most of them leaders and pages at the royal court, were killed between 1885 and 1887 [Kassimir 1991]. They were canonised in 1964 and registered in the calendar of saints, as the obvious reason for their murder was their faith. Fourteen Protestants, seven "pagans" and one Muslim were also killed under the same circumstances [Ilunga Nkonko 2012, p. 13 sq.]. Then, in 2007, the story of the passion of Saint Bakhita was connected to the stories of the Ugandan saints celebrated on June 3rd every year. Joséphine Bakhita (1869-1847) was a slave native to Southern Sudan who converted to Christianity once she managed to free herself in Venice, Italy. In 2006, relics of Ugandan martyrs were brought to St. Maurice, where they remain today next to Saint Maurice and his companions. During the 2007 pilgrimage, Mgr. Joseph Roduit, the abbot of Saint Maurice, took the opportunity to call on African migrants in Switzerland to "perpetuate a 1,500 year old tradition" by getting involved in missionary work<sup>10</sup>. In 2002, Canon Michel-Ambroise Rey said that "today, Africans come to our country and are able to warm up our faith, because our faith has grown cold in our country"<sup>11</sup>. He invited African migrants to "wake us up through their singing and their enthusiasm, through

their joyful and lively celebrations, in order to give us back a taste of spiritual living". Because music is a key element of missionary work, African choirs are invited to the pilgrimage every year. In 2010, Mgr. Joseph Roduit granted each choir five minutes "in order to make everybody dance"<sup>12</sup>. Three years later, the choirs' music had become so popular among the pilgrims that the event had turned into a festival in which choirs competed for the title of best performance. These performances alternated with organisers' speeches and statements on the objectives of the pilgrimage and with paying homage to an individual or a group of 'African' or 'black' martyrs. In addition to the choirs, a griot (storyteller, poet, praise singer) from Togo living in Paris was invited to entertain the pilgrims at the beginning of the event. He also became so popular that in 2013, pilgrims were invited to his night show at St. Maurice. Over the course of the last ten years, the annual pilgrimage has been successfully orchestrated by the mission organisers and their laity assistants, although Europeans have not participated in great numbers.

15 Typically, an African priest participates in and assists the abbot during the final mass every year. Yet in 2012, no griot and no African representative of the clergy was present, and the abbot of Saint Maurice preached on the topic of monotheism, warning of the dangers of polytheism and paganism<sup>13</sup>. Was this a message directed at the African pilgrims who were thought to follow pagan practices? The latter have a much more complex understanding of religious practice and a different concept of membership in a formal institution. A year later, the organising committee of the pilgrimage returned to its former practice and invited Rev. Benignus Ogbunanwata, a pastor from the canton Zurich. Unlike the abbot's, the Reverend's sermon was full of gestures and comic allusions, and just like the griot, he joked with the congregation as he preached the gospel. This performance was applauded enthusiastically by the pilgrims, who felt well entertained. The event was interpreted and appropriated in different ways : while the Swiss organisers failed to adapt African practices and representations to the local transcript, the African pilgrims appropriated the place and the event by adopting it to their cultural representations. As Rev. Ogbunanwata had also been part of the clergy in Einsiedeln in 2012, the two 'African' pilgrimages were interconnected through this clergyman of the (Swiss) Catholic Church.<sup>14</sup>

16 Parallel to the pilgrimages dedicated to the Saints of Africa and in order to create a link between his missionary experience in Africa and his interest in African Christians in Europe, Fridolin Zimmermann has created the association 'Volontaires Chrétiens Africains en Suisse' (Christian African Voluntaries in Switzerland). Missionary work in Africa and Europe is also part of the work of Missio, the Swiss branch of the international missionary services of the Catholic Church. Missio is part of the commission in charge of the pilgrimage in St. Maurice and is active in animating the youth during the pilgrimage as well as publicising the event in media. Some years after the first 'African pilgrimage' in the French part of Switzerland, Migratio, the administrative organ of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Switzerland also invented a pilgrimage for Christians coming from Africa. Since the 1960s, Migratio had taken pastoral care of migrants in Switzerland who had immigrated from Italy, Spain or Portugal. Its former Director Marco Schmid took the initiative of inviting Christian residents in Switzerland native to African countries to take part in a new pilgrimage dedicated to the Black Virgin Mary of Einsiedeln. The Kloster Einsiedeln, founded in 934, is a famous monastery in the German-speaking part of Switzerland where, today, 70 monks live according to Benedictine practice. The first time the pilgrimage took place in 2011, it brought together several hundred Africans living in Switzerland. As the mass is celebrated in French, German and English, people from all over Switzerland took part in the event in 2011 and 2012<sup>15</sup>. In 2012, "African pilgrims in Switzerland : one faith, one body" was the theme chosen for the pilgrimage. Benignus Ogbunanwata, whom we have already mentioned above, commented on the pilgrimage : "Africans are religious and lively. Here, they encounter another type of church, one dominated by rational thinking. Africans enjoy their faith. This can be an important complement to the Church in Switzerland. (...) The Black Virgin Mary is a model we can identify with"<sup>16</sup>. In fact, the final prayer of the pilgrimage takes place in the Chapel of Grace (Gnadenkappelle) in front of the Black Virgin Mary. Although the scientific and religious communities have

