

CHAPTER 6

Pentecostalism, Cultural Memory and the State: Contested Representations of Time in Postcolonial Malawi

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The current state of theory on culture, social memory and postcolonial subjectivity presents a simple challenge. It calls for analysis disentangled from earlier grand social theories which are deeply nostalgic in themselves. Nostalgia was built into the very foundations of social theories at a time when Western nation-states were in search of grand styles of patriotism and national narratives of heroic pasts (Turner 1994; Robertson 1990, 1992). Leading motifs in grand theories, such as the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* antithesis, gave primacy to that which *was* – and which, implicitly, the present lacks. In research on religion in sub-Saharan Africa, a similar nostalgic paradigm has long dominated the study of new religious movements and so-called independent churches. In particular, the modern urban religious movements arising in Southern Africa during the post-World War II period have commonly been analysed as ‘old wine in new wine-skins’ (Sundkler 1961) – as urban deviations from rural, older and, therefore, more ‘authentic’ religious patterns. Furthermore, the religious groups in the cities have been represented as if they re-created villages in symbolic and discursive form for the sake of ‘nesting in the urban social networks’ (Brodeur 1984), or reinstating a community that could deal with urban conditions and hardships (for a very recent example, see Devisch 1996). For such approaches, the urban is estranging and disruptive, and thus, in essence, ‘inauthentic’ in African social formations and cosmologies.

This nostalgic view of modern urban religious movements – the urban religious community as a celebration of the yearning for the ‘village’ whence the urban migrant once came – needs to be rethought in the light of the postcolonial cultural order (van Dijk 1992a, b). We have to shift our perspective from nostalgic social theory to a theory of nostalgia, as Marilyn Strathern suggests, following Roland Robertson. The yearning

for an evocation of the past or the 'authentic' should itself be thematised as an object of cultural analysis (Strathern 1995: 110).

Two modes of nostalgia can be distinguished by the way societies, or groups within societies, foreground specific evocations of the 'past': synthetic nostalgia and substantive nostalgia (Strathern 1995: 111). Synthetic nostalgia betrays a yearning for a past which the present lacks. The past is closed; it is not now effective and, in that sense, has no further bearing on the present. At the same time, however, a process of estrangement from the present state of affairs can be recognised in expressions of synthetic nostalgia. Because this nostalgia is primarily relational – it refers back to relationships with people, spaces and places once engaged in – the anthropologist is unable to enter this realm of yearning. Synthetic nostalgia embodies an idiosyncratic affective code which, at least at the level of superficial recognition, seems incapable of being translated from the personal into the social or political.

In the second mode of nostalgia belong the traces of the past that nation-states foreground, on a political level, to gain historically rooted legitimacy, glorifying their heroic pasts. Strathern, after Deborah Battaglia, calls such nostalgia 'substantive', for it is a past always present and effective in the way that societies or groups deal with their current predicament, substantiate claims of power and interests, and realise certain subjective identities (see Battaglia 1995: 93). However, as can be argued for religious syncretism as well, the blending of older and later representations, signs and images may be viewed as trajectories of empowerment, which seek to resist the power of ideological hegemonies (see Apter 1991 for an analysis of syncretism as a countervailing power against the Roman Catholic hegemony in the New World). Consequently, 'substantive' or, rather, in my terms 'syncretic' nostalgia can perhaps better be viewed as *politicised cultural memory*, syncretically blending the longing for a past and its evocation within present social reality to create a specific route of empowerment.

In pursuing a more critical perspective on nostalgia and politics in Africa, the anthropology of memory as a politicised reality for larger ethnic units or even postcolonial nation-states has departed from an earlier *invention-of-tradition* perspective (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Ranger 1993). At the level of family and individual life, a recent study by Richard Werbner (1991) explores the intertwining of family narratives and nation-state narratives, analysing the admixture of synthetic and syncretic nostalgic modes. Remembrance and nostalgia always constitute a *selective* yearning, relating to the level of the individual, the communal and the supra-communal, and hence revolving around issues of power as Filip De Boeck (1995) argues. De Boeck analyses the practice by which ritual situates both individual and collective social memory in time and space. His

approach discloses the extent to which personhood and communal identity are generated, remembered and produced in ritual performance. Similarly, in the context of exchange and gift relations in Tanzania, Brad Weiss (1996) illuminates the complex processes of remembering and evocation of the past which, by creating specific presences and absences, affect the political relations between different social groups.

