

On Tanzanian Spiritual Health and Resources

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'Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.'
(Romans 12: 2)

Tanzanian Religion Rather than Religions

As I received your document along your invitation to participate into this reflection and 'intellectual debate', I would like to thank you Fr. Vic. for inviting me to share in this 'delicate but necessary exercise' of attempting an 'analysis of the main spiritual forces, values and vices that move us' (Missiaen, 2009: 5).

It is indeed a great challenge for me. Many of the documents you and CPT team produced generate the idea that Tanzanian society in general and Tanzanian leadership in particular is in a state of deep crisis, in need of new motivating inspirations to heal doubts and wounds provided by the current situation. These documents repeatedly mention corruption and greed as causes of this crisis, but also 'ignorance, diseases, poverty and exploitation' (Ibreck, 2009: 11).

Yet, Tanzanian society is defined as 'very religious' (Mukandale et al., 2006 opening statement). Perhaps what is needed is an analysis on the social quality of the religious character within Tanzanian society that is, the manner with which religion affects ordinary life and events for individuals. Often, we may be misled by assuming too fast what religion is in the first place without sufficient attention to the practical consequences of religious experiences from believers replaced in their specific contexts: 'the nature of the bias religion gives to ordinary life varies with the religion involved and with the particular dispositions induced in the believer by specific conceptions of cosmic order he has to accept' (Geertz, 1966: 39). And the same author to conclude that the anthropological task is 'a matter of understanding of how religious systems colour the sense of the reasonable, the practical, the humane, the moral. How far they do so, how deeply they do so, how effectively they do so', (idem: 41).

Spirituality and religiosity mean relationships of human beings among themselves and also with values, with God, with creation and with other metaphysical entities. These may own the capacity to contribute for a much needed renewal. I do agree with you on that, but the Tanzanian situation is to be investigated. For so doing, I thought helpful to adopt a broad definition of what may constitute spirituality, religiosity or 'spiritual resources'. Therefore, in this document, spiritual resources are not to be understood in terms of specific religious traditions with their corresponding creeds, worships and social obligations. I found those rather divisive as Tanzanian society is scattered into

Christians (themselves from different denominations), Muslims and Traditional Practitioners, together with a handful of others such as Hindus. Rather, my approach is to identify and analyse spontaneous thinking, emotive and intuitive patterns as to be found in Tanzanian population at large and to consequently draw some conclusions meant to be helpful for drawing policies and plans for actions. For so doing, I hold that resilience of some aspects of African Traditional Religiosity, (especially belief in magic medicines and witchcraft) and also, perhaps more positively, the overwhelming appeal of harambees do unite Tanzanians irrespective of their creeds, ethnicity and social status, and these have much to say about the current spiritual condition of the nation.

This reflection is meant to be an attempt to be attentive to what is effectively believed and performed (rather than theoretically said) by a greater number of Tanzanians. I intend to draw from my own observations from rural Tanzania in Sukumaland and also from the literature and some media coverage. It should not come as a surprise that my reflection is shaped by my own spiritual traditions, namely European Catholic Christianity and Rationalism. The task of retrieving latent implications related to these attitudes is to be completed by suggesting concrete proposals geared towards the building up of the Tanzanian nation, and I thought conducive to present illustrations drawn from Christianity and Catholicism from which I am more familiar with.

Magic, Witchcraft and Resilience of African Traditional Religiosity

Recently, I asked a Tanzanian intellectual whether or not according to his own opinion, witchcraft was contributing to Tanzanian actual difficulties, 'very little' did he respond. On its side, REDET Research (2006) indicated that 1% only of its 839 respondents would affiliate themselves directly with African Traditional Religion (ATR). It could be tempting therefore to dismiss altogether the role and weight of traditional beliefs and of Traditional African Religions in Tanzania. However, rather intriguing is the fact that the same REDET research unveiled that 29.4 % of respondents recognised to be involved in some ways with indigenous rituals. Besides, about 30 % of ATR leaders confess to be officially Christians from all denominations and another 25 % of these leaders to be Muslims also from all denominations (Masanja & Lawi, 2006: 99).

The research explains these discrepancies in these terms: 'some of the respondents may have deliberately concealed their religious identity, given that since colonial days, official attitudes towards local customs and traditions have invariably been negative' (idem, 2006: 101). Tanzanians may feel embarrassed about the weight of their traditional beliefs, customs and practices but it does not render them less alive, active and powerful. Traditional beliefs have the peculiar faculty to cross and permeate all the different religious affiliations present in Tanzania, though sometimes in concealed and hidden ways. This is the result of

despising attitudes addressed to African Traditional Religions consistently promoted by authority since colonial time.

According to a research carried out in Dar-es-Salaam, 'witchcraft exerts considerable influence among Tanzanian Christians in spite of their faith. Even the most devout (...) find it difficult to resist the attraction of the witch doctors' (Magoti in Magesa, 2004: 68) and the same author to pursue 'the Church's prohibition of witchcraft (...) has not prevented even the most devout of Catholics from reverting to it in times of need' (idem: 73). By the beginning of 2010, my participation to seminars addressed to local clergy and religious nuns left me with the unambiguous conviction that every Tanzanian participant was affected in vivid ways by witchcraft beliefs. The discussed content was not whether witchcraft exists and whether we should be bothered about it, but rather detailed processes at work within witchcraft activities in order to better protect ourselves. Perhaps this is just an expression of the Tanzanian embodiment of a more general statement from the anthropologist Ashforth writing from a South-African field-work research: 'no one can understand life in Africa without understanding witchcraft' (in Priest, 2009).

Some African traditional beliefs and practices would gain to be viewed as making positive contributions to Tanzanian society and could even be encouraged. Such as those would include in my own opinion regular sacrifices offered to ancestors within the context of traditional ritual worship, as these may have the capacity to provide motivation, self-confidence and strength to perform normal, habitual duties together with a sense of respect, loyalty, responsibility and sensitivity for creation and for future generations (Peterson, 2001: 116). But these traditional ritual worships have been most affected with colonialism and modernity and have even completely disappeared in some areas. This is the case of present day rural (and often perceived as very traditional) Sukumaland. 'Decline of the ancestral cult' among the Sukuma started long ago as noted R. Tanner, and by 1958 'many ceremonies had disappeared' (in Westerlund, 1980: 144). By contrast, it is commonly noticed that ceremonies performed on the tombs of ancestors are more compelling for the Wachagga within the areas of Moshi and Arusha. Could it also contribute to the significant economic achievements of these regions?

Unfortunately, what are nowadays enduring in most parts of the country are the more diffuse and morally ambiguous attitudes and thought patterns crafted from beliefs in the power of magic medicines and of fear of witchcraft. It is significant to find the remark again in Westerlund concerning Sukumaland that as 'the cult of the ancestors has tended to decline whereas, on the other hand, the practice of witchcraft has tended to increase or at least to remain strong' (idem, 1980: 144). Perhaps, there is here an indication that what does no longer take place in regular religious ritual and worship finds its expression elsewhere, and most notably among local healers.

The nature of traditional indigenous rituals may have changed over time, perhaps not for the better. For instance, its current irregular practice is well documented. Indeed, it has been observed that traditional rituals in Tanzania 'are resorted to in two types of situations that individuals or community may face. These are periods of crisis and occasions marking passage to a new stage of life.' (Masanja & Lawi, 2006: 111). My observation confirms the fact that this corresponds to Sukuma rituals. Today, there are little (if any) 'routine' or 'maintenance' rituals responding to more habitual needs and wants of the people facing various challenges of daily life. Sukuma religious rituals best operate within 'periods of crisis' which include 'sickness, bereavement, natural catastrophe and epidemics' (idem, 2006: 111). It is therefore associated with times of anguish, anxiety and fear from which solutions need to be found. Within these situations, resort to magic medicines and to witchcraft beliefs is more than tempting. 'While indigenous deities and ancestral spirits suffer neglect in the age of modernisation, the same cannot be said with regard to conceptions about mystical powers such as magic, witchcraft and sorcery. Ideas and practices upholding these beliefs are at large among many a Tanzanian, and this apparently as true in the urban settings as it is among rural folk' (Lawi & Masanja, 2006: 89).

In another recent study carried out in North-West Tanzania in Sukumaland, a medical anthropologist 'was given the task of finding a Sukuma person who did not believe that witchcraft existed. She finally found one woman in a focus group, but everyone else said that the woman was a witch who had killed her husband' (in Rasmussen, 2009: 120). 'Her British supervisor told her to stop chasing exotic stuff like witchcraft and focus on the basics. She said "I am not chasing it. It is chasing me." Meaning it constantly came up.' (Rasmussen, 2010: Personal Communication). Another research, on experiences of illness and death experiences in Northwestern Tanzania 'shows how dominant interpersonal, this-worldly and invisible causes of illness are for Northwestern Tanzanians and to what extent they use minor themes like biomedical and moral causal ontologies' (Rasmussen, 2009: 28), this echoes previous investigations quoted by the same author. Wijisen & Tanner claims that for the 'Sukuma paradigm of the good life (...) ultimately, most evils have a human origin, caused by the ill will of somebody, an ancestor or a witch' (quoted in Rasmussen, 2009: 28), and according to Cory, 'all deaths except those in old age and through some malignant disease were ascribed to witchcraft, and the family of the deceased was determined to find out who had caused the death by magical means' (also quoted in Rasmussen, 2009: 28-29).

Beliefs in witchcraft and the use of magic medicine are in no way the exclusivity of Sukuma society. Belief in magical power of medicines permeates the whole of Tanzanian society. 'Some [soccer] clubs taking part in the top flight Vodacom premier league engage in voodoo as part as their winning strategies', and the journalists to explain that by night time some stadiums were powered

with magical stuff: 'they were like peasants spraying paddy seeds' (Sunday News, Oct. 29th 2006). Likewise Dodoma MP's very chamber receives its share of magical powders (The Guardian, Jun. 16th 2008). REDET research states that 'stories themselves are an indication that beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery and magic constitute a central reality in modern political culture' (Lawi & Masanja, 2006: 89). Economic development is reported to be hampered by witchcraft beliefs in the region of Tabora (Sunday News, Jun. 21st 2009). 'The selective invocation of traditional religious ideas outside their social and political context has indeed proved to be destructive to the orderly operation of civil society in the present context of transition to pluralist democracy. One example of these negative consequences is the phenomenon of witch homicide that has in recent years rocked rural communities in Mwanza, Shinyanga and Tabora regions' (Lawi & Masanja, 2006: 90). We could add that albino subjects have now joined the unfortunate group of female widows to be prey to the violent effects of witchcraft beliefs.

There is evidence therefore of pervasiveness of a selective range of indigenous ideas, beliefs and practices within Tanzanian society at large, regardless of ethnic identity, religious affiliation and social status. These may produce a specific corresponding spiritual quality within Tanzanian society, in the sense that it provides ready made answers, thinking patterns and attitudes governing relationships and which may not always be for the benefit of the people themselves. It may be argued for instance, as I have done elsewhere, that turning to albino killings in order to call fourth luck in gold digging industry is a way to achieve new goals (integration to a comfortable way of life and into some increasingly visible international financial standards) through traditional means (belief of contagious magic and use magic medicines). Another striking instance is that when the MV Bukoba sank in the Lake Mwanza, causing more than 800 casualties, it was heard in the streets of Mwanza that it was caused by then President Benjamin Mkapa who had 'sacrificed' human beings in order to gain supernatural strength to consequently be able to stay in power (Rasmussen, 2009: 102). Once again, a radically new catastrophic situation, itself possible only with the advent of modern technology, was to be deciphered through the means of some selected traditional beliefs and practices of witchcraft.

What is to be retained in my opinion is that beliefs in witchcraft and in magic medicines commonly attribute causes for afflictions in external factors (other human beings or spirits) rather than to challenge the inner strength and resources of the suffering individuals. They promote search for guilty third parties to be blamed and eliminated or at least neutralized. As a famous example states: 'Granted that typhus is carried by lice, but who sent the louse?' (Wilson in Brokensha, 1983: 84). Witchcraft does not exclude reliance on bio-medicine and scientific explanations, but it may render them superfluous or unnecessary. Once I understand and know that my sufferings are ultimately caused by an external

ill-willed agent, what could be expected from curing what appear to be only symptoms and not the root cause?

As mentioned above, beliefs in witchcraft are symptomatic of external causality that is, a causality from without rather than from within, which does not prevent acceptance of other forms of causalities as the scientific and biomedical ones. However, in effect, beliefs in witchcraft may tend to play down the role of bio-medicine and of science. This situation is also caused by lack of facilities or/and inaccessibility in terms of cost of health services, it is therefore a complex issue. It also remains that external causality as explained above deals with singular cases and is not open to cumulative solutions.

Resort to Harambees to Solve Financial Challenges

Besides, there is in Tanzania the apparition and flourishing of a 'harambee culture' translated into manifold financial collections and requests for generosity in order to advance particular projects or to solve specific financial challenges. Perhaps this follows a trend initiated in Kenya (whereby the term 'harambee' appears in the motto of the nation). Harambees may be organised as large gatherings as for instance in view of financing the building of a cathedral or of a church, or they may take the form of more discrete collections as in the case of benefactors cards and forms whereby donations are registered and returned. Sometimes, benefactors may be consequently praised on a public forum. It has become common to recourse into those as for instance financing a school fee, a youth group seminar or a wedding feast. The number of requests for generosity that may be addressed to some public figures with decent income such as a head master is simply staggering: about 30 for a primary school head master during the few months of the dry season directly following harvesting. Harambees seem to be the solution to any kind of financial challenge and some social pressure may be occasionally felt as to ensure the participation and success of the project.

Politicians have been and still are key figures in the promotion of this social phenomenon. The invitation and consequent participation of a political authority such as a minister, a member of parliament or a local leader is often a sufficient guarantee of success for the projected harambee. This politician (*mgeni rasmi*, literally 'guest of honour') will unavoidably boost both participation and individual donations by showing an example of generosity to be consequently followed. Politicians may like to participate in harambees as they provide them advertising platforms for their respective policies and goals, and they may help them further boost their public image and popularity. Indeed, harambees are places whereby commoners attain occasions to encounter their leaders. Harambees have the ability to further unite subjects of different religious affiliations and ethnic identities. For instance, a Women Muslim institution has made itself famous in its repeated participation and generous donations to

harambees performed in view of financing the construction of Geita Catholic Cathedral.

Harambees and other related collections are perfectly acceptable and accepted ways of financing specific projects and are uncritically appraised and appealed for. Indeed, they show the resourcefulness of the nation by tapping into dear cultural values such as generosity and solidarity in order to conduct specific ventures to successful achievements. Besides, donations are often tied with expectations of reciprocity (See Mauss, 1990 [1924]).

External causality and interpersonal dependence is also present, and surely more positively apprehended, within the harambee social phenomena. Others who are neighbours, friends, politicians and kin will help to solve financial challenges, and it does work. The success is sufficiently assured when donors are personally praised and publicised. Within processes of witchcraft beliefs, ailments are sought to be solved through some external and interpersonal blame. Likewise in harambees, financial successes are achieved through some external and interpersonal (public) praise. In both cases, there is the presence of an external and mostly interpersonal type of causality or dependence. It is clear that success in harambees requires preliminary initiative and investment, and this from the concerned individual or group of individuals, but these hold promises of immediate rewards. Moreover, they remain rather minimal and short lived.

Therefore, besides the fact that both witchcraft beliefs and harambees unite the nation by their widespread disseminations, they share other similarities worth considering in the task of evaluating the spiritual resources of Tanzanians. Both phenomena are symptomatic of reliance on an external type of causality or dependence. However, it would be ill-advised to establish causal genealogies from witchcraft beliefs to harambee practice or the other way, rather I hold that both phenomena rely on common dispositions, thinking and emotive patterns that also penetrates all the different levels of Tanzanian society:

'Ashforth argues that [there is] an underlying assumption about social relationships (...). The African principle of ubuntu, "a person is a person through other persons," articulates ideals of interpersonal solidarity, love, reciprocity, and communal sharing which are said to provide the essential underpinnings of the good life. But everyone falls short of such ideals, often feeling resentment or enmity against each other rather than love. The negative corollary of ubuntu, Ashforth suggests, is a pervasive presumption that human malice is what underpins and explains misfortune. In a world where one's well-being depends on others, the awareness that others harbor negative sentiments triggers deep anxieties.' (Priest, 2009).

This cultural paradigm in both its positive and negative modes is realised in countless situations. For instance, specific costly projects within Tanzania are commonly seeking financing from the wealth of neighbours and friends. Likewise, the national budget heavily relies on friendly external donors: 700 bn/- in 2006-2007 (The Guardian, 12th Oct. 2006). But this is obviously a complex issue

caused by other factors like history and present lack of financial resources and facilities. But it also raises questions about sustainability and economic health for a long term vision of the nation. It is clear that those who help, just like politicians taking part in harambees, often have agendas of their own and expect returns in some real ways.

External and interpersonal causality or dependence has also significantly been utilised to explain the current painful situation in Africa in general: 'Politicians and some intellectuals have overstretched the paradigm of cultural relativism by which they claim that Africa is a victim of circumstances perpetrated in the past by Western countries and perpetuated through the World Bank/IMF policies and should therefore not be blamed for its problems' (Akong'a, 2001: 6). Without denying the weight of historical and external agents to cause the present situation, it might not be enough a discourse for initiating changes. Tanzanians are the only ones in the capacity to change Tanzania. Alternative interpretations and visions ought to be proposed and implemented, on the basis of what constitutes currently the reality.

Nehemiah and Reconstruction Theology

External and interpersonal causality or dependence as described above is according to my opinion to be audaciously appreciated and criticised. Within the context of suffering, its reliance may console the intellect by offering a satisfying answer to the evil which is occurring, and may also provide a sense that something can be done about it, but it distracts resources towards more endurable and responsible human responses. Within the context of financial challenges, its reliance may indeed produce great achievements, but its logic is also distracting from productivity and from concern to increase common wealth and well-being as it tends to attract towards oneself the existing one. Moreover, it might be a step forward towards much more unhealthy forms of dependencies on proximate others, like those that so much characterise corrupt behaviours. Also, harambees offer invaluable occasions for politicians with doubtful morality to clear his/her name with a generous donation and consequently consolidate his general behaviour.

Perhaps, it could be helpful to review to what extent each religious tradition in Tanzania contributes to the building of the nation, of its social and moral cohesion. For so doing, and if it is accepted that external and interpersonal causality or dependence is not always a helpful answer for the promotion of the common good and the achievement of moral development in Tanzania, it may be fair to ask oneself to which extent each religious tradition is instrumental for its promotion or on the contrary a challenging factor, and also which alternative it may offer.

A few words concerning the case of Christianity, of which I am more familiar with, are worth mentioning. According to my pastoral experience, it is

clear to me that Christianity is still very much challenged and affected by witchcraft and magical beliefs (rather than challenging them) and it is also clear that it relies greatly on harambees for its development in ways which are seldom generating commonly shared wealth and well being.

Let's compare this situation with the situation portrayed in the book of the prophet Nehemiah which is a reference text for the 'theology of reconstruction' crafted by Mugambi (1995, 2003). The African Bible explains the context of the book in the following terms: 'the post-exilic history of Israel resembles the post-colonial history of Africa. The Israelites had been dispersed, their culture and religion practically destroyed, and their homeland changed beyond recognition by foreign powers' (200: 660).

After 70 years of exile and almost complete destruction of their nation, it could have been tempting for the Israelites to resort to an external type of causality, as for instance blaming their powerful enemies in order to explain their own stressful situation. But it is not what they are doing. Israelites do name their enemies. They are certainly at work and are consequently denounced: such are Sanballat and Tobiah. But they are (also) from within the nation, as local leaders and not only from without it. In this respect, I think that Mugambi is misguided when he states that 'there are many Sanballat and Tobiah, in politics, in churches, in the media, in diplomatic circles and also in business. They are there in the World Bank and in the IMF, in universities and in non-governmental organizations' (Mugambi, 2003: 173). Sanballat and Tobiah are *local* and *ordinary* leaders of within the nation and not powerful external enemies though in their opposition to Nehemiah they are also joined by the 'Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites' (Nehemiah 4: 1).

Against the external and interpersonal causality or dependence so much pervasive in Tanzania, we may identify in Nehemiah a moral causality: the entire chapter 9 is a confession from the entire people that comes to consciousness of its shortcomings and sins. This is the ultimate causality for explaining the situation for the Israelites. The effective tool for this awareness is the Holy Scriptures which are read and explained at length. In this case, the painful situation of the people is not interpreted through recourse to an external, interpersonal causality or dependence but rather, on a sense of a corporate self which is enlightened by God. There is no hint, in the book of the prophet Nehemiah on blaming enemies, but rather, a strong conversion of heart after the reading of the holy scriptures.

Moreover, it is also intriguing that the book of the prophet Nehemiah depicts in great details the concrete ways people contributed to the reconstruction of their city and nation. It is not through mere financing as is commonly the case in harambees, but rather through the productive mobilisation and collaboration of the entire community (Nehemiah 3). Starting with the High Priest himself, each clan or family (which are named in the text) *performed* specific tasks. Most interestingly, the failure do so is also mentioned, for instance: 'the Tekoites carried out the work of repair; however, some of their outstanding

men would not submit to the labour asked by their lords' (Nehemiah, 3: 5). It is a very physical effort which is required from the people, and not merely displacement of wealth through financial contributions. It is remarkable that the etymology of the word harambee carries a connotation of a communitarian very physical effort. 'Har means to hail, lift or exalt. Ambee is a [Hindu] goddess (...). The story goes back to a hundred years ago when the Indians were brought to Kenya to build the railway by the British. When the coolies lifted heavy loads, they chanted Har Ambee as Harambee', (according to a Methodist preacher in Gifford, 2009: 208).

It could be felt that against the external type of causality explained above, the suggested alternative would be the resourceful individualism of the self-made man myth of Western societies. A typical expression of this is reflected by a typical remark of an American: 'He wants me to get him a job. I told him to get it himself!' (Bruce, 2001: 299). But this is far from being what the book of the prophet Nehemiah is suggesting. Both interpersonal African communitarianism and Western individualism and materialism have to be challenged by the inspirations triggered by Divine Revelation which includes tenets of the Holy Scriptures. Tanzanians may need to recover the formative identification processes brought about by genuine and healthy encounters with a loving and caring God, from whom we are made sons and daughters. This is what conversion means: the exercise of turning oneself towards God and receiving oneself (also) from Him. Through this process, God frees the worshippers from the dictates of their environment (Romans 12: 2). Concerning Nehemiah's example, the achievement sought after is not an individualistic affair but a common project which could find appeal to Tanzanians who are described to rely often on their immediate neighbours for success in various endeavours. Besides, the Bible repeatedly teaches how wealth is not to be sought for its own sake but instead, for the service and well-being of all without neglecting marginal and destitute people such as widows and orphans.

Perhaps, this may serve as a tool to discern degree of helpfulness to various religious beliefs and practices within Tanzania. It may be now the time for religious traditions to be challenging pervasive beliefs and practices hampering development of the common good and well-being. In this respect, it might be helpful to note that the rare documented examples of successful fights against witchcraft beliefs and practices are from efforts operating outside the inherent logic of external and interpersonal causality or dependence, as for instance unmasking charlatanry (Lavertu, 2003) or actively defending victims of accusations (See Rasmussen, 2006).

Besides, by contrast to harambee culture, it could be more helpful to ask a particular village to produce and sell crops in view of the purchase of an organ for its choir or of some bags of cements for its church, rather than organise a harambee which may well achieve these goals but without increasing common wealth and well-being as such in the area. Experience tells me how difficult and

counter-cultural this can be. Specific religious practices and loyalties are often associated with related entertaining qualities. For the Sukuma people for instance, religion has been argued to be instrumental so as to attract 'Good Life' (Wijsen & Tanner 2000), rather than being a tool for inspiration, fulfilment and for mobilising resources to build up oneself and the nation.

The sad fact is that perhaps productivity is not appealing within current Tanzanian frame of mind. It is like a bit out of fashion. For instance, almost 80% of the Tanzanian population relies on farming, and therefore productivity is first to be thought in terms of food and crop production. But many a Tanzanian may recognize oneself in the voice of the fictional character called Efuru, from the novel of the same name by writer Flora Nwapa: 'Within the first four pages of the text, the reader learns that Efuru has refused to go with her husband to the farm and proclaims that she is not cut out for farm work. She states emphatically that "I am going to trade"' (Darlington, 2001: 260). Business (*biashara*) indeed has a great appeal for industrious Tanzanian entrepreneurs, and it is invaluable as it creates markets for goods which are produced. But small-scale businesses are fast saturated and are they little else than alternative ways to displace (quite literally) wealth rather than producing it? One may take advantage of it in the process, but this may not be sufficient to build up a nation. Audacious policies as to encourage agricultural production through the development of larger markets and agro-industries are urgent. For instance, it is a particularly sad enigma to notice that, as this paper is being written, a kilo of rice sells for the equivalent of a little more than half a dollar within the rice producing rural areas of Mwanza (between 800/- and 900/-), but the same kilo is worth no less than a little more than 3 dollars in Nairobi (4,000/-). Yet Nairobi market remains closed to Tanzanian farmers because of a national export ban. No incentive is offered for increasing rice production, and many fields are consequently used much below their normal capacity.

These succinct examples may also help us grasp the two different directions a spiritual experience (or encounter) and consequent religious practices may take. Either they will be translated through the cultural idioms present in the environment (and become little else than a mirror-reflection of them), or on the contrary, they will be occasion of an alternative view point endowed with the capacity to challenge and correct. According to this second road, what are habitually accepted cultural attitudes become shaped by alternatives (Geertz, 1966: 7-8 and Lambeck 2002: 8). It seems to me that the Church in Tanzania is currently rarely a challenging force but rather is fully immersed into the patterns of its environment. It needs to go back to the unique inspiring experience of encountering its Master who is God in order to become once again salt and light for the nation (Matthew 5: 13-14).

Yet, some enduring Church's practices may be more effective tools for challenging cultural patterns than what is usually suspected. For instance, the routine Catholic practice of individual confessions of sins through the sacrament

of reconciliation as requested for all members with sufficient understanding may be appreciated as a relentless effort to directly counter the cultural paradigm of external and interpersonal causality, and establishing a more biblically based moral one (see Foucault, 1982 and 1993).

A Nation Without Nationalism? Compared Instrumentalities

As explained above, religious traditions in Tanzania are varied, as they comprise Christians, Muslims and African Traditional Practitioners. However, they may be united through processes of external and interpersonal causality or dependence which are at work through common beliefs and practices. Could there be yet other factors unifying the various Tanzanian religious traditions? Could there be another cryptic 'religion' covered by layers of more classic religious traditions?

Literature assesses that national unification is the legacy of Julius K. Nyerere and of its policy of *Ujamaa*, that is, the Tanzanian brand of socialism. '[Tanzania] was often quoted as an example of a country where harmonious relationship between different religions had been realized. This has been attributed to several factors, but many writers agreed that the policy of Julius K. Nyerere was contributory' (Ludwig, 1996: 216 and also see Akong'a, 2001: 8), more specifically, Rasmussen demonstrates how 'the primacy of *Ujamaa* or politics over religion was implicitly asserted' (1993: 71). In effect, *Ujamaa* came to compete with religious traditions within Tanzania (idem), and indeed the expression *Ujamaa ni dini* (*Ujamaa* is a religion) was once popular (idem: 82). Anderson (1983) explains how nationalism has a lot more in common with classic spiritual and religious traditions than what might have been formerly suspected. Tanzanian nationalism, through the policy of *Ujamaa* had the function to integrate various religious traditions into a unity to be built and sustained. This was effective through the establishment of a quasi-mystical, metaphysical and sacred (in the sense of unquestionable) entity called Tanzania which, sustained by the ideology of *Ujamaa* was to be effectively served with respect and consideration, in ways not so un-similar to those usually administered to more spiritual entities (God, deities, spirits or ancestors).

However, in the 1980's, Tanzania changed its economical and political policies under the pressure of international organisations (implementation of 'Structural Adjustment Programmes' or SAP). The erosion and dismissal of *Ujamaa* policy initiated a crisis within Tanzanian national ideology, as the new value to be served was to become the impersonal and capitalistic market (Likwelile, 2009: 27). Tanzania prevails as a nation, but on which discursive foundations does it continue its development? Clearly, national ideological vacuum encouraged the more traditional religious bodies to reclaim power (Ludwig, 1996). Tanzanian nationalism through ideological erosion had lost its mobilising strength.

Instead, what is now emerging is the instrumental use of Tanzanian institutions, especially through corrupt attitudes of people in position of leadership. The decline and disintegration of national institutions means that those are now to serve very selfish, personal benefits rather than the common good (which significantly has no easy way to translate into Swahili). Tanzania is losing its mobilising and transformative power and instead it is itself transformed to fit in interests, which were formerly thought to be subordinated to it. A powerful indicative symbol of this process is the relative ease with which Tanzania as a nation adopted in recent year within the territory of Zanzibar an alternative set of national symbols including a 'national flag, an anthem and a coat of arms' (Sunday Citizen, Jan. 24th 2010). This is unfortunate and cannot be but confusing.

At more local levels, deterioration of the care and maintenance of the common good has deep roots as it may have been initiated with various encouragements addressed to some public servants to start private projects to sustain their living. This is well assessed in education and health sectors. For instance, teachers in rural areas resort to farming, manipulating the availability and work force of their pupils. In urban areas, they are increasingly proposing costly tuition classes to help them make ends meet, to the extent that it is sometimes felt that in their own interests, they may keep regular classroom teachings to a low quality level. Likewise, it is common for doctors and nurses to start dispensaries and pharmacies of their own besides their public offices and commitments. These activities are very effective ways to wear out the quality and respect for public offices, beside their agents' loss of pride to participate into the building up of the people's well-being and ultimately of the nation that it constitutes.

National integrity may be attained through a recovery of national integration. In my opinion, there is an urgent need to regain a sense to belong to a great and beautiful nation, to gain pride in it and consequently regain respect for its structures. There is an imperative necessity to recover the 'cultural engineering' (Akong'a, 2001) which aborted in the 1980's with the collapse of Tanzanian economy. This is to be accompanied with effective sanctions addressed to clearly identified corrupt agents.

Perhaps erosion of national institutions could be paralleled with the greater instrumental use of the religious ones which is also emerging in many places, as for instance, the rise and flourishing phenomenon of 'prosperity Gospel' (Gifford, 1998 & 2009). Within the circle of the Catholic Church, to become a leader is increasingly sought after not so much for the services and responsibilities it entails but rather for the financial and status opportunities it may bear. There are also signs of increasing financial concerns and pre-occupations in the affairs of the Church to the detriment of more classic apostolic and pastoral activities. Within a context related to the République Démocratique du Congo, it has been noticed that within some religious associations the

'ritualisation of problems of personal well-being and inter-personal relations that seems to occur (...) looks regressive; (...) not as a return to pre-Christian forms but to an abdication from searching for solutions to societal problems that are larger than the difficulties experienced in the middle-class.' (Fabian, 1994: 264). It seems to me that parallels within a Tanzanian context could be established. Perhaps there is here another illustration of the fact that religious institutions in Tanzania tend to model themselves to their immediate environment rather than shaping it.

The great advantage of religious institutions over nationalism is that they rely on forms of revelations which are already defined and which offer objects endowed with a sense of ready-made sacredness and unifying unquestionability (God, deities, spiritual realities). Unlike European Christianity, this sacredness is not (yet?) wearing out within Tanzania. But do religious worshippers creatively make use of their advantage? Efforts of some Muslim believers to enforce the establishment of kadhi courts are very much frowned upon, perhaps for some valid reasons. But we cannot deny that it may represent an efficacious religious, (in this case Muslim) contribution responding to a perceived state of crisis concerning Tanzanian institutions.

Comparing national and religious institutions may therefore be a helpful exercise. In my opinion, it helps us understand how much within a Tanzanian context, religious institutions have difficulties to free themselves from the shortcomings of their environments. The nation without nationalism may be paralleled by the quality of religious worship we find in Tanzania which lead some to identify Tanzanians as 'practical atheists', which implies that they are 'living their daily lives without reference to God, and only remembering Him when there is a special need, e.g. sickness, accident, lack of rain' (Missiaen, 2009: 5). Tanzania as a nation may have to recover it mobilising strength. Likewise, religious institutions may have to drink again to the wealth of their inspiring traditions for a genuine, selfless service and dedication to God and his people in Tanzania. My guess is that the recovery of one would accompany the other.

As to the means, there is an element I wish to mention. St Thomas Aquinas once said that 'you change people by delight, you change people by pleasure' (in Mwendwa, 2001: 235). Joy, pleasure and delight might well be more mobilising factors than discourse on efforts, sacrifices or struggles. In my opinion, it would be unfortunate to present national and religious recovery processes in sole terms of sacrifice, struggle or pain rhetoric as it would unavoidably lead to loss of appeal and mobilising strength. 'Suffering and sacrifice dominate delight, joy and play, making change more difficult.' (Mwendwa, 2001: 235). And another author to explain: 'Africans work hard but, as a Nigerian friend once said to me, they don't celebrate it. They gain identity from family, tribal and religious activities as well as from work.' (Bruce, 2001: 300). There is a human fulfilling quality in work for the benefit of the individual subject which is most often lost or replaced with a feeling of work as a burden.

Rather, what is to be stressed is the human fulfilling quality of genuine religious worship which joyful and festive liturgies and celebrations convey. But human fulfilment is not only about celebration, but also about upright living and a sense to be in harmony with the will of God. Religious faithful may have to ask themselves whether they are proposing joyful service to God and the living of an upright life as sufficient motivations for worship (if Christian liturgies are often presented as joyful events, they may also serve selfish goals such as disguised pride and prestige).

Likewise, Tanzanian politicians are to promote through their own personal examples and policies, some signs of joy and selfless dedication to be at the service of the nation and of its people. Is there any better way to fulfil oneself than to gaining participation into the building up of one's environment for a better life? Failure to recognise this could be equated with failure of leadership altogether. In the words of writer Chinua Achebe:

'There is nothing basically wrong with Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate of water or air of anything else. The Nigerian problem is unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.' (in Kanyinga, 2001: 36).

A last challenging question is therefore how to present the building up of the nation as the ultimate way to serve oneself. To appreciate political activities as calls, vocations as any other human activity may help sustain joyful and honest dedications.

A Way Forward

There is in Tanzania a cultural paradigm which shapes and influences individual attitudes as well as religious traditions. This cultural paradigm is to be appreciated in both its positive and negative aspects. A question which is asked throughout this study is the following: once cultural negativities are identified, are religious traditions in a position to challenge, and propose alternatives? In many cases they are, but it implies demanding and uncompromising faithfulness to the inspirations and tenets of respective creeds. Unfortunately, there is evidence in Tanzania of wide religious conformity to what the external environment proposes.

Besides, Tanzania as a nation might be faced with an ideological political vacuum that urgently needs to be addressed in order to abort manipulation of state's institutions to the advantage of more personal and/or corporate selfish benefits. Meanwhile, religious institutions are also subjects to being controlled by the same forces. More urgent than ever therefore is the task to unleash forces of renewal to be extracted from integrity and ingenuity of a religious people.

As I have suggested, politicians to be elected have to be particularly attentive to the hermeneutic discourses they will promote by their words,

policies and examples. External and interpersonal causality or dependence is found short-sighted and counter-productive for long term national policies.

Besides, it might justly be felt that religious institutions are expected to lead in offering outstanding examples of what it means to care for a people and a nation. But respective leaders and faithful also need conversion. And as I have mentioned about Christian believers, this is to be achieved by referring back in deeper honesty, integrity and courage to what constitutes the core of their moving and inspiring faiths.

Kasamwa, February 2010.

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