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Translocal Martyrdom: Community-Making Through African Pilgrimages in Switzerland

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Introduction: Migration and Martyrdom

Migrants carry their beliefs and forms of belonging, emotions and feelings to the different localities they cross or remain in. These discourses and practices are part of translocal social spaces which combine social practices, symbols and artefacts from transmigrants’ life-worlds at different levels: local, micro-regional, national, macro-regional and global (Pries 2010, 157). They result from new forms of delimitation that consist of but also reach beyond geographic or national boundaries. These spaces become the new sources of identification and action within specific local and global reference systems. However, this does not imply a local

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D. Pasura, M.B. Erdal (eds.), *Migration, Transnationalism and Catholicism*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58347-5_7

determinist position that denies agency to the migrants. It is the migrants who also shape the conditions of the local (Salzbrunn 2011, 171).

In our case, a transnational connection (between Switzerland and Uganda) and translocal ties (between St. Maurice and Namugongo) are framing the commemoration of African martyrdom.¹ As the locality is of particular interest for the local history of martyrdom (which took place long before the creation of the Helvetic Confederation in 1291 and of the creation of the Swiss nation-state in 1848), we prefer to speak of translocal martyrdom. However, we take into consideration transnational relations and politics as significant factors of local history. Finally, our findings indicate global relations between Africa and Europe which reach beyond transnational ties of one social group that shares common citizenship or that creates transnational religious practices between two countries (see Pasura, Thien-Huong and Bivand Erdal in the present volume). Thus, transnational relations are localized through religious events.

In this translocal context, religious practices and institutions may offer symbols of identification, serve as contact points and host social events in new places. Since about the start of the twenty-first century, the Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland has been actively renewing the cult of 'African martyrs (and saints)' by linking the idea of martyrdom with the experience of migration and place-making. In this way, the Swiss Catholic Church hierarchy aims to tackle two issues of great public and ecclesiastic concern: the growing number of immigrants, and the crisis of the Catholic community in Switzerland. In the case of migrants from Africa, the Catholic Church is actively missionising and thereby rivalling with international Pentecostal or migrant churches such as Lighthouse Chapel for new (and old) members.

In the introductory part of our chapter, we will discuss the definition of martyr and martyrdom in recent theory and the way that these terms may be used for 'community-making' (Sainsaulieu et al. 2010) in religious

¹We would like to thank Cécile Navarro, Alexandre Grandjean and Barbara Deliwo of the Institut of Social Sciences of Contemporary Religion (ISSRC) at the University of Lausanne for their support in the fieldwork of this study, for translations and for editing of the manuscript. Furthermore, we thank the reviewers as well as Maria Bivand Erdal and Dominic Pasura for stimulating comments and suggestions on the previous version of this chapter. We are particularly grateful to all pilgrims who shared their views, food and time with us, as well as to the organisers of the pilgrimages who kept an ear open for our interest in these events. May we continue pilgrimaging.

events such as pilgrimages. In the second part, we will look deeper into the practice of forming a Catholic community through identification with martyrs as it is done in St. Maurice. The notion of migrants' martyrdom is most expressive in the annual pilgrimage to the African saints of the Abbey of St. Maurice, an Augustinian monastery founded in AD 515. St. Maurice is located in French-speaking Switzerland. We will also, but to a lesser extent, refer to another annual Swiss-African pilgrimage, leading to the Black Virgin Mary of the Abbey of Einsiedeln, a Benedictine monastery founded in 934. Einsiedeln is located in German-speaking Switzerland. Here, pilgrims are encouraged to identify with the Virgin Mary. Suffering, in this case, is addressed in terms of salvation through the grace of the Holy Madonna, the mother of God. We will argue that the foundation of a cult of martyrs (and of the Virgin Mary) is an ancient strategy of identification and community-making of the Catholic Church that has recently been reinvented to (re)incorporate migrants from Africa and their descendants into the Swiss Catholic Church.² By asking what is the ritual and transformative force of the pilgrimages, we have identified essentialising performances of music and culture (Salzbrunn and von Weichs 2013). We will now centre our investigation on the institution of idols and cults (martyrs and madonnas) which are at the core of the events. The conjunction of both music and cultural performance with the veneration of superhuman powers through institutionalised cults becomes a productive force in the remaking of the ritual community (of the Catholic Church).

The Cult of Martyrs and of the Virgin Mary

For several years, the topic of martyrs and martyrdom drew little attention in social science. Partly, this neglect can be attributed to the theory of secularisation which claimed a decreasing impact of religion in modern life.

²Ballif (2014) discusses the 'Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique à St. Maurice' from the point of view of the organisers and concludes that the event 'est présenté comme le renouvellement d'une pratique pélerine ancienne'. She suggests that the event may be interpreted as a response of the organisers to a situation that is new and threatening to the Swiss Catholic church: the loss of members and of ritual celebrations. This agrees with our own findings. We go further by investigating the ritual and transformative force of these pilgrimages.

Also, the act of martyrdom did not concern modern Christians (in Europe) as opposed to those of the early Christian church. Since the return of religion in the post-secular age (Casanova 1994; Berger 1999), secularisation theory in its radical form has been discarded. In the wake of these theoretical shifts, martyrs of a plurality of religions are re-emerging as a social phenomenon of high political significance (Flanagan and Jupp 2014). They are likewise re-emerging as icons of identification for Christians worldwide.

The term 'martyr' derives from a Greek word, *martyros* or *martur* and signifies 'someone giving testimony', a witness of an event. However, the semantics of the term changed with the persecution of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Those who refused to recant the truth of the Christian faith under torture and threat of death came to be known by their fellow Christians as 'martyrs', now signifying 'victims' (Chiovaro 2000). What were the martyrs testifying to? They bore witness to the voluntary death of Jesus Christ, whose violent death became the primordial narrative of Christian martyrdom. Since then, the term has had a religious connotation. The veneration of the martyrs developed into a cult offering role models and identification patterns for Christian converts, believers and disciples up to today. In order to control the new cult, there were several attempts by Christian leaders to come to a definition of the term 'martyr', however without great success. Their opinions varied greatly. Discussions centred particularly on three issues: the religious motivation of the person, a pious and/or ascetic way of life, and the exclusion of suicidal motivations (Albert 2010, 688). A three-phase procedure was invented to transform the worldly martyrs into holy saints: first examination, then benediction and finally canonisation (Nabhan-Warren 2012). Martyrs were and are believed to enter directly into paradise due to their testimony to the resurrection of Christ, their (bloody) self-sacrifice, and their bodily suffering through torture and killing. They are therefore considered as intercessors between Christians and God and as agents with superhuman power. Reformists like Luther and Calvin rejected the cult of martyrs, its dissemination through the trafficking of relics and the belief in miracles. However, for Catholic martyrs to be canonised as saints by the pope (Holy Father) in Rome, their devotees until the present day need to bring evidence for at least *two*

miracles. Incorporated into Christian theology, the cult of martyrs and saints helped to institutionalise the early Christian and later to bolster the Catholic Church. As Middleton argues, stories of martyrdom circulated not simply to celebrate the deaths of brave individuals, but to inspire similar behaviour, and in doing so created strong boundary markers (Middleton 2014, 128). Martyrologies narrated the stories of these Christian heroes.

Much as the cult of martyrs has been neglected in anthropological and sociological studies of pilgrimages, this is also the case with the cult of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Catholic Mariology and the study of martyrology follow the same logic of narrating, idealising and proclaiming martyrs, saints and Mary. They are made symbols of identification. As with the definition of martyrs, the position of Mary in Catholic theology has been contested. Ever new titles and images of Mary emerged throughout the history of the Catholic Church. In the Catholic catechism, she holds the status of the Mother of God, of the Church and of the Mystical Body of Christ:

From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1993, part 1, sec. 2, ch. 3, art. 9, par. 6)

In anthropology, Hermkens et al. (2009) explore the empowering aspects of Marian pilgrimages for the weak and the dominated. They focus on conflicts and power dimensions in pilgrimage, but also on Turner's (1969) paradigm of rites de passage in pilgrimages. Turner stressed the liminal aspect and the *communitas* created through the events. As Eade and Coleman and Eade (2004, 17) have observed, the movement aspect of pilgrimages is often ignored in anthropological studies. In the Swiss migration context, 'the institutionalisation (or even domestication) of mobility in physical, metaphorical and/or ideological terms' is one aspect of the invention of African pilgrimages. In our case, the cult of martyrs and the cult of the Virgin Mary as the female character of spiritual

power are mobilised for a Catholic community in the re-making. As we will show below, there is a close transnational link between the cult of (Ugandan) martyrs in Switzerland and in Uganda. The formative aspect of the Ugandan martyrs for the Ugandan Catholic Church has been analysed by Kassimir (1991). More recently, Behrend has shown how a laity organisation of the Ugandan Catholic Church, the Ugandan Martyrs Guild, has turned into an anti-witchcraft movement. This “pneumatic community” in which, above all, the Holy Spirit became accessed and shared’ (Behrend 2013, 97–98) was, moreover, empowered by the spirits of the local martyrs. There are four aspects we focus on: the creation of situational *communitas*, the institutionalisation of mobility, empowerment, and the identification with the Catholic Church and her icons of martyrdom.

Community-Making Through Inculturation

We will now see how in the context of the diversification of societies and the pluralisation of religions (Salzbrunn 2014; Giordan and Pace 2014; Baumann and Stolz 2007) in Switzerland, the cult of martyrs and of the Blessed Virgin Mary is adapted to African migration. We will discuss how the Roman Catholic Church in Switzerland, institutionally, as a religious community, facilitates, challenges and intersects with the adaptation and incorporation of immigrants in their new settings by renewing the cult of martyrs and the cult of the Virgin Mary. We will also ask how translocal flows of religious rituals, customs and practices of migrants and their effects on non-migrants reshape Catholic institutions, liturgy and style of worship, and communities in Switzerland.

The Second Vatican Council paved the way for the incorporation of indigenous elements into the liturgy. The strategy of inculturation has also been adopted to incorporate cultural and religious practices from African Christians into the Swiss Catholic liturgy. Among these practices we find the cults of the African martyrs as another version of a cult of ancestors, and the cult of the Virgin Mary as the veneration of the female saint and spirit *par excellence*. Both cults are at the heart of the pilgrimages we focus on.

First and foremost, we argue that pilgrimages to the martyrs and Mary are popular with African pilgrims in Switzerland because they offer a temporary space for prayer, socialising and identification. Africa is thereby reinvented through cultural performances of music and prayer (von Weichs 2016). In this way, these pilgrimages facilitate processes of community-making in transnational African migration.

However, inculturation also bears some obstacles for the migrants and the Catholic Church in so far as indigenous practices, according to official doctrine, must not distract from belief in and contemplation of God (Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1963). This leads to a tension between cultural practices on the one and liturgical practices on the other side. Musical performances are deemed to enrich but not dominate liturgy.

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 Camerounaise 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’, the transnational migrant-pilgrims 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.

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 and so on) belonging as part of the general struggle for recognition. In our case studies, 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 (for example, Ilunga Nkonko 2012).

Switzerland: A Postcolonial Framework for Events

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 (for example, by means of suitcase diplomacy) to the confines of its national prosperity. Swiss entrepreneurs, like Henry Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, for example, participated in colonial businesses by funding a financial society linked to the 'Compagnie genevoise des colonies suisses de Sétif' in Algeria and 30,000 Swiss citizens lived in Sétif around 1880 (Pous 1979). 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.

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, 33). Expressions of racism are strongly linked to their counterpart: exoticising representations of the 'other' (Purtschert et al. 2012, 36 ff.). 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, 36 ff.). The critique of modernisation theory (Alexander 1994) has shown that Western civilisations tend to define themselves as 'modern' in contrast to others considered 'backward', 'traditional' or 'savage'. Sometimes, following Rousseau's ideas, the 'savage' was also idealised as a pure representative of a preserved, ancient culture that had not yet been influenced by the dangers of civilisation. 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), the Cameroonian theologian and philosopher Jean-Marc Ela calls for the necessity of inculturating Christianity in order to preserve or revive indigenous creativities (Ela 1985, 14). He asks how it could be possible to 'africanise' Christianity if 70 % of missionaries come from Europe and North America (Ela 1985, 14). In the wake of transnational migration, 'reverse mission' (Adogame and Shankar 2013, 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.

Even though modernisation theory, which reinforces the distinction between 'tradition' and 'modernity', has been questioned for some time in the social sciences (Balandier 1968; 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 (1968, 18). 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.³

African Migration, Orientalism and the Catholic Church in Switzerland

Since the 1990s and the implementation of structural adjustment programmes in many African states, we observe an increasing movement of people from African countries to the Swiss Confederation. It is a movement accelerated through the impoverishment of African societies and military or para-military violence. In Switzerland, immigration is controlled by a restrictive policy.⁴ However, this process has shaped the social structure of the Swiss Confederation.⁵ 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-wing activists try to disseminate stereotypes of drug dealers, black men who rape white women and so on.⁶

³The article draws from fieldwork in Switzerland that we conducted between 2010 and 2015 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 audiovisual 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, namely situational analysis, following Clarke (2005) to analyse our material and thus the complexity of postcolonial events.

⁴In 1990, only 24,768 African immigrants were registered. Around 6000 were born in Switzerland and approx. 8000 were married to Swiss spouses. In 2004, 65,092 immigrants from 49 African countries were living in Switzerland—less than 1% of the total population (7,529,564). In 2011, 4.9% of the immigrants in Switzerland (and 2.7% 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 February 2013).

⁵In 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).

⁶See for example, <http://www.fragemich.com/warum-haben-wir-so-viele-schwarzafrikaner-in-der-schweiz/> (accessed 20 November 2012).

If racism is a negative dimension of this fear of the Other and of post-colonial 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. We will see to what extent the asymmetrical power relations analysed by Fanon are still visible today.

Following Purtschert et al. (2012, 14), we assume that Swiss historiography is shaped by a 'colonial imagery', although explicit mention of Switzerland's implication in colonial history is extremely rare. Therefore, the present chapter 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.

As the Catholic Church in Western Europe, notably in France, Germany and Switzerland, sees herself confronted with a declining number of seminarians, qualified personnel are increasingly moving from African countries and India to Western Europe. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Catholic immigrants from Italy, Spain and Portugal have substituted the shrinking of the Swiss Catholic Church. In the 1990s the Swiss Catholic communities began to rapidly lose members.⁷ In this context, new migrants from overseas were and are particularly welcomed as new

⁷The percentage of Catholics amongst the Swiss population (over the age of 15) was 42.5% in 1910, 45.4% in 1960, remained relatively stable until 1990 and then declined to 38% in 2013. The percentage of Protestants fell from 56.2% in 1910 to 26.1% in 2013 and the percentage of the population that declared it was without religion rose from 0.5% in 1960 to 22.2% in 2013. The fact that the Catholic Church lost a smaller percentage of members than the Protestant church(es) is due to migration: the majority of Swiss immigrants have been Catholic. Source: Federal Office of Statistics; Judith Albißer, 2015: *Aktuelle Daten aus der Religions- und Kirchenstatistik der Schweiz*, *Factsheet Kirchenstatistik*, Schweizerisches Pastoralsoziologisches Institut (SPI) St. Gallen (Dezember 2015), p. 3. <https://spi-sg.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/albißer-j-2015-factsheet-kirchenstatistik-d.pdf>

members and personnel. However, according to Marco Schmid, the former representative of Migratio (Office of the Swiss Catholic Bishops' Conference for pastoral care for migrants), African migrants are difficult to reach through conventional pastoral care or through official Church structures.⁸ The Swiss Catholic Church therefore seeks assistance by employing personnel from Africa, and, by integrating performative elements such as music, dance and story-telling into their services, assuming these make them more attractive to their congregations. This is part of a more general tendency of eventisation or spectacularisation of faith which we can observe on a local and on a global level (namely with the World Youth Days). However, the increasing participation in events does not necessarily go along with an increasing engagement in church structures in the long run (Salzbrunn 2014).

In the following section, we give a brief history of the pilgrimages dedicated to the Saints of Africa in St. Maurice and to the Virgin Mary in Einsiedeln, we contextualise the transnational relations of these sacred sites, their objects of veneration and their eventisation, and we discuss our empirical studies of the two pilgrimages in the years from 2011 to 2016.

'African' Pilgrimages in Switzerland

The 'Pèlerinage aux Saints d'Afrique' took place for the first time in June 2002. 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.⁹ 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

⁸ Interview R.v.W. with Marco Schmid, Fribourg, 7 December 2011.

⁹ The profile and history of the missionaries, <http://www.africamission-mafr.org/histoiregb.htm> (accessed 19 October 2016).

Algeria. 'The first Catholic communities in Uganda (of which 22 martyrs are originated) were evangelised by the first caravan of the White Fathers: Siméon Lourdel, Léon Livinhac, Amans Delmas, Pierre Girault and Léon Barbot, during 1880–1890. These martyrs have become the protectors of the Africanum of Fribourg.'¹⁰ By this choice, a clear transnational link between Uganda and Switzerland has been established.

As the White Fathers also consider certain parts of Europe a place to be reconquered for the Catholic Church, they now engage in missionary work here. In Germany and Switzerland, they serve as contact points for migrants and refugees, sometimes in collaboration with Caritas, or organise events in schools and kindergartens 'in order to bring the African continent closer'.¹¹ 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 la Foi' in Fribourg (Ilunga Nkonko 2012, 6). These contacts gave him the idea of creating a pilgrimage dedicated to African saints. The 'Groupe de coopération missionnaire en Suisse romande' (GCMRSR), which is part of 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 Thebes martyrs in S. Maurice. Since then, the pilgrimage has taken place every year in the month of June in commemoration of the execution of several of the Ugandan martyrs said to have been killed on Ascension Thursday, 3 June 1886.¹² Since 2007, the

¹⁰ Jean-Marie Gabioud, Roman Stäger, Claude Maillard, Jean-Pierre Chevrolet, 2011: *Lettre à nos amis* 2011. Pères Blancs de Suisse. Fribourg, p. 29. Translated by M.S.

¹¹ According to the mission statement of the White Fathers in Switzerland and in Germany, the main activity is missionary work in African countries. The education of future missionaries is conducted in Europe. Besides these activities, they aim at changing the image of Africa by organising presentations for children. The 'Africa Center' in Berlin organises networking events for refugees, in order to 'build up contacts to the African community in Berlin and to get information on day to day questions': <http://www.africamissionare.de/de/Veranstaltungen%20Berlin.html> (accessed 19 October 2016).

Photos taken at the White Fathers' weekly contact point for migrants in Fribourg can be found here: <http://www.africanum.ch/fr/home/fribourg-rencontre-des-migrants.html> (accessed 19 October 2016).

¹² <http://www.ugandamartyrshrine.org-ug/details.php?id=8>, (accessed 21 December 2015).

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 Thebes (in today's Egypt) were killed at the end of the third century because of their refusal to persecute other Christians. A century later, in 380, St 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 St. Maurice, which is today the oldest continuously inhabited abbey in Northern Europe. The story told during the pilgrimages reports that this narrative symbolises the first link established by Swiss Catholics to African martyrs. In 2012, Michel Ambroise Rey, canon of the abbey St. Maurice and director of the eleventh pilgrimage to the African saints, introduced the topic in this way:

I will now begin by presenting you St. Maurice and his companions. St. Felicity and St. Perpetua will follow. St. Maurice is thus born in Upper Egypt, in Thebes, today called Luxor. And there, under the impulsion of a great, great saint who had evangelised that part of Upper Egypt, [it was] St. Antoine of the desert, having known the Christ and having loved Him, [St. Maurice] put himself at the service of the Roman armies with numerous companions and friends. He has been sent from Upper Egypt first to Rome, and there, Emperors Maximilian and Diocletian have sent this Theban legion up to Gaul, through Mount-Joux, present-day Great St Bernard, they have descended to Octodure, present-day [the city of] Martigny, and have arrived here, where they lived several months or years. People that lived here became Christians, and at a given moment, the Emperor said, 'we must kill those Christians there because there is a sedition against my authority.' And it is at that moment that Maurice and his glorious companions have paid a magnificent homage to Christ. They said: 'Emperor, we are your servants and we owe you military obedience, but above all we are servants of God and it is to Him that we owe obedience.' And it is here, on this land, in this place, that around the year 290 they gave their lives for Christ. And 1700 years later, still, we give ourselves by this red camail [mozetta], that is why I wear it, a sign that we want in our turn be witnesses to this love for others and for God, up to the point of giving our lives for each of our brothers and sisters, for justice and for peace.¹³

¹³ Canon Michel-Ambroise Rey, 11. *Pèlerinage aux Saints et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2012, Vérolliez-St. Maurice. Translated by R.v.W. and Barbara Dellwo.

On official documents and websites of the abbey, Maurice is mentioned as being from the region of 'Thebes in Egypt', but not explicitly as being 'African'.¹⁴ Furthermore, the question about the historical existence of St. Maurice divides contemporary archaeologists. The 'négateurs' (negators) and 'les bons esprits' (the good spirits) as they are named in regional circles, have struggled about this for decades, namely because it seems unthinkable that soldiers from the oriental part of the Roman Empire were sent to the occidental part, north above the Alps. However, there is a certain consensus about the existence of a cult of St. Maurice (Chevallet and Roduit 2014). For our purpose, it is interesting to note that the discussion about archaeological or literary sources concerning the existence of St. Maurice has never been raised by the organisers of the pilgrimage. None of our interlocutors seemed to put into question the story about Maurice and the legion from Thebes. From an anthropological point of view, the contemporary impact of such stories and its effects on diverse societies (in our case on residents of African origin in Switzerland) is worthwhile to analyse. Interestingly, the local population of St. Maurice seems to be absent from the pilgrimage of African Saints whereas the festivities around St. Maurice (at the anniversary of Maurice) are extremely popular among the local population. According to interviews and informal conversations with local residents and persons who have grown up there, a large part of the population ignored the existence of the pilgrimage and the African origins of Maurice. Even an elected member of the city council of St. Maurice was not aware of these events.¹⁵ She does not attend church services but participates each year as a political representative in the important festivities of St. Maurice. During this event, the abbey choir performs but no African choir is invited. Are there parallel logics in the way the Catholic Church conceives these events? Do they intend to address different types of public?

¹⁴ 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 St. Maurice's martyrdom by El Greco from 1580 to 82 shows a white-skinned Maurice. There is, however, a painting by Mathias Grünewald, St. Maurice and Erasmus, from 1517 to 23, showing Maurice with darker skin, but it does not circulate in this context.

¹⁵ Notes taken by M.S., 27 September 2013 and several informal exchanges with former residents conducted by M.S. in 2014.

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 reason¹⁶ for their murder was their faith. Fourteen Protestants, seven 'pagans' and one Muslim were also killed under the same circumstances (Ilunga Nkonko 2012, 13 ff.). Each year, on 3 June, the Ugandan Catholic and Protestant churches celebrate and commemorate the martyrdom at Namugongo, a hill in the capital city of Kampala and the former execution ground of the Kingdom of Buganda. Both have erected shrines for their martyr-saints. In 1993, Pope John Paul II visited Uganda and elevated the new construction of the Catholic shrine to a minor basilica.¹⁷ As Kassimir argues, the Catholics had successfully appropriated the martyrdom of the pages as a Catholic event which 'proved to be an important catalyst [...] for the formation of a Catholic Church and a Catholic community in the last quarter of the nineteenth century [in Uganda]' (Kassimir 1991, 359). Pope Francis on his apostolic journey to Africa in 2015 also visited Uganda and there not only both shrines at Namugongo, but also the shrine of three of the Catholic martyrs at Munyonyo, a residential area at Lake Victoria. This shrine was in fact 'rediscovered' by Franciscan missionaries with a Polish background who together with the archbishop of Kampala, developed a concept to revive the martyrs' shrine.¹⁸

¹⁶ However, other reasons for the death of the Ugandan martyrs were discussed by historians and anthropologists. (For an excellent discussion see Kassimir 1991.) Most of the martyrs were pages of the Kabaka and thus under his ritual, political and administrative authority. The scientific and public debates pivot around Mwanga's homosexual desires and his concern for royal ritual and political power. The anti-gay, evangelical and charismatic movements in Uganda and elsewhere interpret the martyrs' resistance as a heroic act confronting satanic acts (for example *Afrique espoir, Les Saints d'Afrique*, Kinshasa 2009).

¹⁷ <http://www.ugandamartyrshrine.org/ug/details.php?id=1#>, (accessed 20 December 2015)

¹⁸ <http://www.munyonyo-shrine.ug/index.php/pages/construction>, (accessed 10 December 2015).

For future activities they are planning to found a new pilgrimage centre at Munyonyo, consisting of a shrine church and other facilities for the pilgrims which will be administrated by the community of Conventual Franciscans (Greyfriars) of the Mary Immaculate Mission in Uganda.¹⁹ Likewise, they founded a project committee, consisting of Ugandan business men, industrial leaders and church leaders, members of public services and other elites, to create a network of supporters. Thus, the local and global (re)formation of the Catholic Church through the cult of martyrs, through shrines and pilgrimages and through the dissemination of the martyrs' relics, is an ongoing process that encompasses the Swiss Catholic Church.

The commemoration of the Ugandan martyrs which attracts many pilgrims and visitors and the frequent visits of popes²⁰ to this country is interpreted as a sign of distinction by Kampala's Archbishop emeritus, Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala:

The holy Uganda Martyrs have been the focal point attracting pilgrims to the country because we do not see any other kind of social superiority that Uganda has over other African countries except that we have been privileged in modern times to have such great numbers of young people who gave up their lives in order to witness for Christ.²¹

On 16 June 2002,²² relics of Ugandan martyrs, Charles Lwanga and his companions, were brought to the St. Sigismund chapel in the Basilica of St. Maurice, where they remain today next to St. Maurice and his companions. In this case, the transfer was made possible through the intervention of the White Fathers of Fribourg, and thus again through

¹⁹ <http://www.munyonyo-shrine.ug/access>, (accessed 10 December 2015).

²⁰ Pope Paul VI came in 1969 and Pope St. John Paul II in 1993.

²¹ *Catholic Radio Sappientia*, cited by Vatican Radio, 6 November 15, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/06/cardinal_wamala_on_pope_francis%E2%80%99_visit_to_uganda/1184790 (accessed 20 December 2015).

²² *Les Echos de Saint Maurice. Nouvelles de l'Abbaye*. Numéro 6, Décembre 2002, p. 6.

missionary agency.²³ The official information letter of the Abbey²⁴ describes the event as follows:

Sunday 16 June. For a long time, the Christians living in Switzerland have desired to find a place of worship where they could assemble and venerate the relics of their martyrs of Uganda, Charles Lwanga and his companions. The idea of choosing St. Maurice, place of martyr of a legion of African origin, pleased them. During the afternoon of 16 June, the relics of these witnesses of faith on African soil are brought solemnly and lodged in the reliquary casket of St. Sigismund chapel (upper part of the eastern aisle of the basilica). From now on, every year, the first Sunday of June, there will be a pilgrimage of the Blacks of Switzerland to 'St. Maurice the African'.

Here, a clear link between the Ugandan saints and the place of martyr of a 'legion of African origin' is drawn. Furthermore, the initial intention was to name the pilgrimage to 'Maurice the African' in order to emphasise this link. Finally, the intention to attract 'the Black Switzerland' to this event is expressed clearly.

During the 2007 pilgrimage, Mgr Joseph Roduit, the abbot of St. Maurice, took the opportunity to call on African migrants in Switzerland to 'perpetuate a 1500 year old tradition' by getting involved in missionary work.²⁵ 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'.²⁶ 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'.²⁷ Three years

²³ The details of the transfer of the relics from Uganda to Switzerland are not yet revealed, only the fact that they were brought to the Basilica of St. Maurice on 16 June 2002 (see above).

²⁴ *Les Echos de Saint-Maurice. Nouvelles de l'Abbaye*, 6, 2002, p. 6. Translated by M.S.

²⁵ Mgr. Joseph Roduit, *Homélie lors de la réception des reliques des martyrs des Saints de l'Ouganda à l'Abbaye de Saint-Maurice, at the 9. Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 6 June 2010. Translated by M.S.

²⁶ Michel Ambroise Rey, *Homélie donnée lors de la célébration eucharistique du 16 juin 2002 à la basilique de l'abbaye de Saint-Maurice*. Translated by M.S.

²⁷ Mgr. Joseph Roduit, 9. Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique, 6 June 2010, St. Maurice.

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 2011, a Congolese nun, Anuarita Nengapeta, was honoured as martyr. According to the martyrology of the abbey St. Maurice, she was kidnapped in 1964 together with other sisters of the Convent of the Holy Family. She was stabbed to death, because she refused sexual intercourse with a Congolese officer. Was she a martyr? Since 1978, her martyrdom has been examined by the Vatican Congregation for the Saints. Finally, in 1985, on the occasion of his visit of Zaire, Anuarita was beatified by Pope Jean-Paul II. In 2012, Claude Didierlaurent, representative of Missio and member of the GCMSR, called for solidarity of the pilgrims with present day martyrs whom he identified as 'boat people' and 'undocumented migrants'. Claude Didierlaurent welcomed the pilgrims in 2012:

We celebrate the eleventh pilgrimage of the Saints of Africa, in particular those [martyrs] around Maurice and his companions, but also of all African martyrs, known and unknown, from long ago, yesterday and today. Parting to discover the world, conquer territories, share other cultures, make war there, then negotiate peace, those are the societal facts that mark the history of mankind. They are emissaries of liberty and hope; they have shaped our civilisations for better or worse. Decades ago, mind you, boat people risked [their lives] to cross the Chinese ocean, escaping persecution. Today, the young people of Africa, likewise on boats of fortune, leave a land or country of hopelessness for a journey without return, just for a better life with or for their families. And Europe becomes scared. A foreigner, even someone with documents, won't be suspicious because of his status as a stranger? We are also here today in order to fight against discriminations, those of ordinary racism, whatever they may be. We need to remember that the new migrants, who tempt fate up to the peril of their life, testify an immense suffering, individually and in their families, but also a terrible failure of the global mechanisms of immigration regulations, which are administered by the rich countries. The greater part of mankind is excluded from the benefits of the world. The North has built up his wealth and spreads his materialism on the pillage of world resources, after a long period

of conquests and colonisation. We are all migrants. That is why we need solidarity with the migrants wherever they come from and whatever their status. To migrate means ruptures, with families, cultures, and social ties that can be traumatic. And to share their suffering and their hopes with the migrants is the basis of our active solidarity. The migrants concern us and push us to surpass ourselves in our outpouring of solidarity but also to get out of our comfort and certitude, and they incite us to conversion, the internal migration.²⁸

In 2012, after the welcoming speeches, selected migrants gave testimony about the horrors of their flight from repression and terror in their countries of origin and on their way to Europe. Some narrated stressful situations in refugee camps and difficulties encountered as undocumented migrants, but some also gave testimony to miraculous solutions in apparently hopeless situations. In this speech, different categories of 'migrants' are blurred and mould into one, the refugee. In analogy with 'all African martyrs, known and unknown, from long ago, yesterday and today [...] the new migrants [...] testify an immense suffering'. Subsequently, in conjuring a 'unity in diversity' and a *communitas* of the Catholic Church for all, power relations are partly muted or inverted, by assigning agency to the pilgrims. According to our observations and interviews however, not all the participants identified with this overall category of migrants. Some of them are well established and long-term residents; others even have Swiss passports. The will of the organisers to create a feeling of *communitas* through solidarity with the excluded is ambiguous. On the one hand, it supports the capacity of a person to escape from suffering, and thus recognises that person's agency. On the other hand, it maintains the African population in a position of asymmetric power relations, in a position of weakness, thereby perpetuating a (post)colonial way of thinking. Could we imagine the same kind of discourse about Asians? Of course, the historical exploitation of African countries by colonial powers as well as the ongoing domination of Western economies is a fact with the consequences of which many of the African transnational migrants had and have to struggle. However, to tackle the postcolonial mind in a country

²⁸ Claude Laurentdidier, president of GCMSR, 11. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2012, Vérolliez-St. Maurice.

without official colonies is still a taboo. The second part of the speech follows the logic of 'reversed mission', underlining that the African choirs are the hosts and masters of the ceremony:

But above all, thank YOU, all the African choirs which came from all over Switzerland. It is YOUR pilgrimage. It is YOUR feast. You invited our immigrant brothers who came from all over the world, you invited us, the autochthons, and it is a deeply felt pleasure to have received YOUR invitation. May this ceremony, which now begins, bring us closer one to another, may it blow away all frontiers, particularly those of racism, of anxiety and of indifference. Let us therefore live this pilgrimage in peace, prayer, friendship and a spirit of sharing, so that the feast may be beautiful. Let us all be welcomed in this sacred place.²⁹

Community, despite all difference, is made through pilgrimage, through the cult of martyrs and through the (controlled) inculturation of African cultural elements. The event starts with the naming of the martyrs selected through the pilgrimage committee. The martyrs' names and martyrdoms are recorded into the martyrology of the Abbey of St. Maurice and they are narrated to the pilgrims. Prayers follow and finally, before dining and marching to the shrines of St. Maurice and the Ugandan martyrs in the abbey, the assembled 'African' choirs chant and dance in a kind of competition. It is through this procedure that the notion of martyrdom is renewed and transmitted to the pilgrims who in this moment represent a community in Christ. By framing and enacting this pilgrimage, the 'African' and non-African pilgrims contribute to the institutionalisation of the event. But does this also involve the 'domestication' of their religious mobility? Community is also made through 'internal migration' and 'solidarity' as a form of political activism. Nevertheless, only very few locals attend the pilgrimage and only few 'autochthones' from the whole of Switzerland join the pilgrims. During the procession from Vérolliez to St. Maurice in 2010, several nuns and elderly Swiss were praying with a chaplet in the front of the procession whereas 'African' choirs were singing in the rear.

²⁹ Claude Laurentdidier, president of GCMSR, 11. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2012, Vérolliez-St. Maurice.

In 2012, the abbot of St. Maurice, Mgr Joseph Roduit, honoured forty Catholic seminarians who had been killed in Bura, Burundi, in 1997 by Interahamwe militia:

Later, I will repeat the Creed and by three times I will invite you to say if you believe. And at the end, we will say 'Amen', which means, 'Yes, I agree'. So, brothers and sisters, each of us are temples of the Holy Spirit, and today, by coming so many, we manifest our universal fraternity, which surpasses the limits of seas and continents, here a single people before God, and it is the wonder of the Universal Church, that wherever we go in the world, we meet with brothers and sisters who know God as a father, Jesus as a brother, the Holy Spirit as the one who inspires us. By coming here today, (even by waking you up early), even by enduring the afternoon rain, you have accomplished an act of faith. Here, we worship Egyptian martyrs, martyrs at the end of the third century, but the martyrdom is not over, and you have recalled this morning, those martyrs from Burundi, but how many other countries still know martyrs today? And those who have the courage to go up to the testimony of their faith help us, and it is a paradox, since they seem to have lost, they have lost their lives and it is they who give us courage. The martyr is a witness, so could we in our turn bring to our entourage the simple faith in a generous life, well lived in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.³⁰

The abbot's sermon reflects an aim to bond a situative *communitas* of pilgrims to the Universal Catholic Church by appealing to the universality of martyrdom for the Christian faith. By drawing a line between the Early Church and the pilgrims of St. Maurice, he appeals to accomplish the tasks of giving testimony and of defending the universality of the (Catholic) Church.

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.

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 St. Maurice preached on the topic of monotheism, warning of the dangers of polytheism and paganism.³¹ 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, in 2013, the organising committee of the pilgrimage returned to its former practice and invited the 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 refused to adapt African practices and representations indiscriminately to the local liturgy, the African pilgrims appropriated the place and the event by adopting it to their cultural representations. As the 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.³²

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 Volunteers 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 the media. Some years after the first 'African pilgrimage' in the French part of Switzerland, Migratio, the administrative organ of the

³¹ Fieldnotes taken by R.v.W. at the 1.1. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2012.

³² Fieldnotes taken by R.v.W. at the 1.2. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2013.

³⁰ Mgr. Joseph Roduit, Homélie lors de la 1.1. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 3 June 2012. Translated by R.v.W. and Barbara Dellwo.

Conference of Catholic Bishops of Switzerland copied the pilgrimage for Christians coming from Africa. Since the 1960s, Migratio has 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 2012.³³ 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.³⁴

In fact, the final prayer of the pilgrimage takes place in the Chapel of Grace (Gnadenkappelle) in front of the Black Virgin Mary. Originally, the chapel was devoted to the hermit and friar St. Meinrad who had been slain by brigands in 861 (Salzgeber 2008, 2). Legend tells that Christ together with saints and angels consecrated the chapel, Meinrad's hermitage, in 948. Up to today, the *Engelweihe* (sanctification by the angels) takes place annually to commemorate this legendary event.³⁵ The present Black Madonna dates from the fifteenth century and replaced a Roman statue of the Blessed Virgin that burned in 1465. The scientific and religious communities have diverging opinions about the origins of the

Virgin Mary's black skin. According to the abbey guide (Salzgeber 2008, 10), smoke from candles and lamps blackened the face and the hands of the Madonna. 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 St. 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 (for example in 1798 by the French, Salzgeber 2008, 8), 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 (since 1600, the Madonna wears a gown in the tradition of the Spanish royal court, Salzgeber 2008, 9). 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. It also reveals how legendary, historical and translocal events (before the invention of the nation state) are telescoped and reinterpreted to produce new semantics of religious symbols and identification figures in the contemporary Catholic Church.

As a general observation, in St. Maurice as well as in Einsiedeln, 'Africa' or 'African' culture, religious practice, faith and so on, tend 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

³³ Fieldnotes taken by R.v.W. at the 1. *Afrikanische Wallfahrt nach Einsiedeln*, 25. August 2012.

³⁴ Interview given to SRF, Swiss Radio Television, 25 August 2012. Translation by M.S.

³⁵ For the event *Engelweihe* in Einsiedeln, see <http://www.engelweihe.ch/> (accessed 13 April 2016).

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, Tigrinya 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, 213). In fact, all of this can be interpreted as the orientalist 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.

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, the essentialising discourse is sometimes countered by critical voices. During the ninth 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.³⁶

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 are undocumented migrants,³⁷ 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 (Salzbrunn and von Weichs 2013).

Conclusion

The present chapter has shown various mutual transformations of religious practices through transcultural pilgrimages and the commemoration of translocal martyrdom. The pilgrimage to the martyrs of St. Maurice in the French part of Switzerland and her counterpart to the Black Madonna of

³⁶ Fieldnotes taken by M.S. at the 9. *Pèlerinage aux Saintes et Saints d'Afrique*, 6 June 2010, St. Maurice.

³⁷ M.S. has met several undocumented migrants during the 2010 pilgrimage. We have followed the trajectory of one of them until his imprisonment and expulsion from Switzerland. His contacts with other Christians have been an important source of support for him.

Einsiedeln in the German part of Switzerland, both reinvigorate Catholic practices by incorporating elements of African religiosity such as music (and choir singing), the veneration of ancestors, and the belief in the power of (female) spirits and deities. The two annual Catholic events are interconnected within a translocal and transnational religious space that includes Switzerland, the East (Uganda) and the North (Egypt) of Africa. They are also interlinked in time, entangling the history of the Early Church (the martyrdom of St. Maurice) with the history of colonial (the Ugandan martyrs and the White Fathers) and post-colonial Christian mission work in (Missio, The White Fathers, Migratio) and from Africa (African pilgrims, laities and clergies in Switzerland).

The commemoration of (African) martyrdom, together with the reinvigoration of Africa (through music, clothes, story-telling and so on) by clerics and missionaries of the Swiss Catholic Church and by migrants of African origins, has created a temporary and situative *communitas*. This *communitas* is founded on the notion of sacred ancestors and their martyrdom as a testimony for the truth of, belonging to and suffering for the belief in Christ. It is equally founded on the veneration of the Blessed Virgin who figures powerfully as a female protector in African Christianity. The concepts of the male and female martyrs are closely linked to the ontogenesis and growth of the Christian church. They are now revived to rejuvenate the Catholic Church in the twenty-first century and to address the suffering of migrants and refugees from Africa. Apart from these identification figures, 'sacred' or 'religious' music, composed and chanted by African choirs in Swiss Catholic Churches, has become a medium of representation, believing and belonging, of mission and reverse mission. It is staged at religious events, such as pilgrimages, and carries religious and political messages. At the same time, African musical performances are incorporated into the Catholic liturgy in a restricted way, in regard to the musical dynamics, movements, images, objects and expressions of spiritual agency. On the one side, the events are empowered by the cultural performance of religious music that the organisers consider and present as essentially African, and by the spectacle of colourful costumes. On the other, these features of an essentialised 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, the pilgrimages are ambiguous in negotiating the relationship between African migrants and the Swiss Catholic Church. They were invented as new traditions to revive the old Catholic Church, to reverse the fragility of its aging community, to incorporate immigrants of African origin, and to reshape the religious landscape in Swiss society.

In this post-secular age, the Catholic Church and her missionary organs take paternal, moral and institutional care of African citizens and non-citizens in the Swiss Confederation. As we have shown, clerics, missionaries and laity mobilise references to Africa, African martyrs and saints in order to create a translocal link between experiences, legends and stories in different places in African and European countries. Besides Africa, 'Blackness' is also an emic category used by certain authors and speakers to construct an identity that aligns with the martyrs and the Blessed Virgin. In the case of St. Maurice, the explicit reference to his African origin is expressed in the particular context of the Swiss 'Pilgrimage to African Saints'. This is supposed to build a bridge between Swiss-African local history and saints from Burundi, Cameroon or Uganda celebrated during the annual events. Furthermore, the relation between biographical narratives of ancient martyrs and contemporary migrants is discursively constructed in order to deepen the link between Christian residents of African origin and Swiss Catholic institutions. As we have shown, these discourses can lead to numerous misunderstandings and different interpretations, especially among highly skilled well established participants of the pilgrimages who claim to be considered as Swiss citizens instead of being permanently reminded of their skin colour or their origins. Hence, the Swiss residents or citizens of African origin enjoy the temporary feeling of *communitas*, but appropriate it in a different way.

In the case of Einsiedeln, the strength of the Black Virgin Mary is a sign of African empowerment and a means of identification with a symbol of female divine power. Furthermore, the pilgrimage is a temporary space for prayer, socialising and exchange of information. The Missionaries for Africa, or 'White Fathers', continue their work in African countries as well as in Switzerland, namely by providing a space of encounter for refugees, African residents and people interested in Africa. But do these activities lead to a long-lasting *communitas* or to an engagement within the Swiss Catholic Church?

At the *Pèlerinage aux Saints d'Afrique* 2012 in St. Maurice, Catholic clergy and missionaries presented transnational migration primarily as a movement under suffering and stress. African migrants were seen as victims of globalisation processes and their suffering was interpreted as a martyrdom that affords the solidarity of all Christians, in and beyond Switzerland. This equation of African martyrdom in the past with experiences of suffering and racism by African migrants in the present was supposed to foster a Catholic community with a collective identity. However, interviews conducted by us at the pilgrimage in St. Maurice reveal that the pilgrims were highly diverse in terms of social milieus, residence status and financial resources. We have met asylum seekers from Nigeria, Cameroonian entrepreneurs from Lausanne and long-established families with Swiss passports from various origins. The latter did not identify with the experience of martyrdom. Rather, they sought for recognition as Swiss citizens, even though they expressed sympathy for the suffering of (undocumented) migrants. Predominantly, our interviewees expressed their sensation and enthusiasm for the pilgrimage as a community-fostering event. They were particularly cheerful when music was performed with balafons (xylophons), drums and guitars, when 'African' choirs performed, and when the liturgy included thanksgiving with exotic fruits, dance and jubilation performed by women and children. Following situational analysis, we can assume that certain moments of the event allow participants from various origins to express a feeling of belonging which leads to empowerment. But does this feeling and the situative *communitas* exist beyond the event?

Indeed, the situative *communitas* has become institutionalised with the participation of an increasing number of African choirs since the invention of the pilgrimage in St. Maurice. However, this *communitas* does not reach far beyond the group of missionaries, choir members with their kin, and organisers that are involved in the event. In Einsiedeln, the pilgrimage is still a recent innovation with a number of the same African choirs participating in it. Here, the shrine of the Black Virgin Mary is a powerful symbol of identification, not only for Black but also for White Christians. However, membership in the Swiss Catholic Church is but one option for old and new immigrants from Africa. The religious diversity in Switzerland provides an expanding field of alternatives that are chosen in addition or as a supplement for membership in the mainstream churches (Kabongo 2011, 49).

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 or 'butinage religieux' (Chanson et al. 2014) of practising religious belonging, related to events, family networks and places of residence and/or circulation, is quite common among African migrants. It seems to be underestimated by the authorities of the Catholic Church in Switzerland, who wish to incorporate African migrants just as they embraced those from Italy or Portugal in the 1960s. However, church representatives find it difficult to organise and care for migrants and refugees from Africa, who tend to mistrust institutional representatives of their host country. Hence, religious events organised around musical performances make these migrants more confident and visible, and make it possible to pull and incorporate them into church structures.

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, 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.

Recently, on a broader level, contemporary initiatives taken by the current Pope Francis confirm the will of the Catholic Church to deepen the link between Europe and the saints of African origin. The saints of Uganda who were put at the centre of the pilgrimage of African Saints

in St. Maurice in 2010, have been honoured by Francis' papal tour to Kampala in 2015 and his reflections of missionary work based on the example of the Ugandan martyrs.³⁸

Nevertheless, the question whether this kind of recognition through powerful symbols has an impact on local Catholic practices in the long run remains open. So far, the influence of African immigrants in the Swiss Catholic Church seems to be limited to special events or to particular locations of this denomination. There are some examples where African immigrants get engaged as special ministers of the Eucharist or in other volunteering. Besides, a parallel structure of Christian churches with an African mode of expression 'Des Églises d'expression africaine' began to evolve from the mid-1990s (Kabongo 2011).³⁹ These churches constitute the 'Conférence des églises Africaines en Suisse' (CEAS). This structure and the fact that the pilgrimage to African Saints in St. Maurice is widely ignored by the broader non-African Catholic population and by the local population of the pilgrimage sites shows that the gap between the Catholic (and other Christian) traditions in Africa and the Catholic Church in Switzerland is still wide.