There are, however, two key yet largely ignored features of nostalgia. These need to be highlighted all the more because they are crucially significant for the subject of this chapter: the ideological rejection of 'pasts'. First, within society, a yearning for a past, an evocation of a collective memory, may occur in the context of a *culturally specific image of the future*. Here nostalgia as a yearning for a past engages in a dialogue with utopia, a longing for a perceived future state or condition. In other words, the selection of remembrances, made present syncretically at the individual, collective or national level (that is, empowering subjects in relation to existing power/knowledge schemes), may depend on representations of the future, on prognosticism and its underlying assumptions.

A second relatively neglected feature of nostalgia is that of *not wishing to remember* a past, of wilfully disempowering the past (Werbner 1995), of institutional forgetting (Douglas 1986, 1995; Shotter 1990), of rejecting nostalgia and its yearning for a past. Bending Weiss's argument (1996) to our purposes, we may say that *every* presence creates its own absence and, vice versa, the deliberate rejection of 'the past' should be explored for its syncretic qualities as well. In this case, the past is not made powerless, as happens in 'closed' synthetic nostalgia; nor is it turned into a resource of empowerment in the fashion of syncretic nostalgia, as analysed by the invention-of-tradition approach. Instead, the past is ruptured. This suggestion reveals how subjects can be empowered by ideologies containing a strong element of prognosticism.

In this chapter, I explore how, in the context of African Pentecostalism, the rupture with the past is intimately linked to an overwhelming orientation – one might say, a rupture – for the future. My analysis of the Pentecostalist movement of *Abadwa Mwatsopano* (Born-Again) in urban areas of Malawi, and most of all in the largest city, Blantyre, discloses the importance of the experience of the 'instant' (*instant rebirth, instant healing*) (Van Dijk 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1995). Through such experience, subjectivities are constituted which are perceived to be detached from their individual, communal or even national pasts.

In other parts of Africa, too, Pentecostalism underscores the necessity for its members to make a complete break with the past (see, for Ghana, Meyer, Chapter 7 below; and van Dijk 1997). Although Pentecostalism speaks a language of modernity in which there is a past/inferior versus

present/superior dichotomy (see Baumann 1993¹) whereby the believer is prompted to sever all ties with former social relations in the search for new individuality, it would be a mistake to argue that Pentecostalism stops here (see Meyer). On the contrary, I argue that because the moment of instant rebirth is seen as the power base from which new future orientations are constructed, Pentecostalism may swing in different modalities from a disembedding of the subject from past social relations to a re-embedding in relations with a different temporal orientation. These future orientations promote a new sense of sharing identity within the Pentecostal setting, and enhance the constitution of this new individuality.

On the social plane, such temporal orientations acquire political meaning, particularly if the construction of future ideals and a sense of new individuality run counter to the postcolonial state's project. In the context of Malawian society – which was, at the time this movement emerged, very firmly under the yoke of the regime of President Hastings Banda – the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* represented a break with existing nostalgic modes. Although it sprang up in cities and dealt with migrants from rural areas, the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* did not re-create a community resembling a rural village – a 'villagisation of the city' (Devish 1996), as a counter-hegemonic project to that of the nation-state. 'Villagisation of the city', such as occurred in Zaïre in a very different postcolonial sociopolitical context, was not the hallmark of this counter-movement. Rather, the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* signalled a break with other urban religious movements, which indeed try to reconstruct the migrants' sense of belonging and satisfy their yearning for support in what they may perceive as a hostile, anonymous urban environment. My chapter explores both the realising of this break with existing nostalgic modes, and the departure from other urban religious movements which attempt to maintain a nostalgic mode in Malawi's postcolony by forging a continuity from the past into the present.

After this introduction, I reflect upon the close link between an anthropology of time and the nostalgic mode in the description and analysis of new urban religious movements. Next I describe how the movement of the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* established itself in the urban environment, particularly by presenting apocalyptic views of an imminent moral reordering of society. Finally, I analyse central sociopolitical aspects of this non-nostalgic religious mode in Malawi's postcolonial situation.

