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'Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia': Pentecostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian identities in the transnational domain

Rijk van Dijk

Rev. Mensa Otabil, the founder of the International Central Gospel Church in Accra, is considered an influential representative of a new Pentecostal-inspired Pan-Africanist ideology. His book 'Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia' lays the foundations of a Pentecostal Liberation Theology that proclaims a Christianized sequel to Pan-Africanism. Operating from Ghana, his ideas for Africa and for 'black consciousness' have spread to Ghanaian migrant communities worldwide. While Otabil has been successful in transforming ownership of the intellectualist production of Pan-Africanism by tailoring it to the needs of the ordinary Pentecostal believer, it has not been adopted so extensively among all Ghanaian migrant communities in the West. By exploring Ghanaian migrant communities and their Pentecostal churches in the Netherlands, where the staunch identity politics of the Dutch government leave little room for the assertive proclamation of 'Africanness', this chapter demonstrates that Otabil's ideas do not act as a main source of inspiration everywhere in the Ghanaian diaspora.

Introduction

The emergence in various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa of a thriving literature of religious tracts, booklets and pamphlets — mostly of a Christian nature — has

been noted by many authors (see Meyer 1995, 1999, Ellis & Ter Haar 1998, Gifford 1998, Maxwell 1998, 2001, Van Dijk 1997, 2001a). This literature is sold or sometimes handed out for free in bookshops, at market stalls or among the many church congregations that have sprung up particularly in urban areas. Some churches, and certainly not only the established mission churches, have their own printing presses and publishing houses that are responsible for producing many of these publications in addition to their own regular church-related journals. In West Africa, countries such as Ghana and Nigeria are known for the activities of a particular brand of Christianity in this field: the new charismatic Pentecostal churches. These churches represent the fastest growing form of Christianity in this part of Africa and many scholars have observed their dominance in the public sphere and in the public media (Hackett 1998, Meyer 2001, Marshall-Fratani 1998, Van Dijk 2001e) where they actively broadcast their religious messages on radio and television, produce glossy brochures in which their victorious nationwide spread is portrayed and publish books discussing their religious and moral creeds.

These books and tracts comprise several distinct genres ranging from a 'confession' literature of conversion experiences to testimonies of personal journeys into the dark world of evil and occult powers (and the author's victorious re-emergence) to highly theological treatises concerning certain Biblical truths and dogmas. Popular fascination with this literature often focuses on booklets that describe the author's highly mystical and emotional confrontations with a demonic world of witchcraft and evil spirits.¹ Sometimes replete with details about the nocturnal activities of witches and their hideous assaults on the normal order of society or the writer's reputation in daily life, books of this genre tend to reveal a society's nightmares and anxieties in a world full of uncertainties. Particularly in the West African setting, all this literature is transmitting a moral and socio-political message in a context where increasing pressure is being exerted on the legitimacy of the authority wielded by such institutions as the state, chieftaincy, established mission churches or family elders. Although much of this literature is not explicitly political in focus or nature, it is not difficult to see the ways in which it turns matters pertaining to moral authority and power in social life into issues of Christian or even Pentecostal beliefs, truths and points of view. Booklets and pamphlets that speak out against involvement in occultism, witchcraft and moral laxity do so in a West African context in which holders of power have increasingly become suspected of dealing with hidden forces, of being involved in exploitative and self-serving 'crooked' relations and machinations. This literature can, at first

¹ The best-known example of this genre is Emmanuel Eni's *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* (Ibadan, Scripture Union Press, 1987).

sight, be interpreted as religion and Christian morality filling a void that the steadily reducing legitimacy of state and other civil organizations is leaving behind.

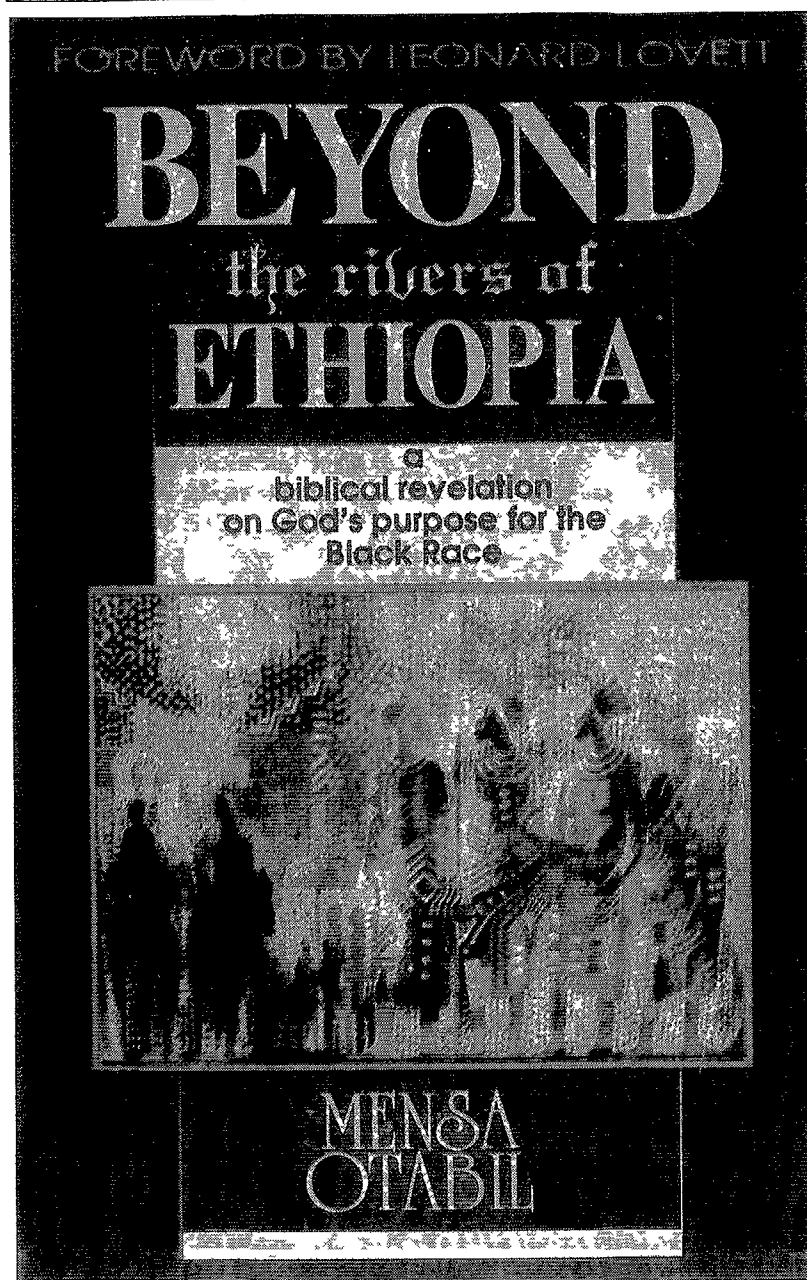
In Ghana, many books of these diverse genres have been written by founder-leaders of the new Pentecostal churches that have emerged over the last two decades in the country. Rev. Mensa Otabil, the leader and founder of the highly successful International Central Gospel Church in Accra, is considered one of the most influential representatives of this group of renowned religious leaders. He is considered by many to be the 'Rabbi to the Nation' because of his sharp and moral pronouncements against the Ghanaian government. Like many of his colleagues, he has written a number of booklets dealing with Pentecostal truths bearing such titles as 'Four Laws of Productivity' and 'The Why, What, How, When and Where of Giving', all of which have been published by Altar International, the publishing house connected to his church.²