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³⁸ http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/12/04/pope_francis_reflects_on_his_trip_to_africa_and_the_importan/1191378 (accessed 20 December 2015).

³⁹ According to the Reverend Joseph Kabongo, religious ceremonies in an African mode were initiated in Geneva by the francophone African pastors Kilola, Mayembe and Kabongo as early as 1983. In 1997 CEAS was founded as an umbrella organisation for African Christian Churches in Switzerland with the objective of caring for immigrants from the African continent and of sheltering them from sectarian churches (Kabongo 2011), <http://ceasuisse.hebfree.org/> (accessed 12 April 2016).

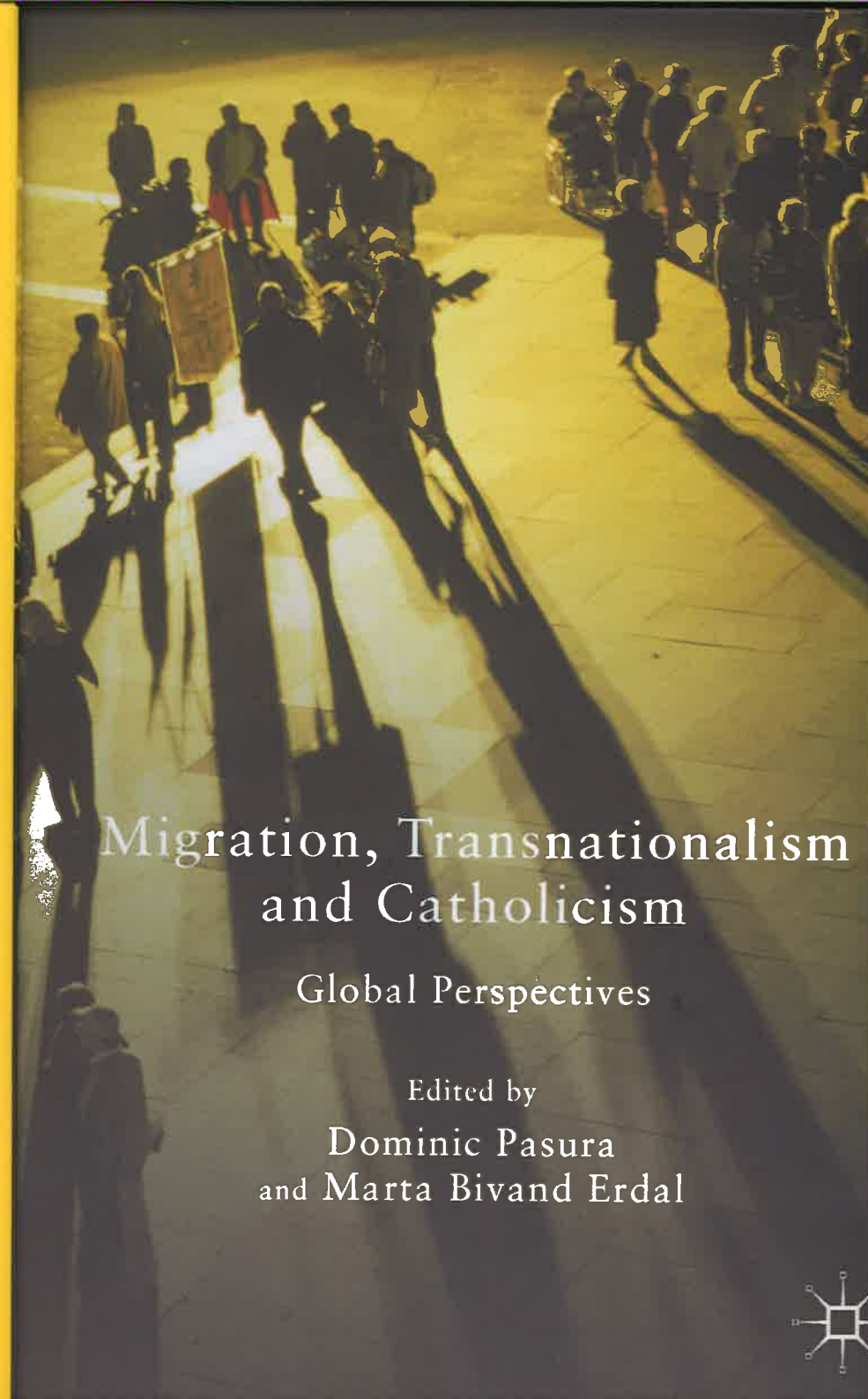
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Migration, Transnationalism
and Catholicism

Dominic Pasura
and Marta Bivand Erdal



Migration, Transnationalism and Catholicism

Global Perspectives

Edited by

Dominic Pasura
and Marta Bivand Erdal



'The stereotype of Catholicism as a static, archaic, top-down religion is shattered forever by this fascinating collection of essays which explore its flows, crossings and entanglements in the contexts of modern migrations.'

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ISBN 978-1-137-58346-8



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Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to the contributors for sharing their scholarship on this fascinating topic and for their patience in responding to our numerous requests for further information. We have reaped innumerable benefits from their work. This collection is a testament to their knowledge, expertise and authority on the subject of analysing the impacts of migration and transnationalism on global Catholicism. The majority of contributors to this volume participated in a workshop held at Middlesex University in 2015 to explore the various ways in which contemporary international migration and transnationalism impact Catholicism both as practice and institutionally. The Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University London, UK, hosted the workshop and we are grateful for their hospitality. The inspiring, collegial and inquiring atmosphere of that workshop has been the guiding force within the joint effort of completing work on this edited volume.

We would like to thank our families and colleagues at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the University of Glasgow whose encouragement and support has been important in working with this book on migration, transnationalism and Catholicism.

We also greatly appreciate the help and support from Judith Allan and colleagues at Palgrave Macmillan, throughout the period working on this book.

ISBN 978-1-137-58346-8 ISBN 978-1-137-58347-5 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58347-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016955939

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

The registered company address is: The Campus, 4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW, United Kingdom

vi Acknowledgements

Dominic would like to dedicate this volume to his late mum, Rosa Pasura, a devout Catholic and an inspiration to him who sadly passed away while we were putting this volume together. This book is dedicated in loving memory of her.

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