UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Spirit media : charismatics, traditionalists, and mediation practices in Ghana

de Witte, M.

Publication date
2008

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
de Witte, M. (2008). *Spirit media : charismatics, traditionalists, and mediation practices in Ghana*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date:09 Sept 2026

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina vii

Contents

Detailed table of contents viii
List of images xiii
Acknowledgements xvii

Part one: Getting in touch 1

Introduction 3

1 Religion on Air: changing politics of representation 41

Part two: The International Central Gospel Church 83

2 Mensa Otabil: marketing charisma, making religious celebrity 85

3 Christ Temple: Holy Spirit discipline and the born-again subject 125

4 *Living Word*: formatting charisma and the televisual body 173

Part three: The Afrikania Mission 215

5 Afrikania Mission: 'Afrikan Traditional Religion' in public 217

6 Publics and Priests: dilemmas of mediation and representation 265

7 Defending Tradition: Afrikania's voice in public debates 303

8 Media Afrikania: styles and strategies of representation 323

Conclusion: Making sense 355

Chronology 365
Appendixes 369
References 381
Nederlandse samenvatting 399

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina viii

Detailed table of contents

List of images xiii
Acknowledgements xix

Part I: Getting in touch

Introduction 3

Power in Presence 5
Charismatic Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religion 9
The International Central Gospel Church and the Afrikania Mission 15
Thinking religion, media, senses: theoretical considerations 19
- Religion as mediation 19
- The sensibility of religion 22
- Cross-sensual media 25
- Religious formats 26

Doing religion, media, senses: methodological considerations 28
- Studying religion 29
- Researching mass media 31
- Sensory ethnography 32

Writing and reading 33
Notes 36

1 Religion on Air: Changing politics of representation 41

Introduction 41
The state, broadcast media, and politics of representation 45
Radio and colonial governance 45
- Media and 'nation building' 47
- Religion on state radio and TV 49

Opening the airwaves 51
Return to democracy 51
- FM stations 51
- Private television 54
- Airtime for sale 56
- Negotiating media practice 57

The 'pentecostalisation' of the public sphere 62
- Charismatic 'media ministries' 63
- Christian media ownership 66
- Radio and TV pastor-celebrities 68
- Gospel music and Christian entertainment 71

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina ix

Fear and fascination: 'African traditional religion' in the media 73
Conclusion: religious celebrity, spectacle, and the sensual public sphere 76
Notes 78

Part II: The International Central Gospel Church

2 Mensa Otabil: Marketing charisma, making religious celebrity 85

Introduction 85
Dr. Mensa Otabil: the making of a charismatic figure 90
Self-presentation 91
PR strategies 93
Stage performance 97
Office space and protocol 99
A brand of Black consciousness 101
'Life transforming messages' 104
Personal transformation 106
Cultural transformation 109
Political transformation 113
A religious vision on modernity in Africa 117
Conclusion: charisma, branding, and religious celebrity 119
Notes 121

3 Christ Temple: Holy Spirit discipline and the born-again subject 125

Introduction 125
Space, spirit, and body in Christ Temple 129
From classroom to Christ Temple 130
Sunday worship service 137
Solution Centre and prayer meeting 139
Annual conferences 144
'Raising leaders, shaping vision': making ICGC members 148
Being born again 151
Discipleship classes 153
Water baptism 155
Covenant Families 156
Membership 157
Talent, skills, and lifestyle 160
Leadership 163
Church marriage 163
Conclusion: format, spirit, and the religious subject 167
Notes 169

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina x

4 Living Word: Formatting charisma and the televisual body 173

Introduction 173
AltarMedia's *Living Word* 175
In the AltarMedia studio 176
From audio tapes to DVD 179
The making of *Living Word* 181
Broadcasting the message 185
Editing Otabil and his audience 189
Watching *Living Word* *195*
Audience research 195
Living Word correspondence 196
Doctrines of sensory perception 198
The eye 199
The ear 202
The touch 203
Receiving the Word, being touched by the Spirit 204
Conclusion: television and the religious subject 208
Notes 212

Part III: The Afrikania Mission

5 Afrikania Mission: 'Afrikan Traditional Religion' in public 217

Introduction 217
An Afrikania service 221
Conceptualising 'African traditional religion' 225
The imagination of Africa 226
The imagination of tradition 227
The imagination of religion 229
Three Afrikania leaders, three approaches to ATR 230
Osofo Komfo Damuah and the early Afrikania Mission 231
Break with the state 234
Damuah's death 234
Afrikania's 'Second Servant', Osofo Komfo Kofi Ameve 235
Ameve's death 239
Afrikania's 'Third Servant', Osofo Komfo Atsu Kove 241
Afrikan Traditional Religion in a Christian format 244
Reforming Afrikan Traditional Religion 244
Rewriting the history of civilisation 245
Finding a common form of worship 246
Growing public presence and getting established 248
The Afrikania Mission Headquarters 249
The Afrikania Priesthood Training School 254

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina xi

Spiritual consultation 256
All night prayers 257
Conclusion: dilemmas of sameness and otherness 258
Notes 260

6 Publics and priests: Dilemmas of mediation and representation 265

Introduction 265
Addressing and attracting 'the people' 268
Publics 269
Members 270
Clients 275
Practices of authentication 277
Shrine priests in Afrikania 281
Changing attitudes towards shrine priests 281
Mobilising shrine priests 282
'Divine priests' versus 'Afrikania priests' 287
Tensions and contention 291
Conversion and initiation 291
Church and spirit possession 293
Public knowledge and secret knowledge 295
Beauty, hygiene, and spiritual power 297
Conclusion: mediating between the public and the priests 299
Notes 301

7 Defending Tradition: Afrikania's voice in public debates 303

Introduction 303
The ban on drumming: sound, spirits, and urban space 304
Libation: cultural heritage and national development 309
Trokosi: tradition, 'fetish slaves', and human rights 311
Conclusion: in defence of tradition 317
Notes 319

8 Media Afrikania: Styles and strategies of representation 323

Introduction 323
Afrikania in the media: from voice to image 324
Damuah and the media: the voice of spiritual nationalism 325
Ameve and the media: public image and beautification 326
Struggling with media formats 327
Talk shows 328
Afrikania as news 329

02-TOC-pVII-XII.qxd 2-4-2008 22:04 Pagina xii

The making of Insight 332
Negotiating authority 337
Spectacles of otherness, spectacles of evil 342
Human vultures 342
'Beckley's juju: seeing is believing!' 345
'Christianity under attack' 348
Conclusion: formats, technologies, and spiritual power 350
Notes 353

Conclusion: Making sense 355

Dialectics 355
Mediations 359
Technologies 361
Sense 363

Chronology 365

Appendix I: Overview of religious TV programming, February 2004 369
Appendix II: List of Mensa Otabil's messages 370
Appendix III: Christ Temple membership statistics 371
Appendix IV: Afrikania Mission membership statistics 376
Appendix V: Biographical text about Juliana Dogbadzi 377

References 381

Nederlandse samenvatting 399