However, he has also published a remarkable piece entitled 'Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia: A Biblical Revelation on God's Purpose for the Black Race' (Otabil 1992). It is exceptional in comparison with all the other genres of literature that have emerged in these Pentecostal circles in that it represents a relatively new and Pentecostal-inspired Pan-Africanist ideology. In it, Otabil lays the foundations for what has been called an 'Evangelical Pentecostal Liberation Theology' (Larbi 2001: 349) which proclaims a highly Christianized Pan-Africanist sequel to the ideas of Fanon, DuBois and, more recently, Gilroy (1993). In a critique of Mudimbe's *Idea of Africa* (1994), Davies has placed this book alongside Appiah's *In My Father's House* (1992) as works that display a different sensibility with regard to the meaning of present-day African philosophical thought (Davies 1998). The 'cunning aim' (as Davies calls it) of these books is not to replace the white colonial library or the white Bible, nor to glorify 'Egypt' in a Bernalian sense,³ but to rework them and re-inscribe an essential black presence into these texts. Without such a presence, liberation or messianic hope would never have come into existence.

In the present global context of increasing marginalization of Africa, such notions of 'black pride' appear to be appealing to many. Operating from Ghana, Otabil has been preaching his message for Africa and for 'black consciousness', as he calls it, not only in many parts of the continent but also in the Ghanaian migrant communities in the United Kingdom and the United States where his ideas have started circulating among some of the Black American communities

² See Van Dijk (1999) for a discussion of the idea of a Pentecostal economy

³ See Van Binsbergen (1997) for an extensive discussion of Martin Bernal's work on the Black Athena hypothesis.



in places such as New York. Crucial to an understanding of his popularity is the fact that works such as those of Otabil and Darkwah for instance, offer a Christianized re-appropriation of Afro-centric ideas capable of achieving two things at the same time: a new ownership of longer dating but highly intellectual and secular Pan-African ideals, and a critical confrontation with Western 'book knowledge' as it is often pejoratively called and to which many Africans have become increasingly exposed through the global spread of formal education. In emphasizing divine wisdom and inspiration in the appropriation of Afro-centric ideals, a unity of Africans is proclaimed on the basis of spiritual empowerment by heavenly forces.

In this chapter I explore the significance of this work for and within Ghanaian Pentecostalism, and its spread to various parts of Africa and beyond. The relationship between the Ghanaian diaspora and the global spread of Ghanaian Pentecostalism is evident and has been substantiated by recent research. However, ideas of Pentecostal Pan-Africanism are not equally vibrant among all Ghanaian migrant communities in the West. By exploring Ghanaian migrant communities and their Pentecostal churches in the Netherlands, this chapter demonstrates that these ideas are not considered a main source of inspiration everywhere in the Ghanaian diaspora. It examines the relative success of Mensa Otabil's Pan-Africanist message in Ghana and its marked absence in the life of the Ghanaian diasporic community in the Netherlands. It argues that staunch identity politics by the Dutch government, in this particular case, have left little room for the assertive proclamation of 'Africaness'. Interestingly, the Dutch government has recently celebrated 300 years of diplomatic relations with Ghana and plans to erect a 'slave monument' as a *lieu de memoire* of the Dutch role in the slave trade, but its identity politics appear to be obfuscating Otabil's appeal. Identity has become too much of a contested terrain for Ghanaians, a contestation in which any reference to Pan-Africanist notions is not considered helpful to their community's cause in the multicultural society of the Netherlands.

Pan-Africanism and Pentecostal transnationalism

Historically, Ghana had a pivotal position in the efflorescence of Pan-Africanism. Without going into historical detail here, it is clear that a number of those leading personalities whose contributions to the establishment and worldwide spread of Pan-Africanist ideals and organizations through birth or descent are related to what is present-day Ghana. Accra, the capital city of Ghana, is very much part of what Ebron (2000) recently called the 'memory scape' of Pan-Africanism. It is home to such organizations as the Pan-African

Writers' Association and features, for instance, the George Padmore Library and the W.E.B. DuBois Centre which highlight Ghanaian achievements and contributions to Pan-Africanism. An ever-increasing interest is developing among Afro-American communities into the countries of the former Slave Coast, with Ghana drawing specific attention (see Ebron 2000, Hasty 2002, Davis 1997). Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, displayed an explicit and pronounced interest in maintaining ties with the diaspora, in enhancing the spread of Pan-Africanist ideals within Africa and in keeping the memory of the slave trade alive for generations to come. Later presidents would follow suit. Nkrumah based his ideas about the African spread of Pan-Africanism on the activities of early Pan-Africanists who saw it as their task to come to Africa, settle in various countries and establish direct links with Pan-African conferences held in the Western world. For instance F.Z.S. Peregrino, a Ga from Accra who had settled in the United States around 1900, was one of these early 'Ghanaian' Pan-Africanists who firmly believed in the need to create unity among the African peoples and nations not only in the diaspora but on the African continent as well (Parsons n.d.). He thus settled in Cape Town and, in line with Pan-Africanist 'tradition', began publishing books and tracts and even a journal, the *South African Spectator*, in which Pan-Africanist ideals were introduced to many in Southern Africa. His work reached as far as present-day Botswana and Zambia.

Later presidents of Ghana, in particular J.J. Rawlings, recognized in the relationship between Ghana and the diaspora, and in Ghana's role in Pan-Africanism, other dimensions in addition to the politically motivated ideals of unity, dimensions that would relate to cultural and economic aspects of the relationship between Ghana and Afro-American communities. As in so many other postcolonial African states, the government — controlled by Rawlings's National Democratic Party (NDC) after it came to power in a coup in 1981 — stepped up efforts to overcome the legacy of colonialism and missionization by using the past as a rich resource for societal renewal, for achieving progress and development in a 'Ghanaian' way. While some of the cultural traditions are approached critically, the state's policy of augmenting the general public's awareness of its cultural heritage has aimed at fostering national cohesion and involving the diaspora in domestic affairs. The NDC government thus created a National Commission on Culture that uses governmental funds for the organization of local, regional, national and international festivals. Furthermore, it gave a high priority to culture on school, college and university curricula (for instance, in the form of music and dance classes), and actively supported organizations such as the DuBois Centre and PANAFEST, a biannual Pan-African festival featuring the cultural variety of Ghana's heritage both in Ghana and its expressions in the diaspora. It has become a widely acclaimed Pan-

African cultural festival with extensive programmes of Ghanaian cultural displays, dance classes, literature and ritual ceremonies. It actively promotes photo, film, video, theatre and musical productions that seek to produce images of Ghanaian cultural life and show its diversity and vibrancy. The PANAFEST festivals reach out to communities of Ghanaian migrants and descendants in the former slave colonies and encourage them to remain in close contact with their cultural roots.

This festival must be placed in the context of other initiatives that seek to engage the diaspora in the life of the nation. There is a great deal of 'roots'-oriented tourism from Black Americans who visit the Slave Coast and places of significant meaning in the history of slavery (for instance, the slave fortresses) (Bruner 1996). The economic interest for Ghana in this specific type of tourism, even defined as a secular pilgrimage by some (Davis 1997, Ebron 2000), has become so substantive that Rawlings once called slavery a 'blessing in disguise' (Hasty 2002). Events such as the state-orchestrated Emancipation Day or the so-called Home-Coming Summits with all their visitors from overseas have acquired a clear economic significance for the local population. On the other hand, visits by presidents and paramount chiefs from Ghana to the overseas diaspora communities have attributed political support to the cause of black communities in the United States and the United Kingdom in particular. It was during such visits that former president Rawlings would emphasize Pan-African ideals in general and point to Ghana's needs in terms of development.

It is in this sense that an overlapping of diasporas has occurred (Lewis 1995, Hanchard 1999, Byfield 2000: 5). The way in which Pan-African ideals feed into the support of Ghana in cultural and economic terms coincides with the way in which revenues are accrued from the migration of Ghanaians. Ghana, as even the present newly elected president Kufuor acknowledges, is dependent for its survival in the modern world on its diaspora. (Overseas revenues are the country's third largest source of income after gold and cocoa.) In the past two or three decades Ghana has become a country of large-scale emigration, a form of mobility focused on places where black communities of former descendants of the Slave Coast already exist. In addition however, shifts have occurred as the search for job opportunities also came to focus on Western countries that featured much less in the production of Pan-Africanist notions, such as Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

It is estimated that 12 per cent of Ghanaians are presently living abroad (Peil 1995) and the ambition of many young urbanites is to participate in intercontinental labour migration. Many families in Ghana perceive migration to the West of one or several of its members as a strategy of economic success and survival. This is a clear departure from earlier colonial and postcolonial movements of labour migration in and out of the country. Much of Ghana's

history in the 20th century can be described as being cloaked in mobility. In the colonial period, lasting until the mid 1950s, a great deal of internal migration occurred from northern groups moving to the southern and central regions in search of paid employment in the emerging sectors of cocoa production, mining and urban industries. Large migrant quarters arose close to cities such as Accra and Kumasi where the northern labour migrants settled, contributing to the growth of the urban areas and their economic success. Experiencing an economic boom during the 1960s, independent Ghana under Nkrumah witnessed an influx of labour migrants of a more regional nature and particularly an unprecedented labour migration by Nigerians (Peil 1979, Sudarkasa 1979). During the 1970s, Ghana's economy, particularly cocoa production and similar export-oriented activities, were hit hard by deteriorating world-market commodity prices. A massive out-migration began of Ghanaian labour migrants seeking their fortune regionally. Nigeria, by then with a new booming economy, attracted and absorbed large numbers of Ghanaian migrants until 1983. During Nigeria's rapid decline in the mid 1980s, the country's rulers, contrary to previous ideals of African unity, developed a new and rather violent policy of mass deportation of those labour migrants that its economy could no longer absorb. Hundreds of thousands of Ghanaian migrants were faced with expulsion from the country while a return to Ghana and its deteriorating economy was no viable option either.⁴ It was at this time that the new and massive intercontinental migration began, leading to the establishment of Ghanaian migrant communities in many European cities such as Hamburg, London, Amsterdam and New York. Ter Haar (1998) showed that by 1996 the Ghanaian migrant population had become the largest group among all the officially recorded migratory movements from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe.

It was in the movement of large numbers of people from Nigeria back to Ghana that a new form of Christianity — known as charismatic Pentecostalism — was introduced into Ghana, inspired by similar religious movements that had already emerged in Nigeria. Pentecostalism has since become the most popular form of Christianity in Ghana over the last twenty years and has become deeply intertwined with the diasporic movement of Ghanaians worldwide. Between 1987 and 1992 the number of Pentecostal churches grew by as much as 43 per cent (see Ghana Evangelism Committee 1993). Although there are many different forms of Pentecostalism and not all are gaining popularity at the same rate, recent figures show a marked increase in the spread of Pentecostalism throughout both rural and urban Ghana. Many of these churches belong to what has become known as the 'second Pentecostal wave' that has swept through

⁴ See Aluko (1985) and Yeboah (1986) on the Nigerian expulsion policy and the international outcry that followed

Africa since the 1970s, and has led to the emergence, particularly in urban areas, of a newer type of Pentecostalism that in contradistinction with other independent churches began to proselytise a highly modernist discourse in which notions of individual self-making strongly prevail. These churches, such as Dr Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church and Bishop Duncan Williams's Christian Action Faith Ministries which were founded in the late 1970s, quickly attracted many members amongst the young and urban middle class in search of success and prosperity in life (Gifford 1998, Van Dijk 1997, 1999).

This popular second wave of Pentecostalism continued a process that can be described as the indigenization of earlier mission-based Pentecostalism (see Meyer 1995, Larbi 2001). Missionary Pentecostalism was introduced to Ghana during the first three decades of the 20th century and took root with the founding of churches from England and the United States such as the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Church. Though sometimes viewed in anthropology as belonging to the category of so-called spirit-healing churches that emerged at roughly the same time (locally known in Twi as *sunsum asore*), important differences in terms of ritual discourse, practices and modernist outlook have meant that Pentecostalism eventually took a different path to these other independent churches.

In terms of the various forms of Christianity, these Pentecostal churches have engaged in a cultural dialectic on two fronts. They have challenged mainstream Christianity on the perception of evil, on the diabolization of key elements of the African cosmology and on ways of counteracting witchcraft and evil spirits. Mainstream Christianity (Presbyterianism, Catholicism, Methodism and Anglicism) has preferred to deny the existence of witchcraft (*bayiE*) and has rejected the power of spirits (*adze*), amulets (*asuman*) and traditional healing practices as being mere superstition. It has refused to accommodate or absorb any of the elements of African cosmology in order to save the pure faith from being contaminated by devilish and occult forces. The development of independent African Christianity and its diverse forms of spirit-healing churches can be interpreted as a process of coming to terms with the powers that mainstream Christianity denied and ignored, and as a way of providing individual members with healing and protection. Whilst including Christian doctrines, the spirit-healing churches such as the Nazarene Healing Church and the Musama Disco Christo Church have provided healing through a range of objects and substances that clearly originated from ritual practices rooted in the veneration of *abosom* (family and ancestral spirits) and their worship through the shrine priests (*okomfoo*). The use of herbs, candles, oils, baths, concoctions, magical rings and the like was very much a part of this world and was included in the spirit-healing churches' symbolical repertoires.