diverging opinions about the origins of the Virgin Mary's black skin, and despite the fact that the skin colour of the *Black Madonna* is officially not interpreted as a racial marker, in practice, identification based on skin colour seems to work and to underline the relationship between the Swiss Catholic church and the African pilgrims. But how do the pilgrims perceive these signs, symbols and events of veneration? Do they share in the official discourse? Our fieldwork in Saint Maurice and Einsiedeln has yielded a very complex picture, revealing hegemonic discourses being twisted into counterhegemonic ones. For example, another theory about the black skin of the Virgin Mary of Einsiedeln circulates among Cameroonian pilgrims. According to this narrative, the monastery was plundered and destroyed many times in the course of its history. Every time the chapel of the Virgin was burned by white infidels, the Virgin turned black. Every time, she was cleaned and restored to her place in the chapel. After many such barbaric acts, the white Christians finally gave in. They left the Virgin's skin black and clothed her in gold and silk. According to our informant, this narrative mockingly challenges the hegemony of 'whiteness' in Christian faith and culture. It shows that the notion of a white God is a social and cultural construction that can easily be twisted into its opposite – and thus into a counterhegemonic version.

17 A general observation is that in Saint Maurice as well as in Einsiedeln, "Africa" or "African" culture, religious practice, faith, etc., tends to be reified by both the organisers and the pilgrims. Stereotypes about ways of expressing religious belonging and practice inform much of these events. Their images and representations are produced and reproduced by natives from African and European countries or by Swiss citizens with an African background. They manifest in the way costumes are fashioned, the way food is offered, and the way singing is staged. In fact, the 'traditional' costumes were introduced to African colonies by missionary societies and have now been brought back from the postcolony. Food is handed out by the choirs, but most of the European pilgrims bring their own individual packages, which are difficult to share. Each choir represents a parish, city or region (canton) in Switzerland, and each chants hymns in Beti, Luo, Lingala, Tingrinya or another African language. The choirs rarely sing in English or French. Beti and Lingala hymns have become particularly popular and well known among the African pilgrims. They are accompanied by drums, xylophone (balafon), and electric guitar, and their beat makes both the members of the choirs and the audience dance energetically. The songs create those 'moments of collective effervescence' in which Durkheim saw moments of change and dynamism [Stedman Jones 2001, p. 213]. In fact, all of this can be interpreted as the orientalisating elements of the pilgrimages. However, these elements are also ways of appropriating public space and place through food, music, voice and movement. This is most obvious in St. Maurice, where the procession starts a certain distance away and winds through residential areas to the abbey in the city centre, two kilometres away. Along the way, the pilgrims are greeted, and sometimes photographed and filmed, by local residents. The groups wave to each other, and the choirs increase their drumming, singing and dancing, creating a powerful atmosphere. The street is turned into a public stage and the procession into a performance contributing to the struggle for cultural recognition.

18 In contrast, the procession in Einsiedeln winds through the woods and is much less visible to local residents or tourists, who may however participate in the final mass. As one unexpected incident demonstrates, essentializing discourse is sometimes countered by critical voices. During the 9th pilgrimage to the Saints of Africa in 2010, the abbot asked everybody to show his or her belonging by raising hands. Then he listed a number of African countries : "Who comes from Congo-Brazzaville?" "Who comes from Congo-Kinshasa?" He also mentioned Cameroon, Burundi, Ruanda, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Benin, Eritrea, and Angola. Suddenly, somebody called out, "And Switzerland?" Although a number of people in the audience applauded this remark, the abbot ignored it and continued enumerating African countries. Several pilgrims started to talk about the incident, wanting to claim recognition for Swiss citizens of African origin. "We are part of Switzerland," one of them said. Despite the will to share the event as a common experience, some discourse still contributes to reinforcing the boundary between Swiss and African participants.

19 Interestingly, many pilgrims were motivated to participate in both events because of the opportunity to meet other people from Africa. A pilgrim of Nigerian origin explained, "I come here because this is Africa". Later, we realised that some participants were Muslims or Protestants. In contrast to the missionary discourse, the people we met seemed to be rather indifferent to the objective of incorporation. They appropriated this event as a meeting spot and a marketplace for exchanging goods, news and advice. As some pilgrims may be undocumented migrants, access to information and the possibility to establish new contacts is extremely important to them. In comparison to France or Italy, where the percentage of African migrants is much higher, there are few opportunities to meet people from Africa at special events in Switzerland, and choirs figure among the few visible associations involving African migrants. Although the pilgrimages offer a gateway to these migrants, they have up to this point not met the expectations of the participants to bring together Africans and Europeans. The latter are a tiny minority at these events – mainly migrants' kin and friends, as well as missionaries, anthropologists and tourists looking on as if the spectacle were taking place in Africa. In fact, these events not only reflect *on* the postcolony, they take place *in* the postcolony.

## Conclusion : Pilgrimages as postcolonial events

20 'Sacred' or 'religious' music, composed and chanted by African choirs in Swiss Catholic churches, has become a medium of representation, identity and belonging, of mission and reverse mission. It is staged at religious events, such as pilgrimages, and carries religious and political messages. African musical performances are incorporated into the Catholic liturgy in a restricted way, by means of its pace, emphasis on movement and expressions of spiritual agency. Conversely, the event is empowered by the cultural performance of religious music that the organisers consider and present as essentially African, and by the spectacle of its colourful costumes. These features of an essentialized African Christianity are appropriated by the members of the choirs as representations of their culture and religiosity. As hybrid productions of postcolonial events and missionary encounters, they are ambiguous in negotiating the relationship between African migrants and the Swiss Catholic Church. They are meant to revive the Catholic Church, to reverse the fragility of its aging community and to make Swiss society less colonial. Yet, at the same time, the Catholic Church and its missionary organs take paternal, moral and institutional care of African citizens and non-citizens in the Swiss Confederation.

21 As we have shown above, many African pilgrims do not believe in the idea of formal membership in a community as part of a large, organised Church. As Afe Adogame (2009) reminds us and as we have written elsewhere [Salzbrunn 2013], African migrants show the capacity to perform multiple belonging without caring about the official understanding of membership. This very flexible way of practicing religious belonging, related to events, family networks and places of residence and/or circulation, is quite common among African migrants but is underestimated by the authorities of the Catholic Church in Switzerland, who wish to incorporate them just as they embraced migrants from Italy or Portugal in the 1960s. However, church representatives find it difficult to organise and care for migrants from Africa, who, unlike some other groups, prefer to avoid clerical and state control. Hence, religious events organised around musical performances make these migrants more visible and make it possible to pull and incorporate them into church structures.

22 As Afe Adogame has mentioned, the "host socio-cultural, economic and political milieu largely impacts on and shapes the course and scope of African Christian communities in Europe" [Adogame 2009, p. 499]. Therefore, a mutual influence on religious practices emerges in a migratory context. African communities have to cope with the political, religious and economic landscape in their country of residence. They appropriate the local choreography of events by filling it with new semantics. Speech, humour, music, dance and food, next to powerful collective symbols like martyrs, turn the event into an arena for public recognition and belonging. Although this is meant to empower immigrants in the struggle for recognition, the benevolence of the mission and church hierarchy masks and reinforces underlying asymmetrical power relations that are part of postcolonial thinking. They reproduce the image

of the Other who is in need of redemption and pastoral care. Therefore, the stereotypes entertained by both sides through cultural representations express a continuity of stereotypes about African and European religious practices. This, as well as the performance of sacred music, contributes to making these sacred journeys postcolonial events.

