

Review

Globalisation, religion and religiosity in Tanzania

Huruma Luhuvilo Sigalla

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Dar es Slaam, Tanzania.

Received 13 May 2014; Accepted 04 May 2015

This article examines the impact of globalisation on religion and religiosity in Tanzania in the face of the neo-liberal ideology taking hold of the country. It focuses mainly on christian groups and denominations influenced by pentecostalism in Tanzania. Thus, the discussion does not include other religions because since 1980s, it is evident that there has been an increase of new churches within christian groups. The main argument is that neo-liberal ideologies, which have been apparent in the east African countries since the 1980s, have affected people's religious attitudes, expectations and beliefs. One of the aspectsⁱ of neo-liberal policies in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular has been to strengthen good governance and democracy by, among other things, supporting the civil society (Shivji, 2006). These civil society groups include political parties, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs). The changes taking place have also led to the establishment and registration of various new churches with diverse interests. On the whole, Christian religiosity is changing. It is no longer only about worship but also about faith in the power of healing and miracles.

Key words: Globalisation, religiosity, religion, pentecostalism.

INTRODUCTION

The opportunities in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), a powerful force behind globalisation, have engendered new christian denominations to adopt new forms of worship. Followers and worshippers are now increasing informed through outdoor TV and radio advertisements. Moreover, religion and religiosity are not bypassed by neo-liberal ideologies of global commercialisation of goods and services. Consequently, the values and context of religion and religiosity have been changing subtly. Nowadays, people can choose where and how they want to "worship". One outcomes of these changes, particularly in newly-established churches is that religiosity is increasingly focusing on religious personalities or cult figures- leaders and preachersⁱⁱ-

rather than traditional religious values and a personal, spiritual relationship with God. The link between globalisation, religion and religiosity, in particular, will be discussed in the next section. Then, we consider the concepts of religion and religiosity-their meaning as well as similarities and differences. This is followed by a theoretical discourse.

Finally, we present some concrete examples from Tanzania.

GLOBALISATION AND RELIGION

For Africa in general and Tanzania in particular,

E-mail: sigalla@udsm.ac.tz, Tel. 00255 787 515657

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globalisation and religion have a long history. Not only Christianity but also other influential religions were introduced into Tanzania by foreigners during earlier stages of globalisation (Hasu and Donen, 2014). This topic has been discussed extensively in Sigalla (2006). Indeed, these earlier developments of globalisation influenced and, to some extent, changed traditional religious and religiousity of indigenous people. Based on this, it is argued that even the current wave of globalisation continues to impact on religion and religiousity in Tanzania in much more significant ways than scholars have bothered to acknowledge. In fact, whenever the mode of production changes (in the economic and technological sense) or when the relations between labour and capital change so do people's social life change in many aspects. After all, changes in the mode of production tend to influence the social dispensation as well. Although there are various definitions of globalisation, there is consensus that globalisation refers generally to the increasing interdependence and interconnectivity between countries and continents, economically, politically and socially. Both technological advancement and political decisions have made this connectivity possible (Martin and Schuman, 1996). Giddens (1993:528) contends that "globalisation refers to the increasing interdependence of the world societies. The process of reordering of time and distance in social life". Similarly, Bilton et al. (2002:47) define globalisation as "the process whereby political, social, economic, and cultural relations increasingly take on a global scale, and which has profound consequences for individual local experience and everyday lives". Arguing in the same manner, Dronen (2013:47) claim that, "globalisation is a flow of ideas which infuse local identity-construction through both theoretical rituals and beliefs and social and political changes. the aforementioned ideas and images make up the software elements of the globalisation discourse". Ulrich Beck¹ describes the globalisation process thusly:

"A new kind of capitalism, a new kind of economy, a new kind of global order, a new kind of society and a new kind of personal life are coming into being, all of which differ from earlier phases of social development. Thus, sociologically and politically, we need a paradigm shift, a new frame of reference"

In all these definitions, the authors seem to narrow the process of globalisation down to the social practices and lives of individuals. They link global and local social realities and experiences. This orientation creates a framework discussing the linkage in the context of religion and religiousity in Tanzania.