I conclude my chapter by arguing that the study of this and other non-nostalgic religious movements requires a stronger cultural analysis of shifting emphases in the temporal orientations of such movements, including the prognostic and the utopian. The aim is a major understanding of the pivotal role of Pentecostalism in promoting alternative subjectiv-

ities in different modalities – in one modality a level of disembedded subjectivity; in another, a new sense of individuality.

Beyond Colonial Nostalgia: Southern African Religious Movements as Mnemonics

It took quite some time before the anthropology of urban religious movements in Southern Africa could 'escape' from its own tradition of nostalgic theorising. Sundkler (1961), Daneel (1974), West (1975) and Dillon-Malone (1978, 1983) analysed such movements primarily in terms of a re-enactment of earlier, 'authentic' religious practices. The past was equated with the rural, and the movements witnessed in the urban areas were taken to be modern variations on authentic religious forms which still could be observed in traditional rural areas. The explosive growth of urban movements and churches in Southern Africa was associated by these authors with the expanding urbanisation of recent decades (Sundkler 1961: 80–85; Daneel 1974: 55; West 1975: 4; Kiernan 1981: 142; Comaroff 1985: 185, 186). In general terms, these movements were seen and interpreted as apt vehicles for the adaptation of the rural-to-urban migrant, who was confronted by a confusing, anarchic and fragmented social reality.

Basically, these movements were represented as if they provided a mnemonic, and thus made a nostalgically comforting rural-to-urban transference of a stock of religious symbols and conceptualisations, authority structures and ways of coping with illness and misfortune.² As Clive Dillon-Malone stressed for the Apostle Masowe communities he studied, this 'mnemonisation' of urban ritual creates a secure setting for the preservation of traditional styles of life and religious beliefs (Dillon-Malone 1978: 129–30). Martin West also noted, for instance, that this process seemed to be linked in large part to gerontocratic relationships, and that its success depended on the opportunities the churches or movements offered for the elders to resume their influential positions in the new, urban environment. It was apparently unusual for a man under fifty to hold any position of authority within these healing churches (West 1975: 55).

One could therefore conclude that the realisation of the subject in these new urban religious movements was conceived by the people themselves as moving backwards, and was analysed by an anthropology of religion which addressed the nostalgic as a self-evident ground for academic reasoning.

Jean Comaroff, in her study of Tshidi urban religious movements (1985), departs dramatically from this approach – she no longer takes the mnemonic and the nostalgic for granted. Comaroff redirects analysis to

the syncretic, empowering dimensions which mnemonic religious practice constructs. She argues, first of all, that the urban Zionist incorporation of the nostalgic and mnemonic covers not only symbols, beliefs, authority structures and the like, but also – and most importantly – the spatial organisation of the rhythms of life. Second, the Zionist mnemonic model serves the purpose of political protest. More broadly, her argument suggests that anthropology must both question its own nostalgia, and explore the *political implications* of the absence or presence of nostalgia within religious bodies.

In Comaroff's view, within apartheid South Africa, the Zionist churches, like premodern villages, followed a culturally standard mnemonic scheme. They reflected, under modern conditions, the 'house' and its key symbolic and structural functions for the individual in traditional society: 'Their primary mnemonic is lodged not in Scripture but in the physical body and its immediate spatio-temporal location' (1985: 200). Signs, colours, dress and style are transplanted from the traditional into the urban setting, at once retaining their earlier significance and acquiring new meanings within the Zionist Church (1985: 219–26). Comaroff warns us not to view this process – which I would like to call *mnemonisation* – as a retreat into 'romantic nativism' (1985: 227). Rather, it is a dynamic, purposeful reconstruction, and its intent is double: to express distance both from the subjugated traditional world and from the predicament of apartheid, which deforms everyday experience. Hence, under modern labour relations of oppressive capitalism, individuals who join a Zionist healing church do not find themselves reintegrated into a 'precolonial Eden' which no longer meets their needs. Like the urban migrant, the churches have been irreversibly transformed by experiences outside the traditional setting. The Zionist Church furnishes newly constructed – albeit mnemonised – initiation and healing rites, meant to reintegrate individuals into the collectivity of Zion and to draw them away from both the oppressed traditional scