EDITORIAL

This special issue of the *Journal of Religion in Africa* explores the significance and position of specific forms of African religion in non-African societies in the context of the current waves of overseas migration. In all these cases, religious groups, churches and other organizations are catering to the needs of African migrants and their communities. This is taking place in a situation where states are increasingly concerned about immigration, the integration of cultural diversity into their societies and the calls for recognition of group rights to which minorities aspire. An older literature exists, which claims that ethnic minorities seek legitimacy in the public domain of their host societies by privileging their religious identities. See, for example, Will Herberg, 1955, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Country Life Press); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, 1963, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press); Milton Gordon, 1964, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press).

While this may be true in general terms, in this issue we have further explored this assumption for the situation of African groups and their religious communities. The public's reception of African migrants and their religious organizations differs considerably between the various countries studied—Germany, the Netherlands, the USA and Israel—reflecting different processes of state-formation, the role of civic religion, and the way in which minority communities are being treated, including perceptions of strangerhood and immigrant religious life.

In addition to a comparison between several Christian African groups in different western countries, including forms of African Christianity in which healing and ancestor worship have a dominant place, this special issue includes a study on the spread of African Islam, which is particularly challenging in relation to the positioning of Muslim groups in the public domain. In view of the history of western state-church relations, in which Judaeo-Christian notions of civic responsibility and civil public life have played a crucial role, public debates tend to express concerns about the nature of these various African groups as non-state

religions. In some situations these sentiments concern the extent to which they can be expected to be loyal to state projects that seek to create civic identity. One of the main questions we address is the rise of these concerns about civil society and the circumstances under which ideas revolving around the nature of civic religion tend to become exclusionist, leaving little room for the various groups explored here to play a role in public life. A related problematic is the extent to which these public sentiments incite governments and authorities to question or even investigate the nature of African religious organizations so as to assess their position in society and to scrutinize their sense of civic responsibility. Striking differences occur. African Christianity—Pentecostalism, for example—rarely appears to be the object of such public sentiments and is seldom put under any form of surveillance. Other African religious groups, however, are the object of surveillance, and this sometimes also leads to strong divisions within African migrant communities themselves.

A second set of questions relates to the nature of, and the space for, civic representation and responsibility that these religious groups formulate for themselves. While the public representation and responsibility they are able to claim for themselves may generate little recognition in their respective host societies in general terms, on a more limited scale their influence on civil morale and civic responsibility may be substantial. Most western societies have a history of religion taking up responsibilities of various sorts, such as the establishment of schools, hospitals and welfare systems which later became part of the modern state projects of building a civic society for their citizenry. In some situations African migrants may either have limited access to these institutions or entertain a limited belief in their effectiveness, while in other situations this civicness may become something of their own making. In other words, these religious groups can be effective in creating a kind of civil society on the level of migrants' social interaction, mustering substantial legitimizing power for the civic institutions established within these communities. In a critique of studies that emphasize the nature of civil society as singular and monolithic, the present contributions have in common that they tend to make civil society not only plural, but multi-layered. This plurality of civil societies is to be problematized, however, with regard to existing or emerging hierarchies of power particularly in situations where the 'historical' stakeholders (such as mainline churches and other dominant religious groups) may not yet be at ease with what otherwise is known as the rise of a multicultural society.

A third and final set of issues relates to notions of civility and citizenship as such. How and in what terms do these groups express ideas of what it is to be civil and to behave in terms that allow for civic responsibility. How do they relate to those forms of public life in their host societies they may consider 'uncivic' and how do they respond to public challenges and critiques that may judge their ideas of civility as being uncivic? These concerns may play out in terms of gender and generational differences as well, for example the position of women in society, peer-relationships, sexuality, parenting and so forth.

Four papers are included in this special issue of the *JRA*. The first, by Galia Sabar, 'African Christianity in the Jewish State: Adaptation, Accommodation and Legitimization of Migrant Workers' Churches, 1990-2003', explores the creation of Black Christian African migrant communities in Israel. It focuses on the role of the African Initiated Churches in the lives of the, mostly undocumented, African migrant laborers and traces their multiple adaptations to the unique conditions in Israel and to the needs of their membership. Beyond exploring the positioning of the African Pentecostal churches in Israeli society, this paper investigates the tension created between the state, founded as a haven for Jews and defining itself as a Jewish state, and the presence of non-Jewish, Christian and African migrant laborers. While Israeli citizenship is to a large part defined in terms of the Jewish faith, the African migrants' perceptions of staying in the biblical 'promised land' appear profoundly to contradict this civic role of religion.

Rijk van Dijk, in his paper 'Negotiating Marriage: Questions of Morality and Legitimacy in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora', focuses on the significance attributed to marriages that take place in the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in the Netherlands. He argues that within the context of tough immigration policies, like those adopted by the Dutch state, church-administered marriage assumes a complex role. Van Dijk investigates the changing meaning of the civic functions of the Pentecostal churches in Ghana and the Netherlands and the way in which, in both contexts, legitimacy is created as well as contested in the face of the taxonomy of the nation-state. Through this exploration it will become clear why, in both situations, Pentecostalism is unlikely to develop into a civic religion in the full sense of the term. By making an analytical distinction between civic legitimacy and civil morality, however, he is able to demonstrate that the marriages officiated by the migrant churches have acquired a high moral value, their uncivic nature notwithstanding.

Monika Salzbrunn, in her paper 'The Occupation of Public Space Through Religious and Political Events: How Senegalese Migrants

Became a Part of Harlem, New York', focuses on how Senegalese nationals arriving from Senegal or France perceive the American public space as a domain where they can demonstrate their political and religious identity through the organization of special events. Salzbrunn argues that the Senegalese immigrants remain acutely aware of the cultural and political differences between the various civic domains of these respective countries. These perceptions inform them about the strategies they need to develop in terms of their public representation. Special events held in New York, such as the Murid Parade, are arranged and organized on the basis of their complex interaction with Senegalese translocal networks and their connections to the local situation in New York City. The contribution illustrates the struggle for the public acceptance of Islamic groups in present-day New York (among other examples, by pointing at the significance of the establishment of the House of Islam in the city) but also demonstrates the importance of the diaspora community for the political situation in Senegal. Salzbrunn shows how the events organized in New York during the Senegalese presidential election campaign in 2000 were, in a complex manner, of importance to the public image of Islam in the city and influenced the outcome of the elections 'back home' at the same time.

Afe Adogame, in his paper 'Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora', deals with the developments and public perception of the Aladura churches in Nigeria and in the diaspora. His paper combines an analysis of the historical developments of the Aladura with understanding of their contemporary significance in a greater world. It focuses on this temporal comparison, a dimension usually lacking in diasporic descriptions of the spread of African Initiated Churches. By looking at examples from Great Britain, Italy and Germany, especially the recent 'Thames Torso' ritual murder in Great Britain, the transnational sexual labor trafficking in Italy and their alleged links to some Aladura churches, the paper shows how the media fail to understand the religious worldview of the Aladura and their strong emphasis on ritual re-enactments. Sensationalized news reports stimulate apprehension about, even diabolization of, these churches, and help to perpetuate their strangerhood within the host society.

RIJK VAN DIJK AND GALIA SABAR