However, the new Pentecostal churches engaged in a second dialectic here as they could not accept practices that would signal the continuation of a cultural past that would make the church vulnerable to attacks from the Devil and his many demons. Ancestral spirits, witches and ritual practices that related to veneration and protection were consequently classified as demonic and were diabolized (Meyer 1999). A rigid dichotomy was developed distinguishing benevolent from malevolent powers and spiritual forces, leaving no middle terrain for ambiguity. Whereas ancestral deities (*honhom ananom*) can either work for good or bad in the community or particularly in the family, not denying their existence and influence in Pentecostalism is equivocally brandished as malevolent. Healing and deliverance from such powers can only take place through the 'blood of Christ', the laying-on of hands and ecstatic prayer sessions in which the benevolent presence of the Holy Spirit is manifest through speaking in tongues (in Twi *kasa foforoo*, literally 'speaking the new language'). Objects and substances that relate to a cultural past are not allowed within its ritual practice and discourse. In Pentecostal practice attention is paid to fasting, which is primarily perceived as a way to come to a spiritual control and inspection of the belly (*yam*) as the place where the ancestral spirits make their presence felt and influence the reproduction of society.

So while the mission Pentecostal churches started to Africanize around 1950 in terms of leadership and forms of worship, the importance of their own distinctive ways of dealing with evil forces in society grew. This approach contradicted mainstream Christianity that denied the efficacy of these forces and opposed the 'demonic' practices of the spirit-healing churches. It is important to note that while the Pentecostal churches grew in strength, the spirit-healing churches became less influential, less appealing and less able to adjust to the changing fortunes of Ghanaian society as it entered a global system.

Although the older Pentecostal churches were clearly represented in Ghana's urban areas and could claim international links through their overseas branches, the new type of charismatic Pentecostal churches made internationalism their hallmark (Van Dijk 1997, 2001b, Gifford 1998). In Accra and Kumasi, churches were adding terms such as 'international', 'global' and 'world' to their names, promising religiously inspired access to transnationalism.⁵ Furthermore, this new Pentecostalism appears to be inspired by the developments of Pentecostalism in America. Firmly located in the prosperity gospel, it propounds the notion of the individual's combined spiritual and socio-economic

⁵ Examples include the well-known International Central Gospel Church, the Global Revival Outreach Ministry, the Harvest Ministries International and the World Miracle Church. In some of these churches, their international approach is represented symbolically by placing flags near the pulpit of each country in which branches have been established.

success. Leaders come across as having charismatic powers and acumen in business relationships.

From the mid 1980s onwards, another salient feature of these churches has been their international self-presentation. The global claim has become a prominent feature, demonstrating that, unlike most spirit-healing churches, they can extend beyond Ghana, and Ghanaian and West African culture. Consequently, they have actively sought to enter other cultural contexts and have ascribed a place for them in their ideology, organization and subsequent religious experience. The claim is not simply that Ghana is 'too small a place for our message', but that entering other cultural contexts deepens, enriches and essentializes the religious experiences of Pentecostal communities (Van Dijk 2001a, 2001b). Operating from Accra or Kumasi, these churches began setting up branches outside Ghana, particularly in Western Europe and the United States. Pentecostalism has connected with the 'new' African diaspora through its message for a mobile urban population eager to participate in transnational movement. Over the last decade, migrating to the West has become increasingly difficult due to the stiff measures taken by most governments to curtail immigration from Africa. While Europe has turned into a 'fortress', large numbers of Ghanaian Pentecostal churches have been able to establish themselves in the continent's major cities, thereby once more adding to the image and promise of success and internationalism that Pentecostalism appears to harbour. In many cities in Western Europe but also in the US and even in Israel and Japan, these new Pentecostal churches have been able to establish satellite congregations, and cater to the needs of the Ghanaian migrant in the diaspora.

Pentecostalism in Ghana feeds into the Occidentalized notions that many young people still maintain of the West, of images that bespeak the West's affluence as a place of desire. These churches have, therefore, developed connections with international Pentecostal circles through modern means of transport and communication and are creating an extensive exchange of people and materials both to and from Ghana. Conversely, some of the Pentecostal churches that were founded in the Ghanaian diaspora have ploughed their way back to Ghana. In other words, alongside Ghanaian-based Pentecostal churches that have been set up among Ghanaian communities in Amsterdam, London or Hamburg, Pentecostal churches with no previous links with Ghana have emerged. Pentecostalism has become a transnational phenomenon that in its modern forms is reproduced in its local diversity through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people. In fact it has formed a moral and physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow as created and recreated through travel and encounter.

In the Netherlands there are approximately 40 Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in cities such as Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam where sizeable Ghanaian migrant communities are to be found. They vary in membership from 50 to 600 adults and include both legal and illegal migrants. In The Hague, which is the location of one half of my multi-sited research (the other being in Accra), eleven Pentecostal churches are currently operating in a community of (officially) 2,000 adults (Van Dijk 2001c, 2002b). They hold an influential position in the community and function as the *de facto* moral authority on a wide range of matters pertaining to birth, marriage, funerals and other rituals and arrangements. Six of these churches have direct links with churches in Accra while the others were founded in The Hague during the late 1980s. Styles of ritual practice, worship, the elements of personalism and international linkage refer to what can be observed in Accra among these churches and create a deep sense of transnational continuity, global unity and exchange, and direct accessibility for the Ghanaian migrant. Despite the ever-toughening border controls and identity politics of the Dutch government with regard to immigration, one of the latest arrivals within the Ghanaian community in The Hague has been a satellite of one of the most remarkable Pentecostal churches in Accra: the International Central Gospel Church of Mensa Otabil.

The Pan-Africanist message of Mensa Otabil

Rev. Mensa A. Otabil, the leader and founder of the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) in Accra, is by far the most influential, renowned and outspoken of all the Pentecostal leaders who have come forward in Ghana's second Pentecostal wave. His eloquence and innovative style, his command of the public media and his uncompromising public pronouncements have made him an example to be followed by many emerging Pentecostal leaders in the public domain in Ghana. His flamboyance and his public presence have also made him a favourite subject of study in much of the science-of-religion type literature on Ghana. Studies such as those by Gifford (1998), Hackett (1998), Larbi (2001) and Darkwah (2000) emphasize various aspects of his moral and religious message, his theology and the sources of inspiration he has sought in American Pentecostalism, his coverage of the public media and his role in the emergence of what can be called the highly appealing prosperity gospel in Ghana. These authors do not fail to note the elements of political criticism that transpire in many of his messages, which have made him the moral watchdog of the nation, as well as the Pan-African sentiments that come across strongly. It is the tantalizing combination of Pentecostalism, Pan-Africanism and political criticism that explains much of his massive appeal in Ghana, on the African

continent, as well as in many parts of the Ghanaian diaspora and other black communities overseas. The peculiarity of this combination is unique and must be explored against the backdrop of the transnational nature of Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

Otabil established the ICGC in central Accra in 1984 in line with the way in which a predecessor, Bishop Duncan Williams, had established his church, the Action Faith Ministries, and who in his turn had imported this form of religious organization into Ghana from Nigeria. Starting with church services in a cinema,⁶ the church then decided to move to one of the biggest halls in the city until it finally moved to a newly constructed multi-billion cedi church building in the very heart of Accra in 1996. The success of the church and of Otabil's appeal have coincided with the broad and popular success of Pentecostalism in Ghana at large but is also due to Otabil's charismatic personality and the many services the church renders to the public. It is run on the basis of a modernist and highly liberal notion of religious entrepreneurship which includes the professional proliferation of its basic tenets through the production of cassettes, videos, tapes, printed materials such as books and magazines, television and radio shows and church planting activities throughout Ghana and in other parts of the world. Otabil's messages reach every corner of Ghanaian society and are rapidly spreading across Africa and the diaspora. The books he has written circulate around the world and discussions about his ideas can be found on the Internet. He himself holds two honorary doctorate degrees in the Humanities and Divinity, and the church also moved into academia when in 1998 it opened the first privately owned Pentecostal university in Africa, Central University, with two faculties, namely, Theology and Business Administration. Otabil became the chancellor of the university and as part of this academic effort began publishing his own lectures in a separate series, New Dawn publications.

For ordinary members of the ICGC, however, other and more religious services of the church have remained important, particularly the 'Solution Centre' where people go for spiritual healing and deliverance. The purpose of these rituals is to bring 'divine provision' to every individual in his/her quest for success, prosperity and progress in life. Here people are told they should enter into a covenant with the heavenly forces and be disciplined, diligent and determined whatever that covenant sets forth. This is all dependent on personal free will, choice and ambition and it is for this reason that the so-called Winner's Club was established, a special division of the church with an exclusive membership of the highly motivated and dynamic achievers in fields

⁶ This was the Regal Cinema, Osu. Birgit Meyer attaches specific significance to the fact that so many of these new Pentecostal churches tend to occupy cinemas for their church services. Many of them do so as they cannot afford to build a place of their own.

of business, law, commerce, accountancy who seek to use biblical and secular principles to affect society' (Gifford 1998: 81). It is exclusive particularly in terms of membership fees, which often amount to hundreds of dollars a year.

The overall success of Pentecostalism in Ghanaian society can, in addition to its transnational appearance and globalizing outlook, be explained by this ideology and praxis which strike a responsive chord among the educated English-speaking and upwardly mobile groups in Ghanaian society. In Otabil's case this ritual practice and its public appeal relate to his Pan-African ideas. These are very much based on the Hamitic hypothesis but are largely inspired by Senghor's negritude, and proclaim the worldwide redemption of the Black Race not by a return to traditional African heritage but by an African appropriation of the Bible and the Gospel. They are deeply Afro-centric in the first place. In his book *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia* (1992) Otabil develops a specific form of liberation theology, which redefines the position of Black people in the Bible as crucial to God's redemptive and messianic plan for the world. Davies (1998: 130) writes:

The aim of the book is clear: to retrace within the Bible (the King James version, no less) 'the purposes of God for the Black Race'. Thus we have an exegetical exercise in which the Bible is rethought in terms of Abraham's third wife, Keturah, of Moses father-in-law, of the Midianites, of the Cushites, of the Cyrenians, of Simon the cross-bearer, of some of the early Church elders.

Whites have distorted the Bible and its message for the future of Africa to such an extent that even Africans themselves have come to believe that the black race has been cursed. Otabil is convinced that his liberating Afro-centric work plays a role in what he calls the breaking of a certain mentality which he finds is prevalent among many Africans: a mentality of 'slavery', 'dependency' and that of a 'begging attitude' as he once called it in one of his public sermons. Through the appropriation of the Gospel, African peoples and descendants of former slaves can look for prowess and pride in being black and of having played such a crucial role in saving mankind in Biblical and present times: 'Whenever the world has been in crisis the black man has always appeared on the scene' (Otabil 1992: 87). The book is a strident rejection of this mental slavery and proclaims a 'breaking' of attitudes that do not confirm this quest of self-esteem and promising initiative and entrepreneurship:

The most difficult part to break in any situation of addition and dependency is not the physical but the mental, so then mental slavery is more difficult to break than physical slavery (p. 69)

When I was called into the ministry, one of the things the Lord led me to do was to liberate my people from mental slavery through the preaching of the Gospel and to

lift up the image of the black man so as to be a channel of blessing to the nations of the world. (p. 18)

Businessmen, lawyers, inventors, teachers, your time has come.... You may be starting late, but you must run with purpose. (p. 86)

The book, tellingly opening with a foreword by L. Lovett a professor in Afro-American religious studies at the Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma (from which Otabil received one of his two honorary doctorates), has been widely read in Afro-American circles throughout the United States. Internet discussions and readers' reviews can be found acclaiming the book and Otabil's message for as one reader stated:

This book shatters the myth that we as black people are not in the Bible. God has a plan for us and Christianity is not a white man's religion. We were never cursed. In the light of white America's lies through the years it is time to get the truth. (www.Amazon.com/Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia/p. 2)

Otabil began receiving numerous invitations to speak at events in America, thereby giving greater circulation to his ideas in Afro-American communities. Beyond the International Central Gospel Church branches that were established across the Atlantic, for example in New York but also in London, his books, tape recordings, video recordings as well as his privately owned magazine *Greener Pastures* received wide circulation in Ghanaian migrant communities and among a great number of the Afro-Americans interested in their roots. His private initiatives, such as the university he established, received material support from these communities and the university has become affiliated to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the US.

He took further measures in Ghana and other African countries to spread his specific Pan-African message by establishing the so-called Pan-African Believers' Conference, an annual meeting of representatives of African and Afro-American Christian communities and churches. The one I was able to attend in 1998 had as its central theme 'Lift Up Your Head, Africa' and in his opening speech Otabil deplored what he called the 'I don't care attitude' and warned all present that:

We should not make the mistake of copying Western and Asian countries blindly. The Malaysian economy has become a model for Africa, but unfortunately for us their economy is now in crisis. We must demand our rights and must develop our own models by fighting the 'I don't care' attitude of our leaders!

On other occasions he openly criticized African leaders, including President Rawlings, for putting African countries under the yoke of neo-colonialism and

under the control of such organizations as the IMF and the World Bank and their structural adjustment programmes (Gifford 1998: 88). Books he published after *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia* developed this line of thinking, of combining Afro-centric ideas with economic success and development through the preaching of a change in attitude whereby a promise of progress and prosperity is reserved for those eager to be industrious, studious and willing to sacrifice time, energy and resources to developing their own initiative. In a book entitled *Four Laws of Productivity*, for example, he admonishes the reader: 'Most of the time the reason why people are poor is because of laziness' and continues: 'Make sure you go beyond what everyone else is doing. And that may mean sleepless nights studying. But one day you will come to stand above the others.'

Outside Ghana his visits to other countries in Africa have often left local Pentecostal leaders deeply impressed by his powerful appearance and messages. In Zambia and Zimbabwe his participation in large Pentecostal summits attended by influential leaders from within the region such as Ezekiel Guti (Zimbabwe), Nevers Mumba (Zambia) and Enock Sitima (Botswana)⁷ left many baffled and surprised by his messages of black pride, Pentecostal awakening and resistance to oppressive political and economic structures (Gifford 1998: 236-45). This appealing combination of Afro-centrism and Pentecostal liberation theology was unheard of in this region of Africa where political dictatorships continued to rule until the mid 1990s. Preaching fire-and-brimstone messages against the 'African inferiority complex' as he called it, his public sermons became news and were hotly debated in the public media, partly because of their alleged anti-white sentiments, (being expressed in countries with a still considerable 'white' population) and partly because of their overtly political criticism:

...your personal individual prosperity is tied up with the prosperity of the nation. We have to think structurally about the economy of the nation. You can't preach in Africa and not be political. If a nation is poor, its people will be poor. Christians can't say 'let's leave politics to politicians'. No, if wrong policies are made, you can pray all you want, and you won't have anything. In South Africa, God has changed the situation. They have a black President, but 98% of the wealth in South Africa is in non-black hands. So you can have a black President, but what's different? Christians have the faith, non-believers have the money. But you can't claim anyone's money by faith — it's illegal. If you want to have money, there is only one way: work. On 6 March 1957 Ghana was the first nation to get Independence. But the economy is not controlled by Ghanaians. The economy is controlled by

⁷ See Maxwell (1998) on Guti in Zimbabwe and Van Dijk (2002a) on Sitima in Botswana.

multinationals. We worked for them to create wealth for them to take it out of the country. We were hewers of wood and drawers of water for them. I prayed to God to prosper, but we have to change economic structures and social structures. If I don't have that opportunity, I can pray all I want and I'll still be poor. When we were colonised, structures were built in our nations. The British came not because they thought we needed the gospel; they came because they wanted raw materials...and impoverish you. You can pray all you want, but it won't help...unless we start looking at the structures of our nations.

How come you live in your own country, and you don't own anything? The only thing is to run to Botswana and South Africa. The tragedy of African governments is that they keep their own people poor, and keep foreigners rich. The key lies in a work-conscious, ownership conscious, skilled populace. Don't think, 'who can give me a job?' Think, 'when can I start a business?' (Otabil addressing a crowd in Lusaka, Zambia, August 1994, quote taken from Gifford 1998: 240, 242)

What we can conclude is that Otabil's triangulation of black pride/Afro-centrism, Pentecostal liberation ideology and a prosperity gospel based on private entrepreneurship provides him with a prism with many sides to show in a variety of contexts. Whereas his messages in the context of Afro-American relations emphasize a break with slave mentality and a unification of purposes across the trans-Atlantic — which global Pentecostalism provides — in Africa black pride is becoming a constitutive element of private enterprise in the face of failing governments and white economic dominance.

Despite his overall success and appeal in Ghana, in many parts of Africa and overseas in Ghanaian and Afro-American communities of the English-speaking world, his ideas have not particularly struck a chord in the Dutch Ghanaian community. A branch of Otabil's church was set up relatively late in the Netherlands when compared to all the other Ghanaian Pentecostal churches that were established from the mid 1980s onwards. Furthermore, it was established in The Hague, one of the smaller concentrations of Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands, while in fact the largest concentration is found in Amsterdam (Van Dijk 2001c, 2002b). In the meantime 40 different Ghanaian Pentecostal and other congregations had already come into existence, and so the International Central Gospel branch has remained small in membership and dependent on the help and support of one or two 'like-minded' churches in the city (Acts Revival and Rhema Gospel Church). Mensa Otabil has never visited the branch, as far as I am aware, although he has been to the much larger London-based branch of the church. The various magazines related to Otabil's activities (such as *Greener Pastures* or the university-related magazine *Pathfinder*) do not circulate widely in The Hague, nor do his tapes or video recordings. Some church-related musical recordings are an exception, particularly those that feature Ghanaian or American gospel artists, such as Black Heritage or Ron

Kenoli, and their performances on stage in the Christ Temple in the centre of Accra. Many of Otabil's views on black pride and Pentecostal liberation theology, however, remain absent from much of the Pentecostal discourse in the city of The Hague where his branch is located. Given the immense popularity of Otabil in Ghana and the far-reaching influence of much of his Afro-centric and politically critical thinking, this absence and silence is indeed striking.

Conclusion: Interpreting Otabil's absence

The first point to be made is that the growing elitist outlook of Otabil's church and its dominant views have meant that the church has moved away from a more popular and broader-based Pentecostalism in which the ritual practices of 'breaking' and deliverance dominate. The majority of Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands were unskilled or semi-skilled when they left Ghana to try their luck in this part of Europe, unlike those who migrated to English-speaking countries where training and education were, or became, of dominant importance (see Ter Haar 1998). The Pentecostal churches, which in a sense followed this migration pattern to the Netherlands, were mostly of the type of popular or per force populist orientation in which the practices of breaking and deliverance are considered major elements of their appeal. Many of these churches that have been established in Amsterdam, such as the Resurrection Power Ministries or the Bethel Prayer Ministries, became successful in Ghana and in the diaspora largely because they embraced the practice of deliverance. This is a ritual practice of dealing with evil and misfortune that has become part of the hallmark of Pentecostalism and directly relates to the widely shared concerns of the general public.

On several occasions Otabil has proclaimed to be alarmed by the deliverance hype that hit Ghana in the last decade and which has often led, in his view, to a frenzied search for the occult and dark powers in people's private and social lives (personal communication with Mensa Otabil, but see also Gifford 1998: 108). Gifford writes:

His concern arose for a characteristic reason: that because in practice deliverance bears on idols, local spirits, ancestors, stools and face markings, it hardly applies to whites and is really tailored for blacks, and is thus one more way of alienating blacks from their culture. (ibid)

What is this practice of deliverance that is so abhorred by Otabil? The practice of deliverance (*ogyee*) has become a common denominator in popular Pentecostalism as it shares and negotiates a fear of how demons, ancestral

spirits and the like from the past may haunt a person in the present. The more positions of leadership were taken by Africans and the more Pentecostal churches and breakaway groups were started by Africans, the more the practice of deliverance — a way of dealing with a person's past — came to take a central position in worship and church organization. Its significance has become the subject of extensive study, by scholars from Ghana (see, among others, Atiemo 1993, Adubofuor 1994, Larbi 2001) as well as from elsewhere (Meyer 1995, 1998, Van Dijk 1997, 1999, Gifford 1998: 97-109, Ter Haar 1998: 175-76).

The aim of deliverance is to free people from the powers of Satan that hold them in bondage through demonic forces. These demonic forces are said to reside within society at large but more particularly within the individual's immediate circle of family relationships and descent. Satan is believed to work through ancestral or generational curses (*nnomee*), which can become manifest in specific problems haunting individual family members such as infertility, alcoholism, misfortune or tragic death. Pentecostal believers are, therefore, urged to be aware of such manifestations that may signal the presence of a curse from a past and of which the individual was unaware.

Deliverance is aimed at creating a rift, a clear-cut rupture with the known or, in most cases, unknown past. Deliverance should be preceded by 'breaking' (*obubu*), the spiritual breaking of the bonds that keep people entangled with their past, their former upbringing within the family circle where the ancestors are venerated at the family shrines through the practices of the shrine priests (*okomfoo*). Name-giving, 'outdooing' (an elaborate ritual of bringing a newborn child out into the community), initiation, healing and the pouring of libation to the ancestors performed at important events in a person's life may signal links with the family spirits which in Pentecostal discourses provoke danger and impurity.

Deliverance ministries are established in most churches and provide a break with the past. 'Make a complete break with the past' is a cry often heard in the context of these ministries (see Meyer 1998). Such a break operates on two levels. One is the person's immediate lifestyle, the engagement with present-day society in which the confirmed believer is trapped in moral wrongdoing — drinking, theft, other forms of crime, greed, poverty, rudeness, envy and hatred. These are all redefined in Pentecostal ideology as resulting from evil spirits, or even as spirits manifesting themselves in these forms.⁸ Being Born Again is,

⁸ As Pastor Ampiah Kwofi proclaimed at a gathering of his Global Revival Outreach Ministries which I attended on 29 October 1995 'Poverty is a spirit you need to get rid of'.

therefore, often portrayed as a fierce battle between the individual and the powers from the person's immediate past.

At a deeper level, however, deliverance from the ancestral past confronts the bondage of the *longue duree*. The past life of the family is to be inspected for the sins that have been committed in the past. Any person alive today may be haunted by ancestral curses that become manifest through recurrent problems in terms of the blood-line with the past: families and individuals may experience problems with childbirth, with being able to conceive, with chronic diseases, with afflictions from ancestral or evil spirits which become apparent in possession, madness and nightmares. In Pentecostal ideology these ancestral curses all result from blood covenants that in the past have been established through and by the ancestors with devilish powers. The answer to such problems, as is stressed during deliverance rituals, is a complete break with the blood tie that keeps a person trapped within the realm of an ancestral curse. It may imply a subsequent rejection of all those rituals, such as initiation and funerals, that emphasize connections with a family's bounded past.

Most churches operate special hours, meetings places or even entire 'camps' where people can subject themselves to what are sometimes called 'spiritual operations' meant to relieve them of their burdening ancestral influences (Van Dijk 1997). Often taking place in a highly ecstatic and emotional atmosphere, people are 'broken' through prayer healings from these ties and all evil influences are spiritually cast away. Before this takes place, particularly in the context of admittance to prayer camps, people are requested to fill out extensive questionnaires in which every detail of their exposure to ancestral worship, traditional healing practices or 'devil worship' are investigated so as to enhance the spiritual treatment of all of them. As I have shown elsewhere (Van Dijk 1997), the ritual practices at these specialized prayer camps are considered by many aspiring migrants to be essential before moving from Ghana to other parts of the world to partake in all that migration may offer.

While breaking and deliverance are seen as key elements in the Pentecostal ritual structure as they provide a personal reconstruction of an individual's past and heritage, the control of time, history and self-making it prescribes is reinterpreted by Otabil in a different dimension. He, his church and some of the other churches that came later and that followed the inspirational lines he had set out came to perceive of a second wider and cultural domain of controlling the past: the moral supervision of culture. These Pentecostal churches, which for instance include the successful Lighthouse Chapel, are deeply concerned about culture and how the government and other authorities negotiate the call for a preservation of heritage, ritual and symbolic styles. These Pentecostals perceive African rituals as yet another dangerous avenue by which Satan ensures that ancestral and generational curses manifest themselves in present-

day society. They tend to provoke a profound contestation in the public realm in terms of a politics of culture and its implied nostalgia (see for violent clashes, Van Dijk 2001e).

In their view, traditional ritual blocks progress not only at an individual level but also at the community level. In other words, social-cultural traditions form an impediment to the community's and even to the nation's progress, and Pentecostal initiative is thus directed at disqualifying such displays of cultural life. Consequently, Pentecostals critically examine efforts, such as those by the state, that are aimed at reviving and rejuvenating certain traditions, and that aim to overcome the ruptures with a cultural heritage which have been brought about by the modern projects of colonialism, missionization, western education, and capitalist market relations. Instead, within much Pentecostal ritual surrounding birth, death, marriage and so forth, we notice an explicit strategy aimed at replacing the cultural forms that are so cherished by those wishing to preserve their heritage.⁹

In Otabil's view therefore, breaking and deliverance require — at a higher level of abstraction — a critical examination of cultural styles and repertoires, of tradition and of the Ghanaian state's cultural policy of re-inscribing a cultural heritage into present-day public life. Black pride must be a Christianized pride, which runs counter to a state that has become complicit in encouraging and preserving certain traditions that are defiling to the nation. Considering this staunch criticism, it is remarkable that Otabil has become an influential member of the National Commission on Culture which, established under Rawlings, has become the patron of much of the state's effort to preserve cultural heritage for national interests (which in practice demonstrates the perplexing intricacies of the courting relationship between religion and politics in the modern developments of state formation in Ghana, an issue which I will leave for further discussion elsewhere).

In the Ghanaian migrant communities in the Netherlands, breaking and deliverance in the perspective of personal healing and fortune have remained the dominant perspective of most of the Pentecostal churches that have been

⁹ Replacement may take place, for instance, when after childbirth, usually within a period of about three months, a name-giving ceremony for the baby is held. I once witnessed how an ICGC pastor took full 'possession' of the ritual, proclaimed the name of the baby and, instead of the usual alcohol, put water, salt and honey on the lips of the infant 'to make him taste the three essences of life'. At similar rituals, the power of the family and elders is publicly and substantially reduced and detachment proclaimed. While in a non-Pentecostal context the parents themselves, the family elders or the *okomfoo* (the shrine priests) proclaim the name of the baby in public, in what has become known in English as the 'outdooing' ceremony (Akan, *dintoo*), here the church directly asserts its detaching power over new life.

active since the mid 1980s. They did not, by and large, form part of the more intellectual and reflexive Pentecostalism developed by Otabil after the publication of his book in 1992 (since most of the migrants had already arrived in the Netherlands by then) and their relative seclusion from cultural developments in the Netherlands gave them little incentive to be concerned with such issues as the moral supervision of local cultural heritage. Most of the concerns of Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands have remained highly personal and private and have not seemed to lead to a more structural interpretation of their individual circumstances and predicaments. This dominant orientation towards personal healing was again evidenced by the visit of highly popular Pentecostal healing prophets from Ghana between 1998 and 2000, healing prophets who were able to attract mass audiences at deliverance practices, which turned into veritable spectacles of healing. When these healing prophets showed up in The Hague, they found thousands of Ghanaian migrants waiting to be delivered from whatever was haunting them in their private lives.

While these Ghanaian migrants were unfamiliar with Otabil's thinking as far as the relationship between breaking/deliverance and the quest for black pride in cultural terms, the inverse of this is also true. Otabil's ideas of black pride in relation to self-esteem, one's own initiative and entrepreneurship seem not to be tailored to the specific situation of many Ghanaian migrants living in Dutch society. Otabil's ideas appear to assume too much in terms of freedom to take initiative, to develop entrepreneurial activity, to travel around the world in a cosmopolitan fashion in the pursuit of economic success and independence, as if conditions were the same everywhere and as if everybody had equal access to all sorts of resources to be able to live up to the expectations of these aspects of black pride. His ideas and public statements seem too little attuned to the often harsh political realities of the Ghanaian migrants' predicament in societies such as the Netherlands that are increasingly turning hostile to the presence of foreign labour.

In the Netherlands it has been particularly the presence of large numbers of Ghanaian and other West African migrants that has been a cause of alarm to the authorities with regard to Dutch immigration and identity policies. Around 1992, after the crash of an Israeli plane into a low-cost housing area of Amsterdam that caused an unknown number of Ghanaian deaths in the fire that followed, the commissioner of police sounded alarm bells concerning the allegedly high number of illegal Ghanaian migrants in Dutch cities. The Netherlands came to experience an unprecedented tightening of its identity policies which in the following years specifically targeted five immigrant communities, labelling them officially as 'problem countries'. At the top of that list was Ghana (Van Dijk 2001d, 2002b). The official view came to be that identity documents of any kind from these countries can never be believed to be

genuine and that in almost 100 per cent of cases the identity papers of their citizens must be considered fraudulent.

The Ghanaian community became the subject of intense control and investigation by the Dutch authorities. The Dutch government introduced so-called verification procedures in Ghana whereby investigations into a person's true identity would take place in the first instance on Ghanaian soil (see Van Dijk 2001d, 2002b). This has led to feelings of unrest among the migrant community as well as among their families and friends back home in Ghana. Verification in fact soon became the most pressing problem for many Ghanaian migrants as it prevented them from travelling, from accessing resources elsewhere, from marrying spouses from Ghana, from being united with their families and children from and in Ghana and from obtaining tenured jobs in the Dutch labour market. It also led to a situation in which the many Ghanaian Pentecostal churches that had emerged in the meantime came to be seen by some as the only remaining safe haven where illegal migrants could take part in a social life of some kind. Churches are not commonly targeted for identity checks by the authorities, unlike almost all other public places in the city. Contrary to Ghanaian indignation about these identity and taxonomic state policies, the Dutch authorities basically perceived them as ways of dealing with a kind of corruption which in principle could be tackled through technical and administrative solutions.

As a consequence of the many measures the government took to curb what it saw as illegal immigration from Ghana, protests against harsh treatment from within the Ghanaian community soon mounted. Voiced by a number of Ghanaian migrant interest groups in the country, and not so much by the Pentecostal churches, these protests did not adopt a race-related discourse. The groups could not argue that Ghana had become listed as a 'problem-country' on the basis of racist thought, leading Ghanaians to become a disenfranchised people. This listing included non-black countries as well (India, Pakistan and the Dominican Republic). Although racial discrimination undoubtedly has a long and dark record in Dutch labour relations — a problem many Ghanaians have certainly encountered — the implementation of these specific identity procedures that impacted on the community to such a large extent have never developed a clear racial bend (Van Dijk 2001d, 2002b). Nor have issues of race ever really emerged either among the Ghanaian population and the way they felt they were treated or among Dutch officials. An issue of globalization, weakening state borders, parochial identities, yes, but not an issue of racial identities as such.

So, Otabil's ideas seem to have missed their mark in this specific context. While his ideas of black pride appear to resonate in a cosmopolitan world where he, his books and his ideas can have unfettered travel, can foster opportunity-

seeking in an entrepreneurial fashion unhindered by borders of any kind and as such seem to fulfil the promise of globalization, Ghanaian migrants instead have begun to face the consequences of the 'fortress called Europe' (Ter Haar 1998). Ideas of black pride and free enterprise appear to have little meaning and appeal in a situation where globalization has come to mean blockades, control and increasing supervision through a state apparatus that extends its investigations into Ghana as well. Hence, breaking and deliverance in a *structural* sense, as proclaimed in Otabil's Pentecostal liberation theology, do not bespeak a situation in which these problems of blockade, control and supervision above all have come to be experienced as a highly personal, private problem; an individual's quest for 'verification' of all sorts of documents and as such a highly individualized conquest of almost Kafkain administrative procedures.

Instead of fighting a (pre-supposed) inferiority complex, many Ghanaians see themselves besieged by such questions as: 'Which force from within my family, my background, my past is responsible for these verification problems I am facing? 'Why is this all happening to me and who is to be held responsible for this particular kind of misfortune?' Breaking and deliverance remain inescapably personal and individual. Due to the lack of leverage in a practical sense, Otabil's ideas come across as irrelevant to a Ghanaian migrant community facing the predicaments of Dutch society where bureaucratic and taxonomic rationales have been able to turn 'identity' into an exclusively individualistic affair of coping and manoeuvring.

Important conclusions can be drawn from this difference in the appeal of Pentecostal Afro-centric ideas with regard to the intellectual ownership of such views, and the world and social groups to which they seem to belong. There is no self-evident relationship between such ownership and belonging, as Otabil's case for black pride and the Africanization of the Bible appear to imply. His claim, after all, is that the ownership of ideas of black pride and Pan-African unity do not belong *a priori* to an intellectual class of people well versed in Western enlightened ideals of scholarship but can and ought to be placed in the hands of the ordinary believer. While Otabil's Pentecostal views display a sense of ownership of specific Pan-African identity and entelechy in what it aims to achieve, the Ghanaian migrants who share this identity do not feel that Pan African ideals are part of their longing and belonging. This chapter has, thus, argued that ownership and belonging cannot be taken together as one great solvent of local identity contesting global marginalization, but that there is a dialogue between the two that requires a contextual understanding for each of the situations in which it emerges.

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