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## Notes

1 (<http://www.missio.ch/fr/missio-eglise-universelle/pelerinage-africain-2012.html>, <http://www.migratio.ch/fr/content/view/full/4967>).

2 The article draws from fieldwork in Switzerland that we conducted between 2010 and 2013 by participating in five annual pilgrimages, a choir festival and other public (mainly but not exclusively religious) events with a high proportion of African participants. We used qualitative methods to explore these events, in particular participant observation, interviews, informal talks and audio-visual recordings, which, in the case of pilgrimages, were taken for the purpose of reflecting on the event with participants ex-post. Missionary publications and video recordings made by the organisers of the pilgrimages as well as media reports on the events supplement this material. We used classical ethnography and revised grounded theory, i.e. situational analysis, following Clarke (2005) to analyse our material and thus the complexity of postcolonial events.

3 In 1990, only 24,768 African immigrants were registered. Around 6,000 were born in Switzerland and approx. 8,000 were married to Swiss spouses. In 2004, 65,092 immigrants from 49 African countries were living in Switzerland – less than one per cent of the total population (7,529,564). In 2011, 4.9 per cent of the immigrants in Switzerland (and 2.7 per cent of the emigrants leaving Switzerland) were from African countries. <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/07/blank/key/02/01.html> (accessed 28.2.13)

4 In 2011, the majority of migrants from sub-Saharan countries came from Eritrea (876), Congo (DRC, 74), Nigeria (199), Cameroon (233), Senegal (121), Kenya (156) and South Africa (257).

5 See for example : <http://www.fragemich.com/warum-haben-wir-so-viele-schwarzafrikaner-in-der-schweiz/> (accessed 20.11.2012)

6 <http://www.decolonizethcity.de/about> (accessed 26.3.13)

7 E.g. Women of Black Heritage, Les Afro-Suisses, Le CRAN, The Secundos. We wish to thank our anonymous reviewers for these and other helpful remarks.

8 See <http://www.africamission-mafr.org/histoiregb.htm> for the profile and history of the Missionaries.

9 Moreover, among the population, Maurice is not associated with Africa, at least not at first glance. The iconography does not suggest this either. A famous painting of Saint Maurice's martyrdom by El Greco from 1580-82 shows a white-skinned Maurice. There is, however, a painting by Mathias Grünewald, Saint Maurice and Erasmus, from 1517-23, showing Maurice with darker skin, but it does not circulate in this context.

10 Mgr Joseph Roduit, Homélie lors de la réception des reliques des martyres des Saints de l'Ouganda à l'abbaye de Saint Maurice. Translated by M.S.

11 Michel Ambroise Rey, Homélie donnée lors de la célébration eucharistique du 16 juin 2002 à la basilique de l'Abaye de saint Maurice. Translated by M.S.

12 9ème Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique 6 June 2010, fieldnotes taken by M.S.

13 Field notes taken by R.v.W., 3.6.2012

14 Field notes taken by R.v.W., 2.6.2013

15 Field notes from R.v.W., 25.8.2012

16 Interview given to SRF, Swiss Radio Television, 25.8.2012. Translation by M.S.

## Pour citer cet article

### Référence électronique

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***Résumé***

Fanon, Senghor, and Ela took a radical stance in criticising the structures and mechanisms of power in hegemonic situations and relations between colonial subjects and colonial masters. They aimed to liberate African societies by decolonising the mind, culture and religion of colonial subjects. In this respect, we are concerned with the continuities and ruptures of the colonial encounter and its unequal relationships. Switzerland does not have an official colonial history and yet, Swiss companies and migrants were and are part of the world's colonies. In our contribution, we question what makes an event postcolonial : in other words, how are postcolonial relations negotiated in Switzerland?

We discuss this question by analysing two annual sacred journeys in Switzerland that have been invented for and by African Christians (clerics and laity) together with the leaders of the Swiss Catholic church : one to the relics of African saints in St. Maurice, canton Valais and the other to the Black Madonna, the Virgin Mary of Einsiedeln, in the canton Schwyz. These events are empowered by the performance of African choirs – their music, dance, and costumes – but to which end and in which way?

***Entrées d'index***

***Mots-clés*** : Switzerland, Africa, Christianity, Postcolonial, colonisation, Christianisme, Afrique, sociologie, rituels