GLOBALISATION AND RELIGION

Westerlund (2009:3) in his discussion of globalisation and religion argues that globalisation "refers to [the] condensation of life, people of different cultures and religions are brought into closer contact with each other". He further points out that during the 1990s during the heyday of neo-liberal policies of free market and consolidation of civil society in Africa, the expensive missionⁱⁱⁱ of the majority world grew 17 times, the rate of western mission. Similarly, Ter Haar (2014:16) argues:

"[T] he new generation of African-initiated churches, by contrast, is markedly different. They are products of the late twentieth century, when economic prosperity reached a peak worldwide (before the financial crises of recent years) and at a time when colonialism had become history for younger generation of Africans".

Technological changes in general, especially the electronic revolution, have not only transformed the production process but also have caused a notable transformation in our daily lives. Although globalisation, to the great extent, has been linked to economic activities but its manifestations have been witnessed in social aspects as well. Not only have our economic needs and test been influenced by products and services at the market level but also our feelings, perceptions and attitudes to certain aspects of our lives have also been changing (Bhalla, 1998). It is suggested in this context, that our religious beliefs have not been bypassed by technological, political and economic changes since the second half of the twentieth century. This is even more evident in Africa today than, perhaps, other parts of the world. For instance, Ter Haar (2014:11-25) asserts:

"...religious change that has taken place in Africa in recent decades with particular reference to Christianity which seems to reflect the economic changes on the continent... the religious notion of progress has become secularized and limited to material progress..."

Discussing the impact of globalisation on values and youth in Tanzania, an Imam at Iringa town mosque pointed out that "they no longer worship their God; instead they idolise some prominent figures they see on TV screens" (*The Citizen*, 17 April 2011:12). In the era of globalisation, politics and economics influence each other dialectically (Sigalla, 2006). Indeed, economic and political changes at the international level reinforce societal and individual changes at the local level, and vice versa. Local individuals and collective action such as consumption behaviour influence international developments. In other words, individual or community preference for a particular product or joining of a particular local movement influences the production of that particular product or spreading of that particular movement at a national and international level. At the end of the day, social change is a commitment of development.

¹ Cited from Connel, R., (2007:52) *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social sciences*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin

GLOBALISATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In this article social change refers to the fundamental values and norms of a particular structure and system that undergirds people's social life. Generally, one of the drivers^{iv} of social change and development has been acknowledged to be religion. It is important to emphasise that religion can influence social change both positively and negatively, however, for the purpose of this discussion, we will confine ourselves to the positive aspects of it towards social change and development. In fact, despite the unprecedented changes and the pace of modernisation occurring in the era of globalisation, religion has retained its role and function. From a western point of view, modernisation includes industrialisation, urbanisation, increasing levels of literacy, education, wealth and social mobility, and more complex and diversified occupational structures (Huntington, 1996:68). Yet, modernisation is not always positive as the opposite is also evident and true. For example, on the one hand, modernisation enhances the economic, military and political power of the society as a whole and encourages people in that society to have confidence in their culture and to become culturally assertive. On the other hand, at individual level, the same development may generate feelings of alienation and anomie as traditional bonds and social relations break down, leading to identity crises that religion is thought and/or expected to resolve (Huntington, 1996:76). When people are confronted by the pressure of modernisation, they are traumatised socially, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Finally, individuals, families, communities and societies at large experience a condition of what Emile Durkheim calls anomie. An example today would be an increase of youth unemployment. On the one side modernisation has open more opportunities for education as a result more and more young people get higher education. On the other hand, the modernisation^v has not provided employment opportunities from both private and public sectors to absorb the number of young people who complete their trainings or graduate from higher learning institutions or created environment for these young people to employ themselves. At the end, the number of unemployed but skilled youth has been increasing. In such circumstances, religion (as practiced by new churches) appears to provide support. It is this power of religion of filling this void that has allowed it to remain relevant amidst all the dramatic changes taking place in today's world. In his discussion of such a situation, Huntington (1996:116) suggest that these development (the aforementioned feature of modernisation) „undermine traditional village and clan ties and create alienation and an identity crisis“. However, this piece of work takes all the aforementioned conceptualisations into an account but it emphasise that modernisation is a qualitative transformation of a particular social phenomenon or a product of that social transformation.

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUSITY IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION IN TANZANIA

It is worth mentioning that the discussion presented in this article is not grounded on a systematic empirical observations but stems from informal observations and discussions with various people on the subject. Thus, this article is aimed at provoking a critical debate in addition to calling for systematic field work studies on the link between economic, technological and political aspects of globalisation, on the one hand, and religious practices, on the other hand. I contend that the neo-liberal policies in force since 1980s in Tanzania have been changing people's spirituality. The focus of this article is more on practices than on the structures or institutions. We need to assess critically how and why individuals have been responding to the said changes spiritually. At this point, we need to conceptualise religion and religiousity to understand not only their difference but also their synthesis and to avoid using the terms synonymously. As Kasak (2011: 85-87) writes, *“a religion is a system of beliefs, norms, customs, and values that arrange the relations between a human being and the universe”*. In the same article, he defines it as *“a system of beliefs, norms, customs and institutions that centre on divine, holy or supernatural forces and basic values that arrange the relations between a human being and the universe”*. In the same vein, Geertz (1993:90)^{vi} define religion as:

(1) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Other scholars in the field of religion such as Glock and Stark (1965:4)^{vii} define religion differently as *“what societies hold to be sacred, comprises an institutionalized systems of symbols, beliefs, values and practices focused on questions of ultimate meaning”*. The foregoing definitions suggest that definitions of religion cannot bypass or ignore God, gods or other supernatural forces. In my view, Kasak comes close to religiousity (see below) by focusing on the common ground shared by a group of people who have the same beliefs, whereas Geertz focuses more on systems which seem to be external to individuals and yet influence their inner religious views. Kasak (2011) argues that *“religiousity can be considered to be wider than a mere belief in one or several gods”*. In other words, Kasak (2011:98) claims that *“religiousity means being religious. It is mainly connected with terms describing the strength of faith, e.g. belief, piety, devotion, and holiness”*. Furthermore, he suggest that experts' use of the term *“religiousity”* depending on the speciality. For instance, a theologian may refer to faith; a psychologist may define it in terms of devotion and piety;

and a sociologist may refer to church membership, church attendance or doctrinal knowledge. For the purpose of this article, religiosity refers to religious practices and networks which are adherent of a religion in general or members of a denomination share. These practices may include services, procedures, focus of services (preaching, teaching, healing, prayer, singing, exorcism of demons, languages and tongues spoken by leaders during the service etc). In this regard, religiosity is given macro rather than micro characteristics. Religiosity is about people, not as individual believers but as social groups, communities, sub-religious cultures which may characterise a group and, at the same time, differentiate it from others.

Since the mid-1980s, neo-liberal ideology in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular has affected various aspects of social life, and this influence has not spared religion and religiosity. For instance, the trans-denominational Christian ministries have expanded into many places in Tanzania during the same period. These emerging faiths tout themselves as the "true faith" and insist that it is through prayer that Christians are saved by God. They also strongly believe in the power of healing and miracles. As a result, people with problems such as family troubles have been joining these religious movements en masse (Mari, 2012) in Dar es Salaam, some of these spouting churches have been burgeoned in terms of both numbers and economic muscle, with some of them even establishing banks to create a business networking community among their followers. One Tanzanian daily newspaper, *The Guardian* (25-31 December 2011:2) reported that, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Tanzania had about 650 registered churches and ministries at that time. The implication is that the expansion of new churches has been staggering and Tanzanians no longer have to contend with long established mainstream churches such as the Roman Catholic Church and conventional Protestant churches but also with the newly-established one with a magnetic pulling power galvanised by uncertainties that have come with neo-liberalism.

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY

In the 1990s, the traditional or conventional mainstream churches faced difficulties in maintaining their religious and social activities largely due to lack of funds and mismanagement. According to Wolferson (2004)², more than 50 percent of the health services and education services in Sub-Saharan Africa were provided by faith-based communities at the beginning of the new Millennium. Their members become dissatisfied. Then a

new type of Christianity started spreading in the country like bushfire. It displayed the characteristics of Pentecostalism, emphasising on charismatic gifts and the power of the Gospel. It claimed that God, the Saviour, would help people with difficulties through prayer.

Charismatic leaders conducted their ministry of preaching and prayer outside the mainstream churches. This kind of religious phenomenon emerged not only in Tanzania but also in other parts of Africa. Coleman (2000) calls it the globalisation of Pentecostalism or charismatic Christianity. He points out that it primarily focuses on prosperity and health through faith ministries and crusades. In the same context, scholars such as Westerlund (2009:1-4) suggest that Pentecostalism "is a movement concerned primarily with experience of the working of the holy spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts...pentecostals have addressed practical everyday life problems like illness, poverty and witchcraft". Similarly, Drogers³, "highlight [s] the fact that central pentecostal rituals are physical in nature. The presence of the holy spirit is tied to very physical manifestations".

In an article that appeared in the *Guardian* (24-31 December 2011) of Tanzania, Kajjage and Awami elaborate on the concept of Pentecostalism:

"...theologically and historically close to the charismatic movement as it significantly influenced that movement, and sometimes the terms pentecostal and charismatic are used interchangeably. Pentecostalism is an umbrella term that includes a wide range of different theologies and culture. For example, many pentecostals are Trinitarian and others are Non-trinitarian"

Other studies show that, while this Christian movement is global, it is also intensely local (Maxwell, 1998; Gifford, 1998; Anderson, 2004). They discuss African Pentecostal Christianity, which displays features of African culture in Pentecostalism despite having originated from America and Europe. Kalu (2008:12) argues that African Pentecostalism is a response by local cultures to the globalisation of Pentecostalism. He insists that local cultures gestate, absorb, internalise, domesticate or transform external change agents. Considering the abject poverty many believers in Africa are subjected to, we can understand Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa as an inevitable response of people living with hardship often times on less than a US dollar per day. Paul Guiford argues that such religious zeal is the people's reaction to poverty and the top-down governance by the state and the [conventional] church (Gifford 1998, 2009) that tend to marginalise the mainstream majority poor and sideline their needs and aspirations. In the same context, ter Haar (2014:15) is of the view that "in academic literature,

² Quoted from Clarke, G., (2013) "Religion and Development: Challenges for donors and for faith groups". In Mucknes, H and Meln, M., (Eds.) (2013) *Faith in Civil Society: Religious Actors as drivers of Change*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, pp. 13-30

³ Information are drawn from Dronen, S.T., (2013) *Pentecostalism, Globalisation and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making*, Boston: BRILL, p.49

African churches of the new generation are habitually referred to as charismatic churches or rather condescendingly, as 'prosperity churches'. Similarly, in the view of Allan Anderson⁴, "...the crucial message of these churches is that they promise access to 'power' which will cater for the necessities of life and protect it from its vicinities-a life that is full, prosperous, healthy, peaceful and secure". In other words, the socio-economic realm that appears to elude them from long before neo-liberalism came knocking on the door.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

This article is informed by two major theoretical aspects: first, people's perspectives on globalisation and neo-liberalism, and second, the concept of agency as analytical tool. The ideas of globalisation and neo-liberalism are widespread all over the world, Africa inclusive. In fact, Shivji (2006:205) is non-apologetic by asserting that globalisation is actually a new name for imperialism with its inbuilt inequalities and goes a step further by claiming that neo-liberalism is not concerned about the majority of African people-peasants and villagers-who are often ignored. According to him the neo-liberal school enables the political and business elite in Africa to seek legitimacy from donors and international organisations, and not from their own people. Mallya (2010:139) points out that in post-independence Tanzania policy-making adopted a top-down approach, which alienated citizens from the policy-making process. Both Shivji's and Mallya's studies stress the importance of a bottom-up approach to policy-making in Africa. Their ideas draw on social studies focusing on the perspectives of people living under the influence of globalisation and neo-liberalism.

However, this article suggests that people need to be reminded and told the truth that globalisation is not a natural product independent of their actions but a social process or product influenced by people's action, especially consumption. It is not only the economy, politics and multinational firms that are responsible for this phenomenon but also ordinary people who are consumers of the goods and services. Indeed, Shivji and Mallya point out, the political and economic elite have contributed to the marginalisation of the public (citizens) in the ambit of decision and policy-making on socio-economic and political issues which affect their lives. Yet, ordinary people remain actors and have power to reshape and redirect these processes by thoughtful, logical and careful prioritising of existential issues, especially those related to consumption. Since the 1980s, the neo-liberalism of the "Washington Consensus", which overemphasises economic liberalisation, promotion of

investment and the logic of market forces, has propagated this programme as a panacea to development problems.

The notion of an unregulated market has had a psycho-social influence and/or impact on the people's lives, particularly in the so-called developing countries like Tanzania. Market force have penetrated social life so much people attach "value" to certain social aspects and institutions. This development has led to the intergration of social life with the market mechanism and turning people into commodities, on the one hand, and eroding social networks and bonds that have traditionally held communities together, on the other hand. For instance, neo-liberal ideas have altered the value people attach to occasions such as weddings and funerals. These vital incidences have been commodified and branded. As a result, a demand for services for marriage and burial ceremonies has been created and the services are currently being traded on the market. In the past, these rites of passage were being provided mutually by relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours. What matters today to couples that are planning to get married is not their mutual relationship and their future life, but increasing the kind of kitchen party, the kind of wedding and the kind of send-off as reflected in the budget, style and decorations. The ceremonies are no longer in the hands of relatives and neighbours, but are organised by a committee of what is mainly characterised by their rhetoric ability to raise fund, who sometimes have different interests but who gain control because of their position to control money. As a result of such values, for instance, it is common in such ceremonies that somebody is hired to come and entertain the guests-the famed master of ceremonies (MC). There is not time for relatives from both sides to get know each other and exchange words as two families come together in matrimony, and no time for the couple to interact with invited guests. All these things have changed the meaning and practices of wedding in Tanzania. As a matter of fact, some young couples who for whatever reason cannot conform to these requirements experience increasing difficulties when they think about getting married. These changes, indeed, have created new social pressures, resulting in new social problems which, to some extent, the traditional churches with their norms and values are unable to address and resolve. It is this void that the new emerging churches have stepped in to fill. They are helping you brides to cope by providing circumstances in which they can wed in simplicity but within the church without being bogged down by extravagance. In some cases, mass wedding that cut down on costs are encouraged. Similarly, without exception the religious "values" of religiosity and spirituality as well as norms for "worship", have also been changing. Religion and religiosity are increasingly becoming social services and products rather than spiritual ceremonies. Even the representation of leaders of the new emerging churches is different; most of them compete by demonstrating their divine power to heal and cure rather than their obedience

⁴ Quoted from ter Haar, Garrier (2014:18) "Poverty and Prosperity in Africa". In Dronen, T.S., (2014) (Ed.) *Religion and Development: Nordic Perspectives on Involvement in Africa*. New York: PETER LANG

to God. Some of them have been linked to some social malpractices such as corruption. In fact, churches have turned into social centres for the solution and management of social problems caused by our fast changing world. Discussing this phenomenon, Kaijage and Sammy Awami in an article in the *Guardian* (25-31 December 2011:1-2) write:

“What is undisputable is that preachers in the revival churches preach economic prosperity as well as divine healing as illustrated in Acts of the Apostles, a situation that has attracted millions to join these churches not only in Africa but even in Europe and America.”

It is not unheard of for preachers to tell their followers that God did not command Christians to be paupers and that if they pray they can get whatever they want, including untold riches. In fact, some of the preachers do live by example by flaunting their wealth, including luxurious vehicles such as Hammers and expensive mansions.

In addition, ICT has turned religiosity into a product which can be advertised out of doors, broadcast and consumed from a distance. ICT has transformed “church” from a concrete to an abstract place. Some of the charismatic preachers buy airtime on the local TV stations that cost a fortune to reach out to believers beyond those able to fill in the massed ranks of members of the congregation in enclosed walls.

NEW EMERGING CHURCHES AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN TANZANIA

“Agency” means human creativity and resilience. It is a key concept in social transformation. Archer (2003) and Ortner (2006) introduced the idea of agency. They discuss the relationship between the actor and the structure. Actors’ creativity and resilience are generated by their response to an existing structure. The dialectical interplay between the actor and the structure takes place over time. Mirjam de Bruijn et al., (2007: 10) argue that social transformation is a product of inter-linkage and co-production between actors and changes from outside such as globalisation and neo-liberalism. Many African societies contend with the hardships of poverty, epidemics and violence, which have escalated with globalisation and neo-liberalism. The socioeconomic safety-nets that were often provided by the state through under African socialism, for example, aimed at building a society based on egalitarian principles are a thing of the past. Thanks to the Breton Woods institutions—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and their stringent conditionalities that came into the vogue from the 1980s onwards. Egalitarian principles were swept under the carpet and neo-liberalism took hold, hence marginalising the majority poor in the process.

In the face of the realities on ground, we should

examine social transformation by looking at actors in terms of their decision-making, livelihoods and access to resources. African Pentecostalism is one of the social actors to be examined. Christians transformed the global Pentecostal movement into a particular religious form for themselves. We must research it, not simply to elucidate on African actions but also to reveal how Africans act purposefully and reflectively in response to social conditions and, consequently, have an impact on the structure, resulting in social transformation. This social transformation has become even more pronounced in the post-1980s period when the gulf between the rich and the poor widens even further in the absence of feasible safety-nets, with Pentecostalism filling the void that state actors cede in the name of neo-liberalism.

CONCLUSION

Very often the debate on globalisation is associated with economic, political and technological factors but overlooks its social dimensions. This piece of work has attempted to link globalisation with social change in general, and in particular it has focused on morphing religion and religiosity. The main argument is that globalisation is founded on neo-liberal ideology, which has both economic and social aspects. The central argument is that the emergence of various Pentecostal religious denominations in Tanzania is a result of the said neo-liberal ideology. These religious groups, together with the mushrooming NGOs in Africa attempt to strengthen civil society in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular as one of the endeavours of proponents of neo-liberal ideology to strengthen democracy in different societies. Why is this phenomenon (proliferation of churches) more apparent today than before? One of the reasons this article suggests is changes in economic and political conditions under globalisation through neo-liberal policies, especially a market-led economy which has caused a liberalisation of social services, including religion. Other reasons include social problems and difficulties resulting from our fast changing social life dominated by changing patterns of consumption behaviour dictated by a money economy, on the one hand, and the erosion of morals, values and social bonds based on the extended family and neighbourhood on the other. In addition, it seems, traditional Christian denominations are unable to address, accommodate and solve social problems such as diseases, poverty, hopelessness and the unfulfilled expectations of individuals resulting from our changing world. People would like to feel they are objects rather than subjects of such social problems. The emerging new churches capitalise on this malaise by treating them as “objects” of their problems as they desire rather than as “subjects”. They want to take their problems somewhere where they can be given prescriptions of solutions and/or provided with ready-made

answers to questions which they themselves cannot answer. As subjects of their problems, they would be required to think about possible solutions, which they would rather escape and cling on to the new hope created by the emerging churches with answers for believers as “objects”.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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iAs argued by the Washington Consensus under the umbrella of Structural Adjustment Policies of the late 1980s

ii Whose identity is more linked to material well being than spiritual and moral values such as driving expensive cars like hammer, owning villas, helicopters etc.

iii Referring to the expansion of pentecostalism

iv There are many drivers of social change and development such as technology, social movements, political changes etc

v At all aspects, socially, economically, technologically and politically

vi Quoted from Kasak, 2011

vii *ibid*