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

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Religion on Air

Changing politics of representation

Introduction

Wednesday, 3 April, 2002. At 4.15 in the morning pastor Eric blows his car horn at our gate to pick me up. He is on his way to Uniiq FM, the new, commercial FM station of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), to present *Morning Devotion* and I am accompanying him. Pastor Eric Ampomfoh works in Otabil's office, but his programme, three times a week from 4.45 to 5.30 a.m., is not related to the ICGC's media ministry. He is employed by the station as a part-time presenter on his own title. During the drive to the studio pastor Eric plays slow American gospel on his car system. Accra is still dark and sleeping, except for the joggers that take advantage of the coolness of this early hour and of the momentary quiet of the city's main roads. Here and there people are sweeping in preparation of the day. The GBC premises are still deserted. The soldiers that protect it as a fortress during daytime have not yet arrived and we drive straight to the Uniiq FM studio. The only person in the studio is the sound operator behind the mixing desk. Pastor Eric gives her the CDs he has selected last night and puts on the headphones. The music plays and he concentrates, closing his eyes and slowly shaking his head. The Spirit fills him. 'Why don't you lift up your hands to the Lord and praise him for what he has done in your life,' pastor Eric moves his listeners into devotion in between the song lyrics. After a few songs he greets the audience and starts preaching. Today he talks about 'goodness,' continuing a series on 'the fruits of the spirit.' All in English, because that is how the station wants him to do it. His fellow Uniiq FM-pastor does Twi language programmes. On Saturdays pastor Eric does not preach, but has people phoning in with prayer requests. As he prays for them on air, he says, 'people can get healed through the radio.'

Fifteen years ago a state-owned radio station hiring a charismatic pastor to regularly preach and play American gospel on the airwaves would have been unthinkable. Now, pastor Eric confides, 'it is very difficult to become a popular radio pastor, because there are just too many on air.' Driven by technological developments, democratic and neo-liberal state policies, and new global infrastructures and interactions (Castells 1996), the media landscape in Ghana, as in many African countries (Bourgault 1995; Nyamnjoh 2005), has been dramatically reconfigured. This has opened the way, but also set the parameters for new, public manifestations of religion. Remarkably, democracy and neo-liberalism have transformed the Ghanaian public sphere into a site of charismatic-Pentecostal religiosity, where the Holy Spirit is

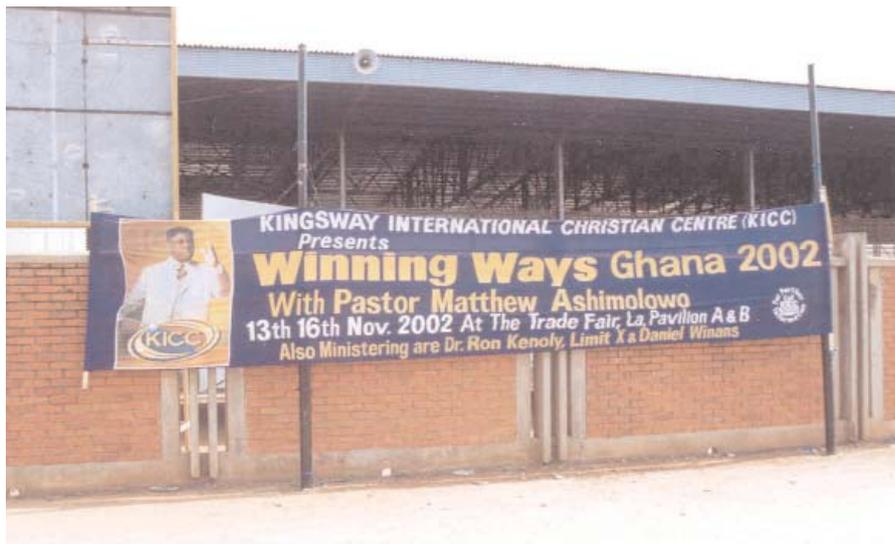
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omnipresent. This chapter investigates how this came about. Analysing the changing relations and blurring of boundaries between the national state, broadcast media, religion, and commerce, it shows how the shift from state to market forces played into the hands of charismatic Pentecostalism.

In Accra today, the various media take up an important place in city space and disseminate a broad variety of information, entertainment, messages, and stories. There are about forty local newspapers and twenty magazines and tabloids in Ghana, available at street corner kiosks. The number of FM radio stations in the country has risen to sixty. They compete for presence on the airwaves and penetrate the public and private spaces of society. Ghana Television (GTV) has been joined by five private TV stations in Accra and Kumasi and a number of cable television providers. Although this draws the audiences from the cinemas, the local video industry is still thriving as new movies are 'floated' through the streets of Accra, sold as video tapes, and shown on TV. Access to the Internet is growing exponentially, with many *com centres* turning to the Internet business and new *cafés* opening in almost all neighbourhoods. The influence of private FM and TV stations is great. Not only does the mushrooming of new, commercial stations alter Accra's soundscape and force the state-owned GBC to go commercial too. A whole new popular culture evolves around radio and TV, consisting of media personalities, RTV awards, review magazines, and live shows. One's favourite radio station has become an identity marker. This situation differs totally from fifteen years ago, when the state still owned and controlled all broadcast and most print media. The liberalisation of the media sector, as part of Ghana's democratisation process starting in 1992, has drastically changed the circulation of sounds and images in public space.

In this new, commercialised public sphere religion is strikingly abundant. Although law prohibits religious organisations to set up broadcast stations, the new

Fig. 1.1 Banner announcing a Christian convention.



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media freedom does allow religious leaders, and especially the prosperous charismatic and Pentecostal ones, to buy airtime or to appear on programmes. As a result, the new media scene is characterised by a strong charismatic-Pentecostal presence. Televised church services, radio sermons and phone-in talk shows, pentecostalist video movies (Meyer 2004a), worship and sermon tapes, popular gospel music, and Christian print media inundate public and private spaces, serving a ready market of enthusiastic young Christians. Tuning the radio at any time of the day or zapping through the TV channels on weekday mornings, one cannot miss the energetic, charismatic pastors, who like professional media entertainers preach their convictions and communicate their spiritual powers and miracles to a widespread audience through the airwaves. In the weekends chains of church services and sermons fill hours of television time on all TV channels. The banners and posters that decorate many of Accra's walls and bridges and call people to Christian crusades, conferences or concerts (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005b; figs. 1.1, 1.2) have been joined by radio and TV commercials advertising such events. Churches have jumped into the new media spaces opened up in the nineties to exploit their commercial and political possibilities to the fullest and capture new religious audiences. The transformation of the Ghanaian public sphere put religion centre stage.

Surprisingly, however, the lively debate in Ghana about media freedom and democratisation that accompanies the rise of independent media hardly discusses the role of religion. Media professionals, policy makers, and public commentators seem to implicitly reiterate modernist ideas of mass media, civil society, and the public sphere that assume the retreat of religion into the realm of the private and hence leave no place for the possibility of religious formations in the modern public sphere. In academic circles 'secularisation theory' and the Habermasian assumption of a rational, disenchanted, and democratic public sphere have come under severe criticism for being normative, ideological, and universalistic. It is important to realise, however,

Fig. 1.2 Posters advertising a Christian crusade and revival meeting.



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that the ideal of a rational and secular public sphere has become widely accepted and taken for granted by media professionals and civic institutions world-wide. Cast as the goal and principle of modern democracy, it informs public debates in Western and post-colonial societies alike. This chapter shows how, contrary to this normative ideal, religion plays a constitutive role in the 'modernisation' and 'democratisation' of the Ghanaian public sphere (cf. Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Hoover and Lundby 1997; Meyer and Moors 2006; Stout and Buddenbaum 1996).

Jürgen Habermas' pioneering work on the structural transformation of the *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* in Western-European societies (1989) has triggered a whole body of critical literature on the notion of the public sphere (see, among others, Asad 2003; Calhoun 1992; Casanova 1994; Mahmood 2004; Meyer and Moors 2006; Van der Veer 1994; Warner 1992). Of particular interest here is the collection of essays on religion, media, and the public sphere (Meyer and Moors 2006). Critical of Habermas' Euro-centric, rationalist, universalistic and normative account of the transformation of the public sphere, contributors to this volume examine how processes of media liberalisation and practices of religious mediation join to transform public spheres into arenas in which religious organisations seek to capture new audiences with spectacular images (Birman 2006; Meyer 2006a), compelling sounds (Hirschkind 2006b; Schultz 2006), and novel markers of religious authority and authenticity (Stolow 2006a; see also Van de Port 2005). As outlined in the introduction, an approach to mass media and the public sphere that foregrounds its sensory, aesthetic dimensions (Meyer 2006b) and analyses the transformation of the public sphere in terms of politics of representation (Hackett 2006; Schultz 2006) seems well suited to account for the public presence of religion in societies around the globe. The question is how changes in the institutions, economics, technologies, and practices of media have changed access to the public sphere, inform strategies of exclusion and inclusion, and contribute to specific ways of being a 'public' and specific notions of personhood (see also Warner 1992). Liberalisation, commercialisation, and globalisation of media allow new forces, including religious ones, to enter the public sphere and compete for persuading audiences not only on the basis of rational-critical argument, but also through the visceral power of visuals, voice, rhythm, and volume.¹

This chapter discusses how the historical and recent developments of Ghana's media landscape, in particular the broadcast media, have set the conditions for a 'pentecostalisation' of the public sphere (Meyer 2004a), and with it, the address and constitution of new publics, the employment of new techniques of persuasion, and the generation of new modes of belonging. Analysing the changing field of power relations between media, religion, the state, and business, it shows how the politics of representation changed with neo-liberal policies and democratisation processes, the development of media infrastructure, the rise of charismatic Pentecostalism, and the increasingly global flows of business, media programming, and religion. An analysis of this new configuration is crucial as a backdrop to understanding the specific styles and strategies of representation adopted by the International Central Gospel Church and the Afrikania Mission that will be examined in the remainder of this thesis.

I suggest analysing the changing politics of representation in terms of a struggle over the means and the modes of representation.² In the era of state ownership,

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the media served state purposes of nation building, social and economic development, and political legitimisation. With the liberalisation of the media the state has lost its grip on the media and faces the problem of how to control media representation. The state, religious groups, media professionals, and entertainment entrepreneurs negotiate control over and access to the media houses and the airwaves. At the same time, the blurry boundaries between politics, religion and entertainment become increasingly unstable, in particular with regard to modes of representation, that is, control over or influence on media formats, styles, and frames. With the globalisation and commercialisation of the media, the popular formats of the public sphere have come to evolve around celebrity, show, and spectacle. The charismatic-Pentecostal emphasis on emotional expression, spiritual experience and embodiment, and charismatic leadership seems to link up easily with these formats, giving rise to religious media celebrities and religious entertainment and addressing believers as mass spectators and audiences. As a result, as I already indicated in the introduction, pentecostalist discourses and styles of worship and expression increasing influence not only the wider religious landscape (Gifford 2004:33; Omenyo 2002), but extend beyond institutionalised religion into popular culture and entertainment (Meyer 2004a), public debate and opinion, and political culture, thus defying modernist distinctions between these domains.

The state, broadcast media, and politics of representation

To understand the transformation of Ghana's public sphere and the changes in the politics of representation, we have to go back to the introduction and development of radio technologies by the colonial government. From the very introduction of radio in the Gold Coast in 1935 until practically 1995, a period of sixty years, radio and later television have been largely controlled by the colonial and post-colonial state and this has greatly shaped media practice.

Radio and colonial governance

Only thirteen years after the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London in 1922, the Colonial Governor Sir Arnold Hodson introduced the technology of radio in the Gold Coast. The new radio experience made the world 'become no longer the distant and strange place it had ever been before, but instead, close and intimate' (Asamoah 1985:6). As with many new technologies at their introduction, radio was ascribed 'magical' qualities of connecting to far-away places.³ Indeed, one can easily imagine the thrill the listeners must have felt when they heard the BBC announcer congratulating them live on the air from London. In no time, the sheer novelty of radio attracted large crowds around the rediffusion boxes in the houses that had them to listen to what came to be called 'the stranger in the home' (ibid.).

Relaying BBC news, music, and other programmes, the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service (GCBS), also called Station ZOY, served a small elite of European settlers, colonial administrators, and educated Africans, whose homes were connected

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to the relay station through overhead wires hung on poles (P.A.V. Ansah quoted in Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:4). But apart from the approximately 300 subscriber homes, the Palladium Cinema was made a public listening venue with one hundred loudspeakers attracting crowds that thronged the surrounding streets (Asamoah 1985:7). Broadcasting in public spaces made the cosmopolitan sound of radio from the beginning extend beyond the confines of elite homes, made radio listening a social event, and significantly altered central Accra's soundscape at the time (cf. Hughes 2002 on India).⁴

The expansion of radio technology in the country was mainly instigated by and served the needs of the colonial government.⁵ Yet, it did not come only from above. Adapting foreign technology to local needs, the Accra broadcasters creatively invented a new type of inexpensive device made from aluminium sauce pans running on small batteries imported from England and smuggled into German territory (Moxton 1996). The development of radio in the Gold Coast also entailed a gradual shift from foreign to local programming. While in its early years Station ZOY had not been much more than a relay station of the BBC, the government's search for popular support during WWII meant a rapid increase in news broadcasts in Twi, Fante, Ga, and Ewe. This trend continued after the war, when the GCBS employed full-time, BBC-trained staff for local broadcasting.⁶ Apart from news in English and local languages, programming included interviews with local personalities, local music, and live choir performances in the studio. Restricted technology, however, still severely limited access to radio and the majority of the population was not reached.

Despite these limits, the jubilee publication at the occasion of fifty years of broadcasting in Ghana celebrates the role of radio as 'social ferment,' its ability of creating one nation out of different people.

Across the country, the stranger in the home stirred up a social ferment. It parted the veils separating the main ethnic groupings, enabling them to talk to each other and learn of each other's customs and social habits. More than ever before, radio gave them the opportunity to see themselves as one people, pursuing similar goals to attain a common destiny (Asamoah 1985:6).

This clearly reflects an Andersonian idea of the experience of listening to radio as one of the vehicles enabling people to feel themselves belong to an 'imagined community' of nationality (Anderson 1991 [1983]). In the colonial context, however, this 'imagined community' was not necessarily a national one. Certainly, Station Zoy, with its majority of programmes relayed from the BBC, did as much to make its listeners imagine themselves as being part of the community of the British Commonwealth as to that of the Gold Coast. It was not until independence that radio in Ghana was consciously employed as a means of 'framing the nation' (Taylor 2001). The ideology behind the introduction and development of radio was in the first place to 'educate,' 'enlighten,' and 'civilise' the colony, but also to subvert the nationalist consciousness and motivation of the educated African elite and to influence the political outlook of the new generations of educated Africans (Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:5). When towards the end of the war the demand for self-governance intensified, however, the colonial govern-

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ment became increasingly suspicious of radio being used exactly to rouse nationalist aspirations and regularly sent its security forces to the broadcasting house to arrest radio staff suspect of broadcasting subversive music and messages.⁷ This speaks of a strong belief in the power of radio to shape people's minds and thus a high concern with control over the means of communication. This belief also inspired the use of radio after independence and still informs media debates today.

Media and 'nation building'

After independence, in the euphoria of freedom and national pride and progress, media were greatly valued as the means for political reform and 'nation building.' Media institutions like the Ghana Broadcasting System (GBS), popularly Radio Ghana, and the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) were part of the colonial heritage and after independence passed into the hands of the new authorities. They employed radio, film, and from 1965 also TV, for the purpose of national education, integration and development. Although former GBC director Kwame Karikari views Africa's radio broadcasting systems of the post-colonial era as 'but a pale carbon copy of the former colonial systems' radio broadcasting philosophies and practices' (Karikari 1994:viii), Nkrumah did turn radio into something new to serve his triple purpose of propagating national commitment, African liberation and his own charisma. In line with Nkrumah's nationalist discourse and anti-colonial critique, media production focused on the promotion of a national identity. This also implied a disapproval of regional or localised stations and community programming.⁸

For Nkrumah the independence of Ghana was meaningless without the total liberation of the whole African continent and in line with his wish of spreading his Pan-African philosophy, in 1961 the government inaugurated the External Service of Radio Ghana.⁹ This was something quite unusual for a newly independent state (De Gale n.d.). With broadcasts in various languages – first French, but later also in Arabic, Hausa, Kiswahili, Portuguese, and Bambara – 'The Voice of Ghana' supported African liberation movements across the continent with programmes such as *The African Scene*, *Cultural Heritage*, *One Continent One People*, and *For Freedom Fighters* (Asamoah 1985:14). The flip side of Nkrumah's 'liberating' media policy, however, was his command of the newspapers and the radio and news agencies for the build-up and projection of his personal image and charisma, both in Ghana and abroad. Mass media contributed to the glorification and mystification of Nkrumah as the 'messiah' of the nation, the personification of a free prosperous and united Ghana (Obiri Addo 1997). In his use of mass media for the creation of a personality cult, Nkrumah broke with earlier colonial media traditions and 'resymbolised Ghanaian politics through a synthesis of the timeless institution of chieftaincy and the messianic tradition in Christianity' (ibid.:189). Tying in to chieftaincy and its fusion of the sacred and the secular, he set the trend for a connection between political 'big men' and the media that still informs media practices today (Hasty 2005) and also informs religious leaders' use of media for self-aggrandisement.

At the same time, state-supported innovations in transistor technology popularised radio and tremendously increased access to programming. The CPP

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Fig. 1.3 Banner advertising a Christian radio broadcast.

widely available *akasanoma* radios, as they were called, allowed many more people to own a receiver and tune in to radio stations without direct cable links to the sources of transmission (Asamoah 1985:4). The new 'wireless' gradually replaced the rediffusion boxes in the houses and also reached widely into the rural areas. *Akasanoma*, meaning 'talking bird,' became a popular term for radio.

When television was inaugurated in 1965 as part of the operations of GBS, Nkrumah emphasised its political purpose of assisting in the socialist transformation and its 'paramount objective' of 'education in the broadest and the purest sense.'¹⁰ A year later the capitalist-oriented military National Liberation Council overthrew Nkrumah's socialist government and introduced commercial broadcasting. The Ghana Broadcasting System became the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), as it is still known today. TV transmission did only cover the southern part of the country, however. State Transport buses brought programme tapes from Accra to Tamale in the Northern Region to be rebroadcast there the next day (ibid.). It was not until the late eighties that TV gained nation-wide popularity.

After a long period of economic crisis and general decline in equipment, facilities, and infrastructure, Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council in the 1980s improved Ghana's media infrastructure significantly with the help of foreign donors. It rehabilitated GBC's deteriorated facilities, purchasing new radio and TV transmitters to expand TV transmission to all the regions of the country, refurbishing studios, introducing colour transmission, and launching its first FM station, Greater Accra Radio (GAR) (ibid.:6; Heath 2001:94). The 1980s were marked by Rawlings' 'cultural revolution' and this had considerable impact on media production. To solve the continued dilemma of how to create a unified nation out of many different ethnic groups, the state adopted a cultural policy of 'sankofa',¹¹ aimed at reviving and propagating Ghana's diverse cultural heritage and recognising cultural diversity within national unity.¹² The people's pride in the African cultural heritage and history was seen as a precondition for the development of the country. The state attempted to restore people's pride in the nation by having Ghana's 'rich and colourful culture' shown on TV, stimulating the celebration of traditional festivals, and teaching pupils in school about

government, recognising the importance of radio in nation building, entered into a partnership with the Japanese company Sanyo to assemble small, portable radio sets in their factory in Tema. These affordable and

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diverse cultural aspects of Ghana's various ethnic groups (Coe 2005). GBC radio played mostly local music and radio and TV programme makers were encouraged to focus on 'culture.' The 'sankofa' ideology has come under heavy pressure, however, of the Pentecostalist discourse of taking distance from tradition and Christianising the nation and has lost much of its influence. Especially after the change of power in 2000, when Rawlings' National Democratic Congress lost the presidential elections to the liberal New Patriotic Party, culture and tradition have dramatically fallen on the state's priority list.

The broadcast media under state control, then, both colonial and postcolonial, were closely tied to the particular state ideologies and were primarily seen as a tool for creating the desired citizens. In colonial times media ideology stressed education and civilisation and programming served to bind people to the British Commonwealth through news about others parts of the empire, European music, and information about colonial state policies. After independence, the processes of nationalisation, in terms of ownership and programming, and popularisation, through the promotion of widely accessible radio technology, served the education of national citizens and the creation of a national identity. With the monopoly over the media and media production, the state, as most post-colonial states, controlled the public representation of belonging, national or Pan-African. As this also implied a nation-wide sharing of the same programming, of a collective listening experience, the state thus created shared understandings of past and present events, of inside and outside the nation of Ghana, of morality and immorality. Interestingly, the most authoritarian regimes were also those that invested most in the media infrastructure, clearly inspired by the belief that when you have the media you have the nation. Indeed, most coups started with the seizure of the GBC complex and the new, self-declared regime addressing the nation through the airwaves.¹³ Although today the profusion of private FM and TV stations has drastically changed the media field and undermines the nation-building potential of the media, the belief in the political power of the public media is still strong and up till today the GBC grounds are heavily protected by soldiers and not easily accessible for non-staff.

Religion on state radio and TV

Whereas the printing press has from its introduction to the Gold Coast been closely entangled with Christianity and has over time become much less attached to it, the relationship between the broadcast media and religion has seen a reversed development.¹⁴ From a situation where the state owned all broadcast media and extended its policy of religious neutrality to its media policy, radio and television have become increasingly entangled with Christianity, of an entirely new type that is. Religion has always been present on the Ghanaian airwaves. Since 1966 the main religious programme on GBC-TV has been Church Service, which is still running under the title Church Bells. It is a recorded and edited broadcast of a Sunday worship service in a Christian church, another one each week. Scheduled Sunday mornings, it is targeted at 'Christians who are not able to go to church on Sundays' and aims to 'inspire, strengthen, and enable people to gain knowledge and understanding of the bible, to

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know God better, promote balanced and mature Christian growth, to bring a life changing transformation and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Organisation-wise GBC produced religious programmes come under the section of education, thus revealing the old link between Christianity, education, and citizenship. The subtle, implicit link between the state and mainline Christianity behind programmes such as Church Bells reminds us that the official policy of religious neutrality is to be taken with a grain of salt.¹⁶

Apart from its own productions, GBC-TV occasionally broadcast programme tapes sent by religious bodies from abroad, for example the pope with Easter or the American televangelist Oral Roberts sometimes. According to the GTV head of religious programming, Pearl Adotey, however, this was not structural and they did not pay for it. Yet, from the late 1970s to 1982 Oral Roberts and the Nigerian preacher Benson Idahosa could frequently be seen and heard on the nation's TV screens. Their programmes and the American evangelical books and tapes that started circulating around the same time inspired a new wave of charismatic Christian enthusiasm in Ghana (see below). This situation, however, changed when Flight Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings took power for the second time in December 1981. Rawlings was very suspicious of Christianity, and especially of this new charismatic strand of Christianity as its generally negative attitude towards traditional culture run counter to the ideals of his 'cultural revolution.' All externally produced (including foreign) religious radio and TV programmes were taken off air and the neo-traditionalist Afrikania Mission was the only religious group granted airtime on state radio. Every week Afrikania's founder and leader, the former Catholic priest Kwabena Damuah, spoke to the nation about the people's civil duty to uphold the values enshrined in the country's traditional religious system and to contribute to national development by integrating traditional religious practices in their daily lives (see chapters 5 and 8).

Next to the Afrikania broadcast, traditional religion was quite well represented in programmes such as the TV programme *Cultural Heritage* and similar talk shows and educative programmes. *Cultural Heritage* featured a talk show hosting cultural specialists who elaborated on specific topics like 'traditional religion,' 'cultural festivals,' or 'libation.'¹⁷ In contrast to Christianity, traditional religion was and still is represented as 'culture.' Rearticulated and polished as folklore, it was part of Ghana's heritage, about which the people of Ghana should know and be proud and so was part of national education (Coe 2005). Not presented as religion in itself, it was not meant to inspire people's religious life, as the programme *Church Service* was meant to do. Where programmes like *Cultural Heritage* had to generate and disseminate knowledge about traditional religion, *Church Service* encouraged people to participate in Christian religion.¹⁸ There was thus a big difference between the mode of representing traditional religion and the mode of representing mainline Christianity. The first was based on an abstract notion of 'our nation,' but from the audience's point of view it often pictured other people's customs and beliefs. People were to identify with it in a cerebral, almost distanced way as citizens. The second mode was one of involvement and personal identification as believers.¹⁹

At the same time – and here it is important to not only look at the state-controlled broadcast media, but also at 'small media' (Eickelman and Anderson 1999;

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Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994) – a lively religious ‘cassette culture’ developed, constituted by numerous ‘tape ministries.’ In the late seventies the charismatic-Pentecostal upsurge had already gained momentum and the banning of Oral Roberts and Benson Idahosa from the airwaves did not halt this. Indigenous charismatic churches popped up one after the other and many started recording their services on audio and video tapes right from the beginning. Such tapes circulated through sales, lending libraries, and hand-to-hand exchange among friends. This cassette culture provided an effective alternative circuit, outside of state control, for the spread of the messages and renown of new, charismatic preachers, or, in Pentecostal terms, of the Holy Ghost fire. When in 1992 the broadcast media were liberalised and the airwaves gradually became accessible, for most of these churches the step to radio broadcasting and, for those who could afford, television broadcasting was not that big.

Opening the airwaves

Return to democracy

In 1992 presidential elections effectuated a return to democratic rule after a long period of military rule under Rawlings. Rawlings now became the democratically chosen president.²⁰ Under pressure from Ghanaian civil society and international donors, the state loosened control over the media, thus giving way to a rapidly evolving private media scene and generating a debate and high expectations about the role of the media in the process of democratisation. According to Carla Heath, while broadcasting opened up in most African countries in the 1990s, the process ranges much further in Ghana than elsewhere in Africa (1999:512). The 1992 constitution guarantees freedom and independence of the media and forbids censorship and licensing of any media outlet.²¹ An inbuilt ‘escape clause,’ however, undermined this right ‘in the interest of national security, public order, public morality’ and enabled the government to require radio stations to apply to the state-appointed Frequency Control and Regulation Board for transmission frequencies.²² The airwaves thus remained under state control.²³ Despite several applications, by the end of 1994 no frequencies had been granted yet for fears that private radio stations would be associated with particular ethnic groups, and thus challenge national unity and possibly subvert public order. So, despite the constitutional liberalisation of the media, it was not until 1995 that the first private FM station started broadcasting, and not without a struggle.

FM stations

After repeated attempts to obtain a transmission frequency had failed, on 19 November 1994 Charles Wereko-Brobby, a self-confident opposition politician, started test transmissions on Radio Eye. Contrary to GBC, the new station played mostly American hits, interspersed with a bit of talk, and this stirred the city. Many people welcomed the breach of GBC’s monopoly and tuned in to Radio Eye. The euphoria was short-lived however. Two weeks later, the police raided the station’s premises,

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seizing the equipment and arresting the owners and disc jockeys for operating a pirate radio station. In response to this, about thousand people marched through Accra demonstrating for media freedom. A counterdemonstration for law and order, allegedly by people who were paid to march by the government, led to violent clashes. The case of Radio Eye was taken to the High Court and the three directors and a technician were convicted guilty of illegal broadcasting. But the public outcry opened the floor for a hot public debate about media freedom and forced the government to allow private broadcasting in the country. A subsequently appointed committee on private broadcasting recommended granting of frequencies to corporations that were Ghanaian-owned and not associated with political parties or churches. In April 1995 JoyFM was the first legal private radio station to begin broadcasting in Ghana. Yet, to the anger of other stations that had tried hard to obtain a frequency, Joy avoided the whole bureaucratic process by leasing a frequency owned by GBC, 99.7 FM. From that time onwards, however, it became possible to obtain frequencies and the late nineties and early 2000s saw the mushrooming of other private, commercial FM stations. In 1999 there were nine FM stations in Accra and thirty-one in the whole country, in 2004 these numbers had doubled to eighteen and sixty respectively. 'FM' has become the local term for radio.

The various stations in Accra have specific characteristics or identities and lay different emphases. One's favourite station has become an identity marker. FM stations being much like fashion, people also shift from one preferred station to another. I introduce a few of them. JoyFM is known as 'the first and the best.' It uses mainly English and emphasises news and current affairs. It is Christian oriented and targets high income, well educated people. Top Radio, *ammanre fie*, the 'house of culture,' broadcasts in various local languages and emphasises 'culture.' Channel 'R' is the 'channel of righteousness.' It is, though not nominally, a Christian station and plays only gospel music and hosts a lot of pastors. Atlantis Radio is the station for relaxation, playing 'cool' music (American R&B, jazz, and gospel) without talk. Vibe FM has come to be known as the 'boga' station.²⁴ It plays mostly American music and is sometimes ridiculed for the presenters' LAFAs (locally acquired foreign accent); Peace FM is the only all Twi station in Accra, known as 'the station of the taxi driver' and the most popular of all FM stations.²⁵ In fact, Peace FM thrilled the media scene with its unexpected success. Unexpected, because local language was not generally thought to be fit for broadcasting.²⁶ After the success of Peace FM, Top Radio followed with broadcasts in various local languages. On other stations too, the use of local language, mainly Twi, has grown steadily with the proliferation of FM stations and increasing competition for listeners. Ga, the language of the autochthonous population of Accra, was remarkably absent from Accra's airwaves (Heath 2001:101) until GBC established Obunu FM in 2001. These developments, together with the fall of the popularity of English-oriented Joy FM and of the ratings of Vibe FM as soon as it became associated with *brofo* (white) culture, indicate a trend of vernacularisation of radio. The new environment of media pluralism and commercialism has changed GBC radio as well (ibid.). GBC opened several FM stations (in Accra Uniiq FM and Obunu FM), where programme content and presentation styles are much like the private FM stations.

A striking characteristic of the new privately-owned radio stations is the phe-

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nomenon of phone-in programmes, where listeners call in to share their opinions, experiences, or questions live on air with the programme host, studio guests and other listeners (see Heath 1999). Such shows are both in English and in some local languages and are generally very popular. Apart from opening up a space for public discussion on various civic issues, phone-in shows turn radio into a truly participatory practice, where being on air is as important as what is actually said. While many celebrate this trend in the name of democracy and freedom of expression, others criticise the new freedom and especially phone-in programming for allowing or even inviting people to say just about anything on the airwaves, insulting persons or groups. A struggle thus ensues about what can and what cannot be said on the airwaves. In the absence of delay equipment, which would make editing of discussions possible, what callers or studio guests say goes on air directly and can only be controlled by the host's skills in moderating debate. Several stations have indeed been sued for libel.²⁷ Clearly, the speech practices that came with phone-in programming violate earlier (GBC) conventions of 'civilised' radio speech. Several incidents raised questions among media practitioners about what can and cannot be said in the name of freedom of expression and what modes of speech are and are not appropriate for broadcasting.²⁸

Apart from news, discussion programmes, interviews, and information, music, as anywhere in the world, takes up the larger part of radio content. Whereas in the 1980s of the 'cultural revolution' the playing of local music on air was stimulated by the state to the (attempted) exclusion of imported music,²⁹ since the mid-1990s the FM stations have provided for the return of foreign music in Ghana's public sphere and soundscape. The state indirectly supported this move by levying tax on 'traditional' music (and other 'folklore'), that it claims to be part of the national heritage kept by the state. Moreover, the copy rights on local popular music can be a financial impediment to playing them on air. Playing foreign music on air circumvents both problems of tax and copy rights and is thus much cheaper. American 'cool music,' reggae, and rap enjoy much popularity. Still, Ghanaian highlife, gospel music, and hiplife are the most popular musical genres. To solve the copy rights problem, most of the Ghanaian music played on air has been recorded and purchased in Europe or the US (Heath 2001:99). Ghanaian musicians have thus found in the radio stations a new channel to reach much wider audiences than before. The importance of recorded music on radio has also further commodified music and made it dependent upon mass appeal (Nadeau 2000:168).

Radio in Ghana is more than what is broadcast on the airwaves and should be understood as a social and cultural phenomenon. Around FM stations, a radio celebrity scene has emerged, constituted by radio personalities (including pastors), annual presentation of awards for the best radio presenter of the year, the best programme, the best DJ etc., and live shows where presenters perform and, very importantly, show their face. Instead of drawing upon the pool of officially trained radio journalists, many new stations bring in their presenters from alternative circuits like Accra's night clubs (Nadeau 2000:149), churches, or through overseas connections.³⁰ Employed primarily because of their voice or charisma rather than their qualifications, many of the now well-known personalities are self-trained. Not surprisingly, many professionally

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Fig. 1.4 Bus shelter advertising a Christian radio broadcast.

trained GBC people look down upon these 'amateurs' and criticise the commercial stations for lack of professionalism and responsibility (Heath 1999). Presenters and DJs with the commercial stations on the other hand say that the lack of bureaucracy and hierarchy allows them much more freedom to develop their own styles and creativity, essential to becoming a

celebrity. Moreover, they receive between 10 and 50% higher salaries than their colleagues in public broadcasting (Adu-Gyamfi n.d.). The rise of independent FM stations has generated a new generation of young, practically trained and enthusiastic presenters and DJs, who apart from their radio work are often also active in showbiz or religious circles, which often overlap. The publication of review magazines, such as *Radio and TV review* (fig. 1.5) and *TV & Radio Guide* (fig. 1.6) sustains this radio celebrity scene. Apart from presenting a rarely updated and incomplete TV programme guide, the *TV & Radio Guide* carries stories and recurrent features like 'personality profile' and 'radio station profile' that disseminate inside knowledge about stations and presenters and so contribute to the creation of a radio and TV community. In addition, in the competition for popularity and reputation, many FM stations sponsor the Ghana Music Awards and other music events. Lastly, the radio culture has stimulated informal national holidays like Valentine Day, which has become very popular since 1996 (see Fair 2004) and 'gets more exciting each year as the electronic media struggle to outdo each other' (Tapena 2002). With support from greeting card shops, breweries, and other sponsoring companies, stations compete in organising big Valentine parties, radio promotions, give-aways, and awards.

Private television

If after the liberalisation of the media private radio took some time before starting to actually broadcast, private television was again slower to take off, mainly due to the financial constraints in setting up a TV station. Neo-liberal economic state policies and global partnerships spurred the development of private TV. In October 1997 TV3 was the first private free-on-air television station in Ghana to begin commercial broadcasting. The TV channel together with the film production section, Gama Film, form the company Gama Media International, which resulted from the sale in 1996 of 70% of the shares of the Ghana Film Industry Corporation by the Ghanaian government to a

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Malaysian TV production company, *Sistem Televisyen Malasia Berhad* (see Ansah 2006). The remaining 30% is Ghanaian owned. Extended to Kumasi in 2002, TV3's transmissions cover most of Southern Ghana. Until 2002 transmission times were very limited, starting only in the afternoon. Now TV3 is in the air from five in the morning till midnight. Three months after TV3 came on air, another private station followed. Metro TV is a joint venture between GBC and the international media enterprise Media1, owned by two Lebanese-Ghanaian brothers.³¹ The station is particularly strong in sports and that is very popular in Ghana. In 2000 the station came to Kumasi and has recently expanded its transmission to Takoradi. Two other private TV stations are based and broadcasting in Kumasi: Crystal TV and Fontomfrom TV. These are not free-to-air, but operate through cable networks. Ghana's fifth private TV station, TV Africa was launched in May 2003. Founded and owned by the celebrated Ghanaian film maker Kwah Ansah, it aims to broadcast both in Ghana and in 29 other African countries news and programmes from the African perspective to 'uplift and enhance the soul and image of the African.' It is designed as a pan-African network to offer programmes to otherwise small television stations in return for spots for commercials on the local stations' channel.

Private satellite television is available through a few different companies. For a subscription fee, stations such as TV-Agoro and M-net offer international channels like BBC World Service, Cartoon Network, a movie and music channel, Discovery Channel, Christian Broadcast Network (CBN), Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), and the Catholic Eternal World Television Network (EWTN). Subscription fees are high and so reception of satellite TV is still limited to the upper class. It is of little direct significance for the local media scene. Yet, satellite TV is important in providing programme formats for local productions. American televangelists such as Benny Hinn, for example, serve as models for the producers of local religious programming (see chapter 4).

The commercial basis of the private television stations of course has implications for programming, as the station owners' main objective is to make money. With the commercialisation of the media there has also been a (partial) shift in the purpose of media use from education and national development to entertainment and to foreign programming. GBC-Television had a tradition of screening 'pure' entertainment, mainly television drama in Akan, Ga, Ewe, and English, and this was very popular.³² During the PNDC era the government came to use television drama as a tool for mass mobilisation and national development (Dseagu 1991). In contrast, the new commercial stations are characterised by much foreign, especially American entertainment programming. Producing programmes is much more expensive than buying the rights to old foreign programmes and films, which may cost as little as \$200 per episode. They show mostly films, entertainment shows such as *Oprah Winfrey*, *the Cosby Show*, soap operas like the *Bold and the Beautiful*, and Mexican or Latin American telenovelas, such as *Acapulco Bay*, *La Usurpadora* or *Cuando Seas Mia*. Such soaps, dubbed in English in the Metro TV studio, are very popular, much talked about, and style-generating, as young people copy clothing styles of these foreign TV stars. Also popular are *Big brother Africa*, from South-Africa, and the weekly Hindi movies.

Another emerging characteristic of the new broadcast pluralism is the live

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relaying on local radio and TV stations of programmes, especially news, originating from foreign stations, including BBC, CNN, Voice Of America, EWTN, CBN, Deutsche Welle, and Radio France International. Local stations affiliate to these international stations and do not pay for relays. BBC for example has partnerships with eleven radio stations in Ghana for broadcasts of news bulletins and Africa-oriented current affairs programmes. Metro TV has an agreement with CBN Africa to broadcast at least five hours of entertainment programmes a week (Adu-Gyamfi n.d.).

The upsurge of foreign programming has triggered a discussion about 'the onslaught of foreign cultures on our media' that 'threatens our culture and identity.' Foreign values and (im)morality, visualised in foreign television programmes, are believed to pervert the Ghanaian viewers. A slightly different critique is heard in charismatic circles, where it is taught that the Devil uses immoral programmes to take people away from Christ. Not only independent stations are criticised, also GTV, which airs a lot of foreign news programming. Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari, for example, two old-time media professionals, lament that 'the state-owned GBC seems to be spearheading the "foreignization" of broadcasting in Ghana' (1998:10). Nevertheless, there is nowadays much more local programming than in the beginning of independent television. News, current affairs programmes, documentaries, talk shows, films, games, drama, soap, cookery and beauty magazines are all produced by the various TV stations in the country. Most of this locally produced programming is in English. Although there is very few local language programming, entertainment programmes in Twi are quite popular. *Taxi Driver* and *Efiewura* ('the first telenovela in Twi to hit the Ghanaian TV screens') on TV3, or Maame Dokono's *Odo ne Asomdwe* ('Love and Peace') and *Papa Ajasco* on Metro TV. GTV has certainly much more local language programmes, such as the drama series *Cantata* and the game show *Agoro*. Further, it broadcasts *Concert Party* (popular theatre) live from the national Theatre, *Mmaa Nkommo*, a talk show focused on women's issues, *Show Case* in Ga or Ewe (drama), and *Akan Drama*, and news and adult education in Akan, Ewe, Ga, Hausa, Nzema, and Dagbani. There has also been an increase in 'African movies' (Ghanaian and Nigerian) on television, which are widely watched. Mostly, these are shown earlier in the cinemas and video theatres, but their screening on TV draws audiences from there. People rather wait till a movie is shown on TV, which usually doesn't take long. As a result, the Gama Films theatre is almost empty even on Saturday nights.

Airtime for sale

With the shift of media production from a state monopoly to a private practice of many small and larger producers, the most significant feature of the new radio and TV stations has become their commercial nature. Rather than being meted out, airtime is now sold at high profit and has thus turned from a public resource into a commercial good. The forces of state interest loosing power to those of global capitalism implied an increase in advertising, the advent of programme sponsoring, and the sale of airtime for privately produced programmes.

On Ghanaian television and radio we see and hear commercials by both big multinational (Royco, Maggi, Coca Cola, Guinness), and national (breweries, food

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producers) and local companies (furniture producers, shops). The government has adverts for family planning, tax paying and the like and churches advertise crusades, religious conferences, and sermon tapes. TV3's daily *In loving memory* shows televised obituaries produced by bereaved families who buy a few minutes of airtime to advertise the funeral of their beloved relation. Funeral announcements on radio account for a significant portion of many stations' income (Heath 2001:97).³³

As prime time is only three hours, from 7 to 10 pm, and that is not enough for advertisement revenue, many of the locally produced TV programmes are sponsored by companies, that like to be affiliated with the content of that particular programme. This means that 'when you come up with a programme, they always think about do you get a sponsor, before the programme can go and until a sponsor is found you cannot start the programme.'³⁴ The sponsor also influences the content of the programme and may even give it its name, e.g. *Maggi cooking* on GTV.

Airtime is also sold, per slots of half an hour, for privately produced programmes. Most are sponsored programmes, which means that they come with adverts, included in the thirty minutes. Most private programmes come from churches. As the Metro TV MD, Fadi Fattal, said:

We have about 12 to 13 churches that buy airtime with us. They are in fact one of the best business relations. They pay \$ 250-350 per 30 minutes, depending on the time. It is restricted mainly to the mornings. We don't have anything to do with their programming. They just bring their tape to be broadcast, they do everything.³⁵

Not all media practitioners are happy with the abundance of church broadcasts on the airwaves. Florence Nyantey of TV3 complained that

There is too much religion in the media, it's terrible, the same church services always, it's so boring. But, you know, we are a private station. The churches have sponsors from among their members to pay for making the programmes and for airtime. And we need the money. But I think God doesn't want us to sit behind the television watching religious programmes. He wants us to work normally, else we don't get any money.³⁶

This market logic governing the new media field has forced GBC to go commercial too and sell airtime to churches, something that did not happen before the liberalisation of the media. GTV sells airtime to mainly charismatic churches for between 4 and 6 million cedis (\$ 300 to \$ 450) per 30 minutes. Unlike Metro TV, GTV judges the programme content according to its own guidelines for religious programming, which are similar to those of the National Commission on Media (see below).

Negotiating media practice

Not surprisingly, the rapid transition to media deregulation has not gone uncontested, but has led to a lively debate about media, democracy, and the role of the state (see

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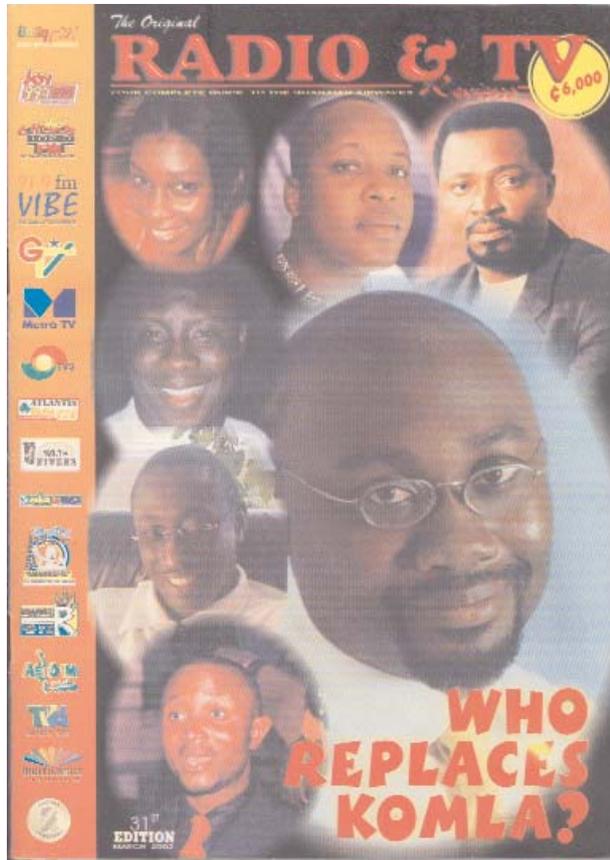


Fig. 1.5 Front cover of Radio & TV Review.

tion of the media field and lament that 'considering the weight entertainment (music) takes on most of the stations' airtime, the greater and immediate motive for investment in radio may have more to do with profits than with any commitment to social and cultural enlightenment that ought to come with the yearning for broadcast pluralism' (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:10-11). It is exactly this independence from the state and dependence on local audiences' preferences, that enables these stations to operate effectively in a broad popular cultural field, including the music industry, musical and theatre performances, fashion shows, entertainment magazines and radio & TV guides. I argue that a normative approach to these processes is not helpful to understanding the particular nexus of and the blurring of boundaries between media, the nation-state, and religion.

Clearly, with the deregulation of the media the state has lost much of its former control over what is broadcast on the nation's airwaves and thus over the public representation of culture and identity, which has instead become subject to fierce public debate and negotiation by a variety of parties. Two examples are the annual conflict over the 'ban on drumming and noisemaking' or the reheated controversy over the pouring of libation at public functions (see chapter 7). This is not to say that the state

also Hackett 2006 on South Africa). A variety of voices, participants, and institutions have taken part in the negotiation of new media practices. Most media professionals, civic commentators, and other contributors are optimistic about the mass media's potential of promoting the liberal democratic principles of openness, pluralism, and participation and so fully embrace the international community's celebration of 'civil society' in Africa, including its modernist assumptions.³⁷ The celebration of media's democratising potential of 'educating the masses' is the general tone, especially of the recent debate over the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law after the change of government. At the same time, many professionally-trained journalists are wary of the commercialisa-

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has no control whatsoever over what happens in the public sphere. Instead of dismissing the role of the nation-state, I want to point out that the state has become one of the players in this field of contestation that the media are today, struggling for a little power over sound and image. The most direct control over radio and television stations is executed by the National Communication Authority (formerly the Frequency Control and Regulation Board). Appointed by the government, it has the power to grant transmission frequencies to prospective stations and to regulate their operations when they start broadcasting.³⁸ One of the requirements for obtaining a broadcasting frequency is that the station may not exhibit a particular religious or political conviction. Baffou-Bonnie of Radio Gold:

They don't want a station to be classified as a religious station. They don't want any radio station to become segmented, it should be a general station. You can broadcast religious programs, you can broadcast entertainment programs, instructive programs, but the station as a whole should serve the general public. That is why, unlike in America where we have CBN, stations that are especially made for religious programmes, we don't have it here.³⁹

As we shall see, this prohibition of religious broadcast stations does not prevent that in practice many stations do exhibit a particular religious, that is, charismatic orientation.

In the absence of clear guidelines on technology, FM stations started competing with more and more powerful transmitters to maximise coverage areas and thus business. The resulting technical problems urged the NCA to interfere with stations' operations and regulate broadcasting equipment.⁴⁰ Apart from technicalities, the 'absence of clear norms other than those of market competition' has given rise to questions about the quality, morality, and effect of private broadcasting. This is a concern for the National Media Commission (NMC), the watchdog of the Ghanaian media. Established by the constitution chiefly as a buffer between the government and the state media, and as a conflict solving party between the public and the media generally, it represents ten civic groups.⁴¹ Of the religious groups, there is a representative for 'the Christian churches,' one for 'the Muslims,' but, significantly, none for traditional religion.⁴² According to the executive secretary Yaw Boadu-Ayebofo,

Traditional religion is too undefined to be incorporated into this kind of set-up, because you don't know how to identify them basically. Traditional religion is so fragmented, not organised as one body.⁴³

The Afrikania Mission, which posits itself as *the* representative body of traditional religion in Ghana, is thus not recognised as such on the NMC. The (alleged) 'unrepresentability' of traditional religion in the public sphere is one of the major predicaments of Afrikania's efforts to enter the media and will be analysed in detail in chapter 6.

In reaction to the rapid developments in the media field, which take place without clear guidelines and 'undermine the ethos of broadcasting as a public good'

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(NMC, *National Media Policy*), the commission came up with a National Media Policy and Broadcasting Standards. Such guidelines are not new (see Heath 1999) and despite their institutionalisation they are still without legal implications.⁴⁴ Assessing the developments in the broadcasting industry, the National Media Policy is concerned about the 'market oligopoly that serves vested interests,' the urban and foreign orientation of programming, curtailing the potential for reflection and nurturing of local culture, the marginal use of local language, the insufficient exposure of Ghanaian talent and impoverishment of Ghanaian culture, the relay of foreign broadcasts, and the passive role of the audience (ibid.). To change this situation, 'the public interest shall be paramount in the operations of all media, [...] together they shall enact the role of the media to inform, educate, and entertain in pursuit of dynamic, equitable, and culturally endowed national development.' Although the times of Nkrumahist socialism with its belief in a makeable society have passed, the idea that radio and television serve as transformative forces is still strong, as is the implicit theory of reception that assumes audiences to be passive receivers of predetermined messages and hardly leaves room for alternative interactions with media. Media debates and media policy are characterised by an instrumentalist view of media that attributes to media an almost magical power to influence the thinking and habits of the people. National consciousness and identity, education, and social development are all supposed to be largely shaped by the media.

A quick look at the National Media Policy and the Broadcasting Standards reveals their being hopelessly out of tune with the working practices of the private media and the reception practices of their audiences in this era of media liberalisation, commercialisation, globalisation, and especially 'pentecostalisation.' The 'pursuit of dynamic, equitable, and culturally endowed national development' entails, as stated in the National Media Policy, the use of local languages and the promotion and growth of local culture. A prescribed percentage of 50% for radio and 30% for television airtime (to be risen to 75% and 50%) should be allocated to local content, including music. Half of these percentages are to be aired during prime time, and half also should consist of programmes promoting local education, culture, and development. Programming should further contribute to civic education, family life, good governance, human rights and gender justice. The media should ensure that programme content reflects and advances Ghanaian cultural aspirations and values through the use of imagery, symbolism and language that promote national and African cultural heritage, self-identity, and self-esteem. The Broadcasting Standards further specify these requirements and include, to pick just a few: 'avoid all indecency and incitement to ethnic, religious or sectional hatred'; 'obscene or vulgar language should not be used'; 'the sanctity of marriage and family values should be promoted'; 'Ghanaian cultural rites should be promoted with accuracy'; 'the distinction between truth and fiction should not be blurred'; 'undesirable aspects of human nature should not be glamorised'; and 'actual sexual intercourse between humans should at no time be transmitted.' Concerning religious programmes: the opportunity for religious broadcast should be available to the various religions and under the same conditions; religious broadcasts should be presented by responsible representatives of the religion, should not contain any attack

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on or ridicule of any other religion, and shall be prepared with due regard and respect for the beliefs and sensibilities of all religions. Rules for commercial advertising include that it is unacceptable for certain professions to advertise, namely physicians, lawyers, dentists, osteopaths, chiropractors, occultists, optometrists and others of a similar nature.

Through such guidelines, the state, through the NMC, tries to direct the representation of culture, tradition, and religion in the media within a common, national framework of morality. In practice, however, these guidelines are subject to different interpretations. Who decides what is 'indecent' and what are 'undesirable aspects of human nature'? And when we see charismatic pastors on television healing people from all kinds of sicknesses, delivering them from evil spirits, or prophesying riches, who judges whether this is truth or fiction or whether the distinction between the two has become blurred?⁴⁵ Such terms are simply not applicable to this kind of television programming. Moreover, are those healing pastors not of 'similar nature' to 'occultists,' a very controversial category in itself? Surely, they do advertise their healing powers, that is, their business, and call people to come to their churches. And although airtime is in principle available to all religious groups, financial constraints make it a rather restricted opportunity, excluding in particular those who indeed 'promote national and African cultural heritage.'

Talking to Boadu-Ayebofo about the guidelines for religious programming, it became clear to me how much the NMC is caught between, on the one hand, the freedom of religious expression, and on the other, the promotion of respect for all religions.

Christians are able to stand there and say all manner of things about traditional religion. Sometimes it is offensive. Part of what the guidelines are saying is that people must be circumspect in religion, because religion is so emotional, it is irrational, it defies all manner of thinking.⁴⁶

He acknowledges that the principle of equal access to the media does not work in practice, due to financial and other barriers.

Because religion has been commercialised, it is about business. They are educated and they know how to go about it. A lot of the charismatic priests are American trained with clip tongues, rapping you. The environment is choking for traditional religion. People think that they are not enlightened. So somehow they don't have that confidence of putting themselves out to the public in a forceful way that these charismatic Christians are doing.

He is not happy about this situation, but there is not so much the NMC can do,

Because it is about the freedom of expression. Religion is not like political parties, we cannot regulate advertisement in that environment. You can't stop them from using their money the way they want, sponsoring a religious programme or advert is not a crime. So we can do very little about it. But we

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would wish that these are used as a platform for national unity and integration rather than causing disaffection and confusion.

State related institutions such as the NMC and the NCA thus struggle to position themselves vis-à-vis the marked public presence of religion, and especially charismatic Pentecostalism. While pursuing neo-liberal economic policies and opening up the media sphere for global flows of business, images, and ideas (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996), the state finds itself empty handed with regard to controlling a national imagination of community (Anderson 1991). Its vision of the public sphere as a secular, national space of rational interaction has come under pressure from alternative, religious imaginations of belonging, both national and transnational.

The 'pentecostalisation' of the public sphere

As a result of the commercialisation of the media, the airwaves tend to be dominated by the voices of those who have money and those who are able to attract sponsors, to the exclusion of those who enjoy less popularity and financial resources. But contrary to the concerns of media practitioners of the old school, who appropriate a modernist discourse of 'civil society' and implicitly assume that religion has no place in a democratic public sphere (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998; Karikari 1994), the religious influence on independent broadcasting is enormous. In practice it is the charismatic churches that have the financial resources to develop their own programmes, pay for airtime on radio and television and dominate the airwaves. But also to organise big gospel events that are covered by the media. Indeed, as Rev. Cephas Amartey of JoyFM said,

The churches are keeping the radio stations in business, paying for interviews, adverts, airtime etc. This means a significant contribution to national development, since workers in these stations get employed and paid from some of these contributions. Religious broadcast has therefore become the bedrock of the media industry in the country.⁴⁷

In response to the strong public presence of charismatic churches, the Islamic Ahmaddiya movement has also started buying radio and television airtime and the Afrika Mission has been buying airtime on radio, but stopped its broadcast due to the high cost involved. The charismatic voice literally shouts down the weaker ones. It is aired not only through the churches' 'media ministries,' but reaches much wider and goes beyond the specific church related media activity to inform a much looser, but all the more powerful, Christian inspired and mass mediated popular culture, entertainment and discourse. In this section I present the impact of charismatic Pentecostalism on the means and modes of representation in Ghana's new media scene.

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Charismatic 'media ministries'

More than forty different Christian broadcasts throughout the week fill about twenty-two hours of airtime on the three free-to-air TV channels in Accra (see appendix I for an overview). GTV shows religious programmes on weekday mornings at daybreak and Sunday mornings four hours long; TV3 has a religious broadcast four days a week at 5.30 am and at 6 pm, in the weekends also at 11.30 am; Metro TV's Christians

programmes are concentrated on Saturday, from 6 to 11 am with some more shown on weekdays and on Sunday. On Fridays it has home produced Islamic programming from 8 to 12 am.

This overview is not stable as programmes come and go, but it does indicate the amount of television content taken up by religious programming on Ghanaian television. Part of it is of foreign origin, such as the American programmes *This is the Life* (Lutheran Media Ministries) and *Turning Point* (relay on GTV and Metro TV from CBN) or the Nigerian TB Joshua's *The Voice in the Synagogue* and Matthew Ashimowolo's *Winning Ways* (Kingsway

International Christian Centre, London). But

most of it comes from Ghanaian charismatic churches: Sam Korankye Ankrach's *Power in his Presence* (Royal House Chapel International), Charles Agyin Asare's *Your Miracle Encounter* and *God's Miracle Power* (Word Miracle Church), Mensa Otabil's *Living Word* (International Central Gospel Church), Dag Heward-Mills' *Mega Word* (Lighthouse Chapel International), Nicholas Duncan-Williams' *Voice of Inspiration* (Christian Action Faith Ministries), Gordon Kisseih's *Treasures of Wisdom* (Miracle Life Gospel Church), and Christie Doe-Tetteh's *Solid Rock* (Solid Rock Chapel International), to name but a few. Among the few non-charismatic programmes is that by the Christ Apostolic Church, which is also Pentecostal. Most of these programmes consist primarily of the Sunday service in the particular church and are also broadcast

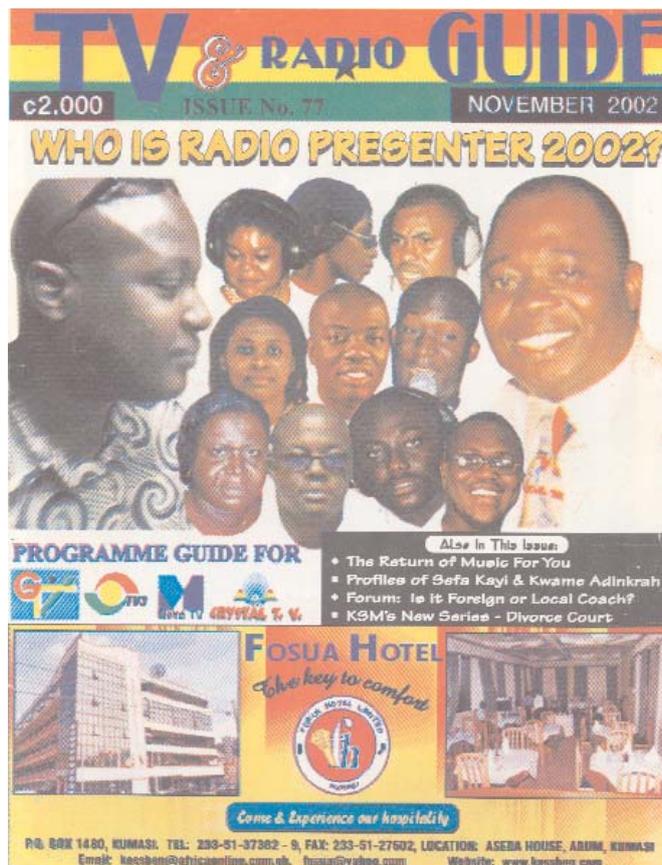


Fig. 1.6 Front cover of TV & Radio Guide.

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on one of the radio stations, sometimes under a different title. In fact, most started as a radio broadcast only and expanded to television later on, when the churches had grown larger and richer. On the radio airwaves one can hear even more preachers than on television as some churches, especially the smaller ones, limit their media activity to radio, as for example the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, which has a broadcast on JoyFM (Moyet 2005).

From the very onset of the charismatic revival in Ghana, this movement was closely tied to mass media. In the seventies, a period of severe economic malaise and widespread suffering, a wave of Christian enthusiasm flooded the country, proclaiming a message of prosperity and power over one's condition and offering people something to hold on to. The US were an important source of inspiration for this new type of Christianity was the US and it came through revival crusades held by globe-trotting evangelists and newsletters, books, audio and video cassettes, and television programmes by faith preachers like Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, and Morris Cerullo.⁴⁸ From 1979 to 1982 Oral Roberts' *Abundant Life* was broadcast on GBC-TV every Sunday evening from 6 to 7 pm, popularising the slogan 'something good is going to happen to you' (Larbi 2001:308). The Nigerian preacher Benson Idahosa, who trained in the US, had already started his TV programme *Redemption Hour* on Ghanaian television in 1977 (ibid. 298). Kenneth Hagin's books, like *The Name of Jesus* (1979), *How to Write your own Ticket with God* (1979), or *Redeemed from poverty and spiritual death* (1983) came to Ghana through the Nigerian market and were among the popular books circulating (ibid. 297). His messages also circulated on audio tapes, making his slogan 'you can have what you say' a source of hope for people in a time of deep economic crisis (ibid.).

Also in the United States, the birthplace of Pentecostalism, this religious movement has been deeply entangled with mass media. Shortly after the birth of modern Pentecostalism on Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906 (see Anderson 2004; Hollenweger 1997), radio began to serve as an important channel for preaching and evangelism. As early as 1922, evangelist Aimée MacPherson preached on radio and created the first Christian radio station. In the fifties the first televangelists, such as Billy Graham and later Oral Roberts, gained fast popularity and televangelism became a phenomenon in itself (e.g. Alexander 1997; Bruce 1990; Harding 2001; Hoover 1988). Christian media networks such as CBN and TBN have by now become very powerful not only in the US, but all over the globe, including Africa. From the seventies up till today mass media for a large part constituted the connections between Ghanaian charismatic churches and their US counterparts, and also visualised these connections for Ghanaian church audiences. This has been of much influence for charismatic Pentecostalism in Ghana, both in terms of messages and of styles.

After Nicholas Duncan-Williams founded the Christian Action Faith Ministries in 1979 many more charismatic churches emerged and they continue to blossom. The doctrine and praxis of these churches emphasise the personal experience of the Holy Spirit, emotional expression, spiritual healing and deliverance. The charismatic personalities of the founders and leaders form the spill around which the churches evolve. They strongly proclaim a message of success, achievement, self-making, prosperity, and power, attracting not only the young upwardly mobile, but also a consid-

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erable number of those already at the top: executives, businessmen and politicians. Most use English as main language and have a 'modern,' cosmopolitan and rich outlook as regards their buildings, cars, technical devices, dress, practices, and international connections.⁴⁹ They have mass appeal and, emphasising church growth, parade their high numbers of followers, visualising their mass audiences in their TV programmes and videos. Moreover, they attach high importance to evangelisation, which is considered an obligation of every Christian. Their positive and productive attitude towards mass media thus fits well with both their doctrine and ways of worship. Not only are the media seen as an effective channel of spreading the gospel of Christ to the masses, but also are the media useful in enhancing an image of success, prosperity, and modernity, in enhancing the charisma of the leader and managing his public personality, and in visualising God's miracles for an audience outside the churches.

Most charismatic churches, then, have a 'media ministry,' a church department that occupies itself entirely with the production, sales and broadcast of radio and/or TV programmes, audio and/or video tapes and PR material.⁵⁰ Already in their early days in the eighties these new churches made use of the limited media channels available to them. As the broadcast media were not yet accessible, they produced (that is, recorded, edited, and packaged) video and audio tapes of their services. These circulated through sales and further lending, but also through the churches' tape libraries, where members could borrow tapes. This sustained lively 'tape ministries.' When in the nineties the broadcast media became accessible, many charismatic churches grasped the opportunity and turned the already developed tape production into broadcasts on radio and TV. It was a matter of looking for funds, buying airtime, and sending their tapes to the media stations. Charismatic churches emphasise the biblical command to give a tenth of one's income to God and most charismatics eagerly donate a lot of money to their church. This monthly 'tithe,' the weekly offerings during services, 'harvest' yields, and other 'seeds' sown at special occasions contribute to the large funds at many churches' disposal. Moreover, the high popularity of this type of Christianity makes that these churches can fairly easily get sponsorship for their media programmes from large companies like soft drink producers, who see a market in the Pentecostal ban on alcohol, or from among their own membership. Successful businessmen are often more than willing to sponsor their churches' TV or radio programmes while advertising their business, especially when they see their success as a result of their being born again and their membership of the church. Lastly, many of the new media owners and practitioners are convinced born-again Christians themselves and broadcast Christian programmes free of charge.

Some churches own a media studio, where they produce their own programmes, but also make their equipment and expertise available to other churches and film producers, on payment of course. These are the International Central Gospel Church, the Word Miracle Church, the Church of Pentecost, and the Christ Apostolic Church. Churches that don't have their own facilities make use of these or other studios in the city. In terms of programming there is a great variety in quality and professionalism. Some churches use professional cameras and studios and employ media trained personnel, while other invest less and use low quality equipment and hardly edit their home-video-like recordings. Further, we can distinguish two 'types' of

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Christian programming, corresponding to two strands within the charismatic movement: those that lay emphasis on the message of the pastor, and those that show mainly the miracles he performs.⁵¹ Of the first type are *Living Word* by Mensa Otabil of the International Central Gospel Church and *Mega Word* by Dag Heward Mills of the Lighthouse Chapel International. The titles already emphasise the 'word' and the make-up of their programmes mainly helps getting the message across to the audience at home, with titles, key quotes, and bible references running through the screen. Of the second, miracle type are for example the programmes by Charles Agyin-Asare of the Word Miracle Church. *Your Miracle Encounter* and *God's Miracle Power* mainly show how he heals people in his church from all kinds of diseases and problems, thus advertising his healing power and attracting those in need of healing to his church. Apart from the main programmes, many media ministries also produce and broadcast commercials for their crusades and conferences, the books and tapes they produce, and for the TV programmes themselves. Religion has become a matter of marketing (Moore 1994; see also Dasgupta 2006; Gordon and Hancock 2005; Ukah 2003). As a result of such TV broadcasts, a new, mass-mediated form of religious expression has emerged, that makes the specific ways of worshipping in charismatic churches visually and aurally available to large audiences and is widely appropriated. And despite differences in quality, style, and content, all convey a similar image: these churches are dynamic, young, modern, and successful. Moreover, they portray themselves as islands of morality in an increasingly immoral world. The message is: if you want to be somebody in this life and also stay on the path of righteousness – and in the end the one doesn't go without the other – this is the place to be. Lastly, their television images authenticate pastors' claims to being conveyors of Holy Spirit power (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005c).

We have to look at other media, however, to see that this image is also heavily contested. The popular print media or tabloids present a totally different picture of charismatic-Pentecostal pastors, employing a similar mode of the spectacular. With large photographs and capital headlines, they carry all kinds of gossip stories and allegations about pastors' sexual escapes, criminal activities, and other immoral behaviour, thus spectacularly exposing the hidden evil these 'false prophets' embody. A popular theme is pastors' consultations with traditional shrines and 'juju men' and their indulgence in 'juju' rituals in order to attract crowds to their churches and get rich quickly. Clearly, pastors do not fully control their representation in all media and their media strategies require a sensitive balancing act on the tightrope between genuine and fake, moral and immoral (see chapter 2). The recurrent emphasis on frauds and fakes, however, still confirms the image of the genuine pastor. Moreover, the same tabloids present the spectacular miracles these pastors perform, thus authenticating their claims to power. The question of authentication will be further explored in chapter 6.

Christian media ownership

Apart from churches buying airtime, many of the new private FM radio stations, such as Channel 'R', JoyFM, and Radio Gold, to name a few, are owned by confirmed born-again Christians. Although stations may not be religiously based, the religious affilia-

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tion of the owner or manager greatly influences programming. The managing director of JoyFM is a born-again Christian and a member of the International Central Gospel Church. That personal religious conviction partners well with business interest is clear from his PRO's answer to my question whether JoyFM was a Christian station.

Yes, it is. But I don't want to call it a Christian station. What it is, is that because it is a commercial station, obviously we know what makes commercial sense and I would say that Ghana is a predominantly Christian country and that is what makes commercial sense.⁵²

Church affiliation is also an important channel for doing business and the MD asked ICGC pastor Rev. Okyere (introduced below) to come and present *Morning Devotion*.

A remarkable FM station is Channel 'R', established in 2001. It is, according to the director, 'not exactly a religious station in the strict sense of the word' (*Radio and TV Review* 28 (2001: 50), and so dodges the law against religious broadcast stations. Yet, also known as 'the Channel of Righteousness,' it plays only gospel music, hosts a lot of preachers, and has various religious talk shows with people phoning in to give testimonies of what Jesus has done in their lives, 'all geared towards campaigning for the Kingdom of God' (ibid.). Indeed, the director of Channel 'R', Mr. Adu, is a born-again Christian and he set up his radio station in response to 'what the good Lord has done for him when he forgave him his sins and thus won him for his salvation' (ibid.). The station has not received any complaints that it operates on an exclusively Christian basis. It has only been criticised for broadcasting 'false prophets.' The station refuted these claims, saying that all the preachers are screened thoroughly before they are allowed to go on air.

The MD of Radio Gold, Mr. Baffou-Bonnie, broadcasts a lot of Christian programmes. Preaching, live shows from churches, and pastors who come live to the studio. Most is paid for by the churches, but for some, he does it free of charge, 'because it is also our duty to promote morality within the community. And therefore if we realise that they cannot pay, we let them preach for free.'⁵³ So he broadcasts the programme *Fruitful Life on Earth* by Joyce Wereku-Brobbeby of Salt and Light Ministries every Wednesday between 8 and 9 pm, because 'it is a very informative and good program and it shouldn't be limited by finance.'⁵⁴ He plays Otabil's messages every day, also for free, because, even though he is not an ICGC member, he feels that 'Otabil has a lot of insightful messages to change the attitude, the belief system of the people in this country.' Baffou-Bonnie gladly admits that this is something personal.

My drift towards sponsoring such religious activities is personal. It is born out of the fact that I am a Christian myself. And I feel that if I die – and I know I am going to heaven – God asks me 'what did you do when I put you on earth?' Maybe if I were to be a Muslim, I would be more inclined to do something to promote some Islamic activities.⁵⁵

Of course, having a popular pastor is also commercially good for the station. Indeed, media owners also try to bring non-Christian religions on the airwaves, but

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find it much more difficult to match this with their business interest. Metro TV for example, is owned by a Lebanese and shows relatively many Islamic programmes, four hours on Fridays, all home-produced. Still, it has a lot more Christian programming and with ten hours a week even more than any other TV station. As mentioned earlier, Metro has a broadcasting agreement with CBN Africa for five hours a week. Interestingly, the station also tries to combine Islam and marketing. During the Muslim festivities of Id al Fitr in 2002, it organised the Metro Rice Festival, a musical show with free meals of rice, sponsored by a rice brand. In this it follows Christian initiatives and formats, but is by far not as successful. Because the institutions of the public sphere are all located in the Christian dominated South of the country, Islam's influence on public and popular culture is very limited. Crystal TV in Kumasi carries a broadcast by the Ethereal Mission, a 'church' that seeks to combine Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and African traditional religion. The owner, Mr. Crystal, who has himself 'a tendency towards Hinduism,' was glad about the broad orientation of the Ethereal Mission including Hindu worship, and decided to put their videos on Crystal TV for free. Obviously, this is an exception that does not at all tie up with broad popular culture and market logic.

Radio and TV pastor-celebrities

Despite the law requiring a secular basis for media station, many radio stations (and TV stations as well) have pastors or evangelists employed as part-time presenters, DJ's, and talk show hosts, independent of their particular church. Most of them belong to a charismatic-Pentecostal one. The employment of pastors by radio and TV stations allows pastors other than the founders and leaders of large churches to become celebrities as well. People like Rev. Kofi Okyere, Rev. Cephas Amartey, and Rev. Owusu-Ansah, all part-time presenters of JoyFM, have become popular media personalities, are interviewed for entertainment magazines, present gospel shows, and are hired by various churches to host or perform on special occasions.

I met pastor Okyere first during the 2002 Easter programme in the ICGC, a two day music, dance and drama programme, where he was the MC. He is an entertainer and knows how to play with the predominantly young audience, cracking jokes and telling stories and also leading them in worship and inspiring them to devotion. 'Tonight we celebrate the transforming sacrifice in the name of Jesus!' Announcing the church band Charisma, he shouted 'we feel very charismatic tonight!' The highlight of the night was a performance by the Daughters of Glorious Jesus, who's arrival on stage turned the church auditorium into a disco. After their show pastor Okyere smoothly took over from them and with much flair channelled the ecstatic energy that they had evoked in the audience towards the 'celebration of Jesus' name,' gradually guiding them into prayer.

Rev. Kofi Okyere is the head pastor of the ICGC branch in Osu, a radio and TV presenter, and a popular MC. His church career started in the ICGC music ministry, where he entered as an ordinary member and grew to leading praise and worship during church services. After his ministerial training, he was assigned the youth

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ministry, where he could use much of his creativity and innovation, while continuing to develop his charismatic talent in the music ministry.

I think my experience on radio might have enhanced my life as an MC, but I basically started out MC-ing some of our youth programmes. And I would just MC for friends' weddings, so that is how it started. And when I would organise a music concert for the church, I would be the MC myself. That's because of my involvement with the music ministry. When JoyFM started in '95, I was asked by the CEO to come and do Morning Devotion.⁵⁶

Later the producer of the gospel music programme *Gospel Trail* asked him to present the show on GTV, which he did for a few years. Mostly it was pre-recorded, sometimes live.

With radio and TV combined, people were now looking at me as a focal point especially when it comes to gospel music programmes. But my involvement in these programmes conflicts with my pastoral work, so I have suspended much of that [MC] work. Except that there are some programmes that rather will enhance your image. I find it honourable serving in my own church, dignifying, so I would do that. And when there are major national programmes in the National Theatre, at the banquet Hall, some good places, I still find it a privilege to go and do it.

The relationship he has established with some of the gospel musicians also helps him in his church. When they ask him to MC for them, like for the Soul Winners' Immortal Praise Jam at the Assemblies of God church in Dansoman, or the album launch of Alabaster Box in the Christ Temple, he does it without charge, 'because I know that I will have a reciprocal return. I am going to call them back into my church and then they are going to sing. And then I don't also have to pay them anything.'

Whereas pastor Okyere already was a successful pastor in a large church before he started his radio work, the career of Rev. Cephas Amartey, known as the 'Cardinal on the airwaves,' is different. Rev. Amartey did a lot of work for many newly established churches, but thought he could never be a pastor 'on a Sunday to Sunday basis.'

I prayed a lot for radio to come, since I was also hustling and couldn't find my feet as a pastor. Moreover I saw myself as a bad local church pastor who didn't fit in and was therefore not cut out to be a pastor of any church. And then when it came, hey, nobody gave me a buzz. So I decided to go fishing in the FM waters myself.⁵⁷

He contacted JoyFM, but there was no slot for him and he ended up working behind the scenes of a lot of radio stations, organizing special programmes and providing them with resource persons to speak on specific religious subjects. Finally he was

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called by JoyFM to come and do *Morning Devotion*. Now he also presents *A walk with Jesus* and *Joy Chapel* on Sundays. 'Since the other [JoyFM] pastors have to go to church on Sundays and I am the renegade chap amongst them who wouldn't go to church, they agreed that I should be 'sent' to church every Sunday on the wave of *Joy Chapel*' (ibid.). Rev. Amartey is well known by his trade mark phrases 'Joy 99.sieben FM' and 'Celebrate your day in style.' Like Rev. Okyere, Rev. Amartey is also active in the gospel music scene (see below), promoting various artists, organising concerts, and acting as a manager for the gospel duo Jane and Bernice.

There is a big difference between radio and television popularity, between the aural and the visual aspects of celebrity, voice and image. When Rev. Owusu-Ansah, a radio pastor well known as JoyFM's 'tallest man,' came on TV in the popular Twi talk show *Mmaa Nkommo* ('women's talk'), my neighbour Sister Afua was very disappointed by his looks.

Òye popular, ne preaching ye popular, ne Bible reading, ne biribiara ye popular. Gye se wohu no a, òye tuntum, òye tiatia, ne hò nye fe, ònyini, ne tadeε nso nye fe. Wo tie ne voice wo radio so a, wobeka se òye nipa keseε. Na wohu no nso a, wonnim se eye òno, wobe pa ne hò koraa!

He is popular, his preaching is popular, his bible reading, his everything is popular. But when you see him, he is very black, he is short, he isn't handsome, he is old, and his clothing isn't nice either. When you hear his voice on the radio, you will think that he is a big person. But when you see him, you won't think it is him, you will just overlook him!

Yet, when during an ICGC gospel show pastor Okyere invited Rev. Owusu-Ansah on stage for the closing prayer, he was welcomed like a pop-star by the young public.

These pastors are like a fish in water in the new celebrity scene created by radio, TV, media magazines, and live shows. They have the necessary charisma and know how to perform not only on the airwaves, but also during live shows. Contrary to such established radio pastors, pastor Eric Ampomfoh, whom we encountered at the opening of this chapter, is only just beginning and is not (yet) a 'personality.' According to him,

It is now very difficult to become a popular radio pastor, because there are just too many on air. Otabil was already popular before he came on radio [be it in a different way, see following chapters], it is not the radio that made him popular. Okyere started as a radio pastor with Joy FM immediately when they started, when they were still the only private FM station and everybody was listening to Joy.

Now every FM station has several or more pastors. The Top Radio Pastors Association alone counts 26 members, all from charismatic and Pentecostal churches.

Personality creation as such is not something new, but has strong traditions in Ghana, in chieftaincy, politics and entertainment. It is the kind of personality celebrat-

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ed that has changed with the 'pentecostalisation' of the public sphere. This new form of religious celebrity and spectacle ties into both global forms of representing personality and local traditions of representing 'big men.' Locally, the pastor as entertainer connects to older, 'secular' entertainment traditions in Ghana that generated popular stars, in particular highlife music, concert party, and its evolution into television comedy. Apart from that, the visual representation of charismatic pastors, and especially of their bodies as icons of both material and spiritual power, links up with the spectacular body images of traditional chiefs, that emphasise their role as public figures of power, but also as intermediaries between the human and the divine. The representational forms of chieftaincy reflect in the relation between the spectacular and the post-colonial state (Bayart 1993) that informs the representation of political personalities and other successful public figures. Globally, the Ghanaian religious celebrity has been influenced most directly by American televangelical formats, but also by 'secular' celebrities and their spectacular bodies and extravagant lifestyles. I suggest, then, that in the religious celebrity scene political, entertainment, and religious personality merge (see also Alvez De Abreu 2005; Öncü 2006; Van de Port 2005). This argument will be further pursued in chapter 2.

Gospel music and Christian entertainment

At the intersection of media, entertainment and religion flourishes the Ghanaian gospel music scene, in which both charismatic churches and mass media play a sustaining role. This genuinely local and very popular kind of music is characterised by highly danceable beats, in which case it is called gospel-highlife, or slow melodies when it is of the more devotional type. It has Christian lyrics, mostly in Twi, sometimes in English or Ewe. Ghanaian gospel music is booming and even seems to take over from highlife in popularity. Many formerly 'secular' highlife musicians, among whom Nana Ampadu and Kojo Antwi, now also turn to gospel. Often such a move is motivated not only by a newfound religiosity, but also by commercial considerations. They are well aware that Christianity sells and moreover, import taxes on instruments and 10% VAT on entertainment make it very hard for 'secular' musicians to make money (Collins 2004). Churches are exempted from such taxes and thus provide an alternative way to make a living from music.

Charismatic churches generally emphasise the importance of music in ministering to the people and spreading the gospel and provide instruments and musical training for talented members. They minister during music programmes and concerts organised by the church and on other occasions outside the church. Some churches also provide the technical facilities to undertake music recording projects. Churches' music departments have brought forth many gospel artists and groups that have grown to be professional musicians, such as Josh Laryea (ICGC), the Soul Winners (Apostolic Church), and Cindy Thompson (Church of Pentecost). They especially provide an avenue for the rise of female musical stars, who have been almost absent in other types of popular music. Churches then create a broad entertainment infrastructure, offering the facilities, space, stage, and organisational capacities needed for large gospel events (figs. 1.7, 1.8). The other way around do gospel artists, once popular,

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Fig. 1.7 Flyer advertising a gospel festival.

provide the songs that are sung during worship in many churches.

The intertwining of religion and entertainment in Ghana is not new. John Collins (2004) has described the relationship between Christianity and popular entertainment over 100 years. Missionary Christianity greatly influenced the development of local popular music, dance and drama. Later African indigenous churches incorporated various forms of popular entertainment in their worship services, a trend that is carried on today by the charismatic-Pentecostal churches. What is new about the current gospel scene, however, is the crucial role of the mass media both for the gospel scene in Ghana, but also for the transnational character of

the Ghanaian gospel business.

Artists regularly travel to Europe to record new CD's and give concerts in Ghanaian churches overseas and their music travels back and forth on CD's, tapes, music videos, DVDs and net.radio. Gospel tapes are for sale on every street corner; music videos are both sold to the public and broadcast on TV, in music blocks in between programmes on all TV stations. Every radio station plays a lot of gospel music, promotes new albums, and interviews musicians. Gospel music charts, compiled by radio stations, appear in the entertainment magazines and on the Internet. Many radio stations sponsor gospel concerts. Indeed, it is the radio stations most of all that have made Ghanaian gospel to what it is today, bringing the praises of God into private bedrooms and public spaces. Many taxi or bus drivers like to tune in to or play gospel music because it keeps away evil spirits and prevents them from getting involved in car accidents.

The 'partnership' of charismatic churches and the broadcast media has thus generated a religious, charismatic-Pentecostally oriented public sphere (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2001; Meyer 2004a). In this public sphere religion is intertwined with both national

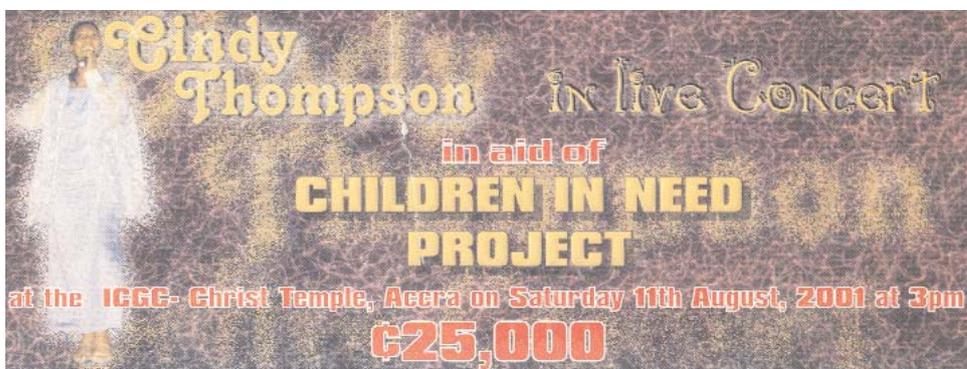
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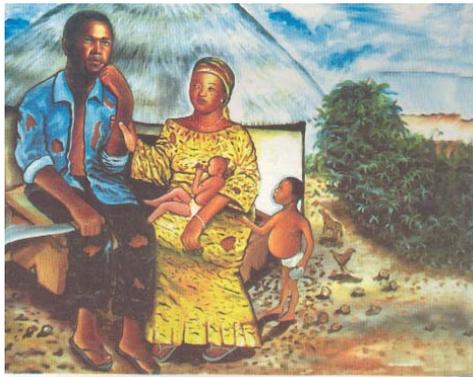
and global politics and the field of commerce and entertainment and media audiences are addressed as believers, consumers and citizens at once. In a situation of growing economic hardship and growing scepticism about the capability of the state to cater for people's needs, it is religious leaders who talk about national issues like elections, ethnic conflict or rising crime and mobilise their followers to support – which often means to pray for – the nation of Ghana. Their commitment to the nation implies Christianising it and their claims to globalised discourses of democracy, human rights, black emancipation, and women's emancipation all come under the final goal of a Christian nation. Religious and political discourse thus flow into each other and various parties negotiate a pluralism of moral ideas, religious doctrines, and ways of conceiving of human dignity, selfhood, and citizenship. Religion, and above all charismatic Pentecostalism, also merges into the field of commerce. Religion becomes like a consumption good, a product in a religious market place where churches compete for customers. The impact of charismatic Pentecostalism lies not only in its institutional forms and rapidly growing number of followers, but also in more diffuse forms of consumer culture and entertainment business. It has a marked influence on general popular tastes and styles that may not be religious per se, but are clearly shaped by Pentecostal-charismatic discourse and practice (cf. Meyer 2004a). 'The culture of charismatic Christianity is dominating both Christian and popular life and culture in Ghana' (Asamoah-Gyadu 2001:11). The result is a media environment that indeed 'chokes' other religions, such as Islam, but even more so traditional religion.

Fear and fascination: 'African traditional religion' in the media

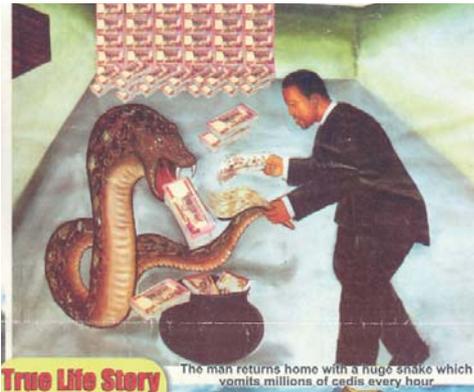
Whereas the dominant media image of Christianity is created by Christians themselves, be it a particular type of Christians, the public image of African traditional religion is not shaped by adherents of this religion – although they do try to bring their own image across as we shall see in part 3 – but by the same Pentecostal-charismatic Christians. The latter use or influence the media channels not only to present a highly favourable image of themselves, but at the same time a counterimage of the

Fig. 1.8 Ticket for concert by gospel star Cindy Thompson in ICGC's Christ Temple.





The Family was Highly Indebted and poor

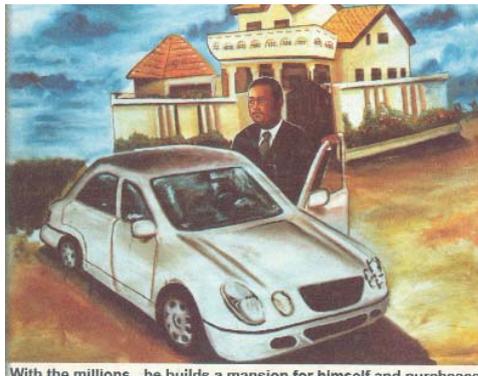


True Life Story

The man returns home with a huge snake which vomits millions of cedis every hour



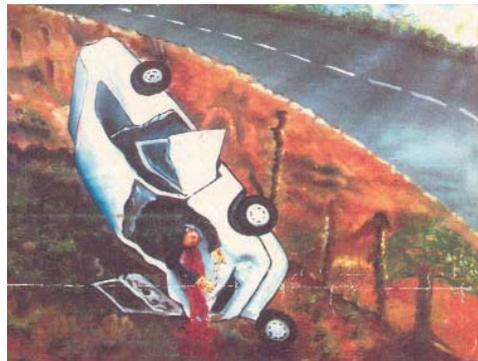
The father decides to look for spiritual assistance for the family



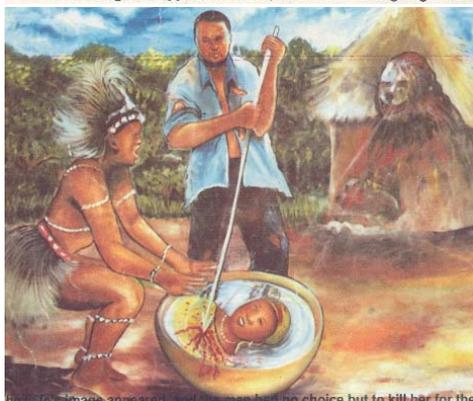
With the millions, he builds a mansion for himself and purchases Mercedes and begins to live a luxurious life, but without a wife



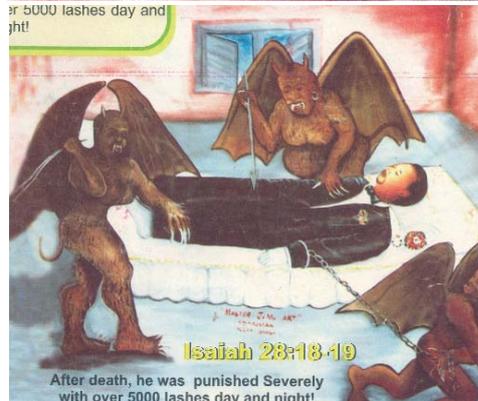
The Spiritualist, Said it will cost him a very dear one, whose image will appear in this calabash or he risks going mad!



But the man offended the spirits, and was killed in an accident



The wife's image appeared in the calabash, so the man had no choice but to kill her for the



Isaiah 28:18-19

After death, he was punished Severely with over 5000 lashes day and night!

Fig. 1.9 Details taken from a poster-calendar entitled *Suro Nnipa (Fear Man)*, depicting the 'True Life Story' of a man who sacrificed his wife at a 'spiritualist's' shrine for material gain, but was killed by the spirits and punished after death.

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non-Christian, traditionalist Other to strengthen the image of a successful, moral, and modern Christian Self. Especially their generally antagonistic relationship with African traditional religion and their use of media to represent the enemy make for a particular, negative image of traditional religion in the media. The Pentecostal stance toward African traditional religion is generally denouncing or at least ambiguous. Contrary to missionary Christianity, African Pentecostalism acknowledges rather than denies the existence of local gods, evil spirits, witches, and other spiritual beings that characterise African traditional beliefs. It incorporates these into Christian doctrine as demons under an image of the Devil and offers their followers a way to fight these evil forces with the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, especially through the practice of deliverance (cf. Meyer 1999). In this worldview, then, African traditional religion is perceived as extremely dangerous, as Devil worship, and as the epitome of evil. This diabolisation of African traditional religion is rooted in a long history of Christian suppression (e.g. Steegstra 2004; see also chapter 5). The present charismatic-Pentecostal dominance gives it a new impetus and nurtures a widespread fear of and animosity towards traditional religion. At the same time people are also fascinated by this 'evil Other.'

The media feed (and feed on) such popular fears and fascination with sensational stories and images of 'juju priests' and their 'occult' practices, commercialised in video movies, tabloids, posters, and calendars for sale on the streets. Exploiting the mode of the spectacular to the fullest, tabloid front pages scream about 'occultists' trading in human blood and organs, calendars depict the 'true life story' of a man ritually sacrificing his wife in exchange for millions of dollars (fig. 1.9), and radio stations broadcast live-on-air testimonies of people confessing their previous visits to shrines and revealing the sacrificial demands the priests would make. A spectacular image of traditional religion as the dark and evil Other of a morally upright and successful Christian self surely sells.

This spectacular mode of representing African traditional religion as evil makes it very difficult for traditionalist organizations such as the Afrikania Mission to spectacularise themselves. Employing the mode of the spectacular to visualize shrines, priests, and priestesses risks slippage into audiences' moral frameworks that posit a dichotomy between Christianity as modern and good on the one hand and traditional religion as dangerous and evil on the other. In chapter 5 I will discuss the Afrikania Mission's dilemmas in publicly representing African traditional religion and in chapter 8 the ambiguous relation between the Afrikania Mission and the media. Here I have sketched the generally negative representation of African traditional religion in the new media field. With the commercialisation of the media there has been a shift in the representation of traditional religion from the source of national pride and development to the antipode, if not enemy of Christianity, modernity, and morality. In the heydays of 'Sankofaism,' the state media associated African traditional religion with an imagined 'us' that had to be the nation. Now private media production in particular, as for example documentaries or news items, tends to exoticise traditional religion and connect it with a 'them' opposed to the Christian 'us' that many perceive to be the nation now. The portrayal of traditional religion often focuses on those aspects of it that are far removed from the daily life world of the majority of the urban public.

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Ironically, then, the Ghanaian media today reproduce a process of 'othering' that reminds us of the representation of 'primitives' and 'savages' by early anthropologists and explorers (cf. Fabian 1983, 2000).

Understandably, adherents of traditional religion feel threatened and disturbed by the general disdain for their religion. Their representatives stand up and try to counter both the charismatic-Pentecostal representation of 'African traditional religion' as the evil enemy and the state's reduction of it to 'cultural heritage.' They lack control over both the means and the modes of representation, however, and, as will be worked out in part 3, they can hardly escape such media images and struggle to represent 'African traditional religion' as a full-fledged religion in its own right. One of the results of the growing public dominance of charismatic Pentecostalism, in its various, but often aggressive and intolerant forms, then, is an upsurge in interreligious tensions, especially between charismatics and traditionalists. There has indeed been a series of incidents of religious clashes over the last decade. One such clash, that over the annual 'ban on drumming and noisemaking,' will be analysed in detail in chapter 7. Among the factors that Rosalind Hackett discerns as contributing to the emerging pattern of conflict in several African countries over newer religious formations are 'the emergence of an increasingly mediated public sphere and new religious publics' and 'an increase in human rights discourses concerning religious freedom' (Hackett 2001:187, see also Hackett 1999). Religion has become a site of public clash, fought out partly through the media.

Conclusion: religious celebrity, spectacle, and the sensual public sphere

Over the course of the last fifteen years politics of representation in Ghana's public sphere have fundamentally shifted in favour of charismatic Pentecostalism. Developments in technological infrastructure, increasing global media and business flows, the spectacular rise of charismatic churches, and the crisis of the state in framing the nation all contributed to this shift. Since independence, the state fully controlled the media and thus had the monopoly over the public representation of culture, religion, and national identity. Despite a media policy of religious neutrality, this implied on the one hand a subtle, historical link between Christianity, education, and citizenship. On the other hand, the project of nation building framed 'African traditional religion' as 'cultural heritage,' and in the 1980s Rawlings privileged ATR over other religions. With the liberalisation of the media in the 1990s, state monopoly has given way to the power of charismatic churches and of the market, which go together remarkably well. The new political and economic media infrastructure offers ample opportunity for charismatic-Pentecostal media strategies. This type of religion not only mingles with, but helps constitute the business and entertainment culture of the commercial media. Just as entertainment, business, and marketing constitute charismatic Pentecostalism. Having access to the means of representation, charismatic churches also take over the language of nationhood from the state, but frame the nation in Christian terms, aiming at and largely succeeding in binding people to an ideal of Christian nationhood. In the new Pentecostalist mode of framing the nation,

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boundaries between entertainment, politics and religion dissolve ever more.

Habermas (1989) lamented the return to the display of personal prestige of public representatives before a mass of consumers as the 'refeudalisation of the public sphere.' For him this meant the end of the bourgeois public sphere, where the public is abstracted from physical, theatrical representation and from power interests. Charismatic religious leaders in Ghana derive much of their power from being seen and being heard, from their publicly visible body images and publicly audible voices. I propose to take seriously this interplay between media, power, and the body and to investigate empirically how the connection between the emotionality, experientiality, and sensuality of charismatic-Pentecostal practice and the celebrity formats of the public sphere produces a particular aesthetics of sounds and images. The pentecostalisation of the public sphere calls us to take into account its sensual, bodily dimensions and to look at how media images and sounds work upon the body and the senses and thereby inform modes of religious subjectivity and personhood (see also Hirschkind 2001b; Meyer 2006b; Van Dijk 2005).

Charismatic Pentecostalism appears to fit well into the new commercial public culture characterised by personality creation, spectacle, and dramatisation. A new religious format has come to evolve around charismatic media personalities. Pastors become religious celebrities and employ the mode of the spectacular to capture audiences far beyond the confines of their churches. Employing the notion of the spectacle (Birman 2006; Kramer 2005), I wish to broaden its implied focus on splendid imagery to include impressive sound. Charismatic-Pentecostal celebrity depends not only on spectacular body image and theatrical show, but also on dramatic body sound and sonic performance, that is, voice. Having an ear for the stylistic features of sound is particularly important in the context of radio, a medium at least as important and powerful for charismatic preachers as television. But also on television, it is the interplay of images and voice that makes (or breaks) the affective power of a pastor's public presence.

I have proposed to conceive of religion as a practice of mediation, and of charismatic Pentecostalism in particular as a practice of being in touch with Holy Spirit power. This tactile religiosity thrives well in Ghana's public sphere, where being in touch with the Holy Spirit may be facilitated by mass mediated sounds and images. African traditional religion is equally about being in touch with spirit powers. Traditionalists' relationship to the mass media, however, seems to be a lot more problematic. The media formats that make charismatic pastors celebrities and authenticate their power turn traditional shrine priests into fearsome antiheroes, less attractive, but equally spectacular and certainly not less powerful. In order to understand why the charismatic-Pentecostal figure of the religious celebrity is so attractive and powerful as a medium for effectuating this touch, and also why traditional religion has much more difficulty spectacularising itself, we have to pay attention to the sensual dimension of the public sphere, and of religious mass media in particular. These questions will be further explored in the coming chapters.

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Notes

¹ I acknowledge that we should always take into account the sensual, bodily dimensions of any public sphere anywhere and thus reject Habermas' notion of the disembodied public. The particular nature of Ghanaian charismatic religiosity and its public articulation highlights this question.

² With these terms I do not aim at a Marxist analysis in terms of class struggle. I employ them to indicate that the media representation of religion always involves negotiation between various parties in a historically constituted field of power relations.

³ In the maiden broadcast on 31st July, 1935, the Governor shared his excitement about the 'magic' of radio technology with a thrilled audience:

I think you will agree with me that a new broadcast service opens up a new vista of life for all of us who live in Accra. Few can realize what the new service will mean. It opens up a new horizon. It brings the latest news to our doors. It is very similar to the magic stone we read about in fairy tales. We press a button and transport it to London. Again, we press it and hear again an opera from Berlin. In fact, nearly the whole world is at our beck and call (Asamoah 1985:6).

Several recent anthropological studies on people's engagement with media have focussed on the 'magic' of new media technologies and on the cultural conception and integration into wider social fields. On Africa, see for example Behrend (2003) on photography in East Africa, Larkin (2002) on cinema in Nigeria, and Spitulnik (2002) on radio in Zambia. See also Kittler (1999).

⁴ Various 'Information Centres' were set up outside Accra and equipped with rediffusion boxes for the purpose of public listening.

⁵ In response to chiefs who travelled down to Accra to request for radio extension to their areas, but also in its own interest of explaining its policies and programmes to a larger part of the population, the colonial government expanded the radio infrastructure beyond Accra. In 1936 a rediffusion station was set up in Cape Coast; later other stations followed in various district centres of the colonial administration. The outbreak of WWII provided an incentive for further technological improvement, as Station ZOY became the primary means of mobilising British West-Africans behind the war efforts. In 1940, during WWII, a new broadcasting house was opened in Accra. Its 1.3KW transmitter was the first to broadcast programmes and patriotic messages to the neighbouring countries. The number of relay stations rose to sixteen during the war (Asamoah 1985:8).

⁶ When in 1954 the Gold Coast Broadcasting System was set up as a department of its own, distinct from the Information Services, locally produced programming again increased, broadcasts to schools and training colleges were started and outside broadcasting brought national events live into thousands of homes (Asamoah 1985:13).

⁷ One of the radio pioneers, Ben Gadzekpo, remembers such an instance: 'When the war was drawing to an end, our demand for self-government was intensified [...] and the European and the African became highly suspicious of each other. One evening the famous Gracie Fields was singing in the BBC Listeners' Choice programme in the General Overseas Service. The song was "Now is the hour that we must say goodbye. Soon I'll be sailing far across the sea..." The Colonial Government suspected that the recorded music was being deliberately played from Station ZOY to warn the Europeans that it was time they left the country. Police were therefore rushed to the Broadcasting House to arrest those suspected to be responsible for playing the record, [...] only to find out that it was a BBC programme being relayed overseas' (quoted in Asamoah 1985:10-11).

⁸ A plan to introduce an all-Akan channel in the early 1960s was dropped because of fear that it

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might arouse discontent among other language groups (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:4). Community specific programming was discouraged because it was believed to strengthen ethnic sentiments. In 1960, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Kwaku Boateng, told the National Assembly:

I wish to emphasize that the radio is a unifying influence and there is no intension of regionalizing the broadcasting system. [...] I have no intension of encouraging either regional or class or cultural distinctions among the people (quoted in Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:5).

⁹ Two new short wave transmitters made Radio Ghana now available outside the country as well. Due to deterioration of facilities, the External Service ceased in the mid-1980s.

¹⁰ In his speech on that occasion Nkrumah said: 'Ghana's TV will be used to supplement our educational programme and foster a lively interest in the world around us. It will not cater for cheap entertainment nor commercialism. Its paramount objective will be education in the broadest and purest sense. Television must assist in the socialist transformation of Ghana' (quoted in Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:5).

¹¹ 'Sankofa' is the name of the Akan symbol of a bird looking back. It translates as 'go back and take it.' The bird's feet are pointed forward, which shows that not a complete return to the past is aimed at, but a use of traditions and past experience and wisdom to build the future, instead of allowing local culture to be swept away by supposedly homogenising Western values, fashions and practices.

¹² In line also with Rawlings' populist ideology of communalisation and 'power to the people', it became, contrary to earlier times, a GBC policy to have community radio in the local language(s) in all the ten regions, to inform, educate, and entertain the people. GBC opened new regional and district FM stations in the late 1980s and 1990s (Heath 2001).

¹³ The June 4th Revolution in 1979, for example, started with the rescuing of Flight Lieutenant Rawlings from prison, after which the soldiers and he immediately ran to the just seized broadcasting house where Rawlings made his first (and famous) public broadcast to the nation (Shellington 1992:44). When Rawlings took power for the second time, after having handed over power to a civilian government, 'the first thing most people knew of it was a radio broadcast by Jerry Rawlings at 11.00 a.m. on the morning of Thursday 31 December 1981' (ibid.:79), in which he asked for 'nothing less than a Revolution' and 'nothing more than popular democracy' (ibid.: 80). In a second broadcast on both radio and TV on 2 January 1982 he articulated in detail the purpose and direction of the 31st December Revolution and announced the suspension of the constitution, the dismissal of all members of government, the dissolution of Parliament, the banning of all political parties, and the assumption of power by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) (ibid.: 82). This second broadcast already mobilised people behind the revolution, but when three days later Rawlings returned to the broadcasting house once again to explain what the Revolution was all about, 'the message was getting through to the mass of the people that this was indeed *their* revolution. Over the next few days numerous demonstrations took place in Accra and other cities in support of the PNDC (ibid.:85).

¹⁴ The second most important importers of printing machines, after the colonial authorities, were the Christian Missionaries (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998:3). This reduplicates the historical pattern in Europe, where the first users of printing technology were the church and the state. After independence, however, the relation between the mainline churches, the state, and print media changed and the three Christian newspapers, *Methodist Times*, *Christian Messenger*, and *Catholic Standard* became well-known for their critical attitude towards the state (Gifford 1998:70), especially during the Rawlings regime.

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¹⁵ Interview Pearl Adotey, GTV head of religious programming, 21 November 2002.

¹⁶ As in many public and business organisations, any meeting of the GBC board of directors starts with a Christian prayer, one of its members, Enimil Ashon, told me.

¹⁷ The programme continued to be broadcast until a few years ago, but it has according to Pearl Adotey, now 'served its goal and is no more relevant' (interview 21 November 2002). The discontinued public 'relevance' of 'cultural heritage' and 'tradition' is another indication of the Pentecostal influence on public life.

¹⁸ This difference between participating in and studying 'culture' was also stressed by school teachers confronted with the dilemma of having to teach pupils about traditional religion as part of the subject Cultural Studies while at the same time wanting to make them good Christians (Coe 2005).

¹⁹ Born again Christians, however, criticise the religious involvement promoted by mainline churches for being too superficial.

²⁰ The outcome was fiercely contested by the opposition, however, who claimed that the election had been rigged and boycotted the parliamentary elections (Nugent 1995:234-42).

²¹ Chapter 12 of the 1992 constitution, 'Freedom and independence of the media,' article 162 reads:

(1) Freedom and independence of the media are hereby guaranteed.

(2) Subject to this Constitution and any other law not inconsistent with this Constitution, there shall be no censorship in Ghana.

(3) There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal, or other media for mass communication or information.

²² Chapter 12, Article 164 reads:

The provisions of articles 162 and 163 of this Constitution are subject to laws that are reasonably required in the interest of national security, public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons.

²³ The allocation of transmission frequencies has been a subject of debate up till today (Heath 1999).

²⁴ 'Boga' derives from Hamburger and is a popular term for a Ghanaian who has been in Europe or the US (Hamburg being the city where a large part of the early migrants settled) and implies a particular way of dress, of walking, of behaviour, and of talking.

²⁵ In 2001, Peace FM was, according to a media survey on radio listenership by Research and Marketing Services Ghana Ltd., by far the most popular radio station in Accra, with 46% of poll participants voting for Peace. JoyFM came second with 17%. GBC radio scored a meagre 2 %.

²⁶ As Yaw Boadu-Ayebofoh, the executive secretary of the National Media Commission, told me, 'When Peace started as the first station that used exclusively Twi for the bulk of their programmes, it had a tremendous impact. Until then, JoyFM was the choice of everybody. But when Peace came, many more people were able to relate to Peace than to Joy' (interview 13 November 2002).

²⁷ Although the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2003 is much welcomed by media practitioners and the public as a move towards more freedom of expression, which is now a popular 'human right' drawn upon by anybody fighting for any case, there are also concerns that the new wave of media freedom, causes increasing tensions between different political, religious, or ethnic groups.

²⁸ An example is the controversy over Obunu FM. Shortly after the station's establishment in 2001, the National Media Commission (NMC) received complaints from listeners that the language used on the station, especially by 'Ga "nativists" using strong language during live call-in programmes to voice complaints about "non-Gas taking over Ga lands"' (*Democracy Watch* 2(8):6), was 'arousing Ga-

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Andangme passions' and 'inciting ethnic animosities.' Upon that the NMC wrote a letter to Obunu FM asking the staff to 'maintain the quality associated with GBC' and find avenues to prompt callers and guests to be 'a little bit civilised in their use of language.' In reaction to this a prominent Ga personality, Dr. Joshua Aryeh, lead a group of fifty *wulomei*, Ga traditional priests, to the office of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to lodge a petition against the NMC in protest against this infringement upon their freedom of expression. The incident called for 'guidelines on what type of speech would rouse ethnic passions' (*Democracy Watch* 2(8):7).

²⁹ The music industry, however, was given low priority by the government and imported musical instruments were heavily taxed (Collins 2004).

³⁰ The only official radio training available in Ghana is at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. The Ghana Institute of Journalism mainly offers training in newspaper reporting.

³¹ Metro TV started as an advertisement company, that produced the entertainment programme *Smash TV* broadcast on bought airtime on GTV. After proven success they were asked by GBC to join in a venture of a new, commercial TV station. Because of this partnership, Metro TV did not have to apply nor pay for a licence at the Frequency Board and this sparked a controversy.

³² TV and concert party comedians like Osofo Dadzie, Super O.D., Bob Okalla, Maame Dokono, and others were and still are immensely popular.

³³ This practice fits very well not only with the public nature of Ghanaian funerals, but also with their commercialisation and increasing extravagance, in which the media play a significant role (De Witte 2003b).

³⁴ Interview Elizabeth Coleman of TV3, 27 July 2001,

³⁵ Interview 18 July 2001.

³⁶ Interview 19 March 2002.

³⁷ See for example Karikari (1994) for a collection of papers on the implications and challenges of the liberalisation of Ghana's broadcasting system.

³⁸ Although the NCA has outlined the requirements for obtaining a licence for a broadcasting frequency, the grounds on which it decides whether a licence will be granted or not are very unclear and thus subject to much criticism. A person or company wishing to establish a radio or television station has to submit an application including a business plan and information on the vision, programming, and target audience of the station.

³⁹ Interview Baffou-Bonnie, MD of Radio Gold, 10 August 2001.

⁴⁰ Baffou-Bonnie recounted: 'What happened in Ghana is that we put the cart before the horse. They issued the frequencies without rules and regulations. So what happened was that Radio Gold, we started with a 1 kilowatt transmitter. Later we realized that the radio stations which were coming after us were using more powerful transmitters and thus consuming our area of coverage. So we bought a 5 kilowatt transmitter and so expanded our area of coverage far beyond Accra. Now, the National Communication Authority has realised that a lot of us are now operating with high-capacity equipments, our area of coverage is expanding, there is interference with other radio stations, people are clamouring for more frequencies to operate radio stations and we don't have a lot of frequencies left. So now they come out with rules and regulations, that now we are going to regulate you. Are you going to tell me to go and purchase or reduce my power to 1 Kwatt or 500 Watt? So it is going to be a legal battle between us and the NCA' (interview 10 August 2001).

⁴¹ The NMC is currently made up of eighteen people. The Christian churches and the Muslims have one representative each. The teachers association, the retailers, the librarians, the public relations practitioners and advertisers, the lawyers/the bar association, and the Trades Union Congress all

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have one representative. The Journalists association has two representatives and the media training institutions have one representative each. Parliament has three and the president has two representatives. These people meet, elect their own chairman, and serve for a maximum of two terms of three years (interview Yaw Baodu-Ayebofo, 13 November 2002).

⁴² The (much older) Film Censorship Board, by contrast, did (and does) have traditionalist representatives (Birgit Meyer, personal communication). Apparently, when the censorship board was set up, one thought differently about the representability of traditional religion.

⁴³ Interview Yaw Baodu-Ayebofo, 13 November 2002.

⁴⁴ When in 2002 it was recommended to turn the NMC guidelines into laws, thus making persecution possible when broken, a controversy arose, as this was widely considered a leap back on the path of media freedom and democracy.

⁴⁵ Since 2004 Nigerian media laws prohibit the broadcasting of 'unverifiable miracles.' See also Meyer (2005b) on techno-religious realism.

⁴⁶ Interview 13 November 2002.

⁴⁷ Interview in *Radio and TV Review* 28 (2001):57.

⁴⁸ Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, Derek Prince, Reinhard Bonnke, T.L and Daisy Osborn, Morris Cerrulo, and Benny Hinn have all visited Ghana to hold mass crusades (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005a:110).

⁴⁹ Unlike in older Pentecostal churches, for example, men and women are not separated during worship and women do not have to wear headscarves in church.

⁵⁰ See chapter 3 for elaboration on charismatic churches' notion of 'ministry.'

⁵¹ I am aware that this is an oversimplification that reproduces emic categorisations. Gifford (2004) prefers to speak of a continuum. I will elaborate on this in chapter 2 and 3.

⁵² Interview Adjoba Kyerebah, public relations officer JoyFM, 13 August 2001.

⁵³ Interview Baffou-Bonnie, 10 August 2001.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, Mrs. Joyce Wereko-Brobby (then Joyce Aryee) was the Secretary for Information under Rawlings' PNDC government. It was under her responsibility that all foreign Christian broadcasts were banned from the airwaves. Much later she got 'born again' and became one of the few publicly successful female evangelists in Ghana.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Interview 14 August 2001.

⁵⁷ Interview in *Radio and TV Review* 28 (2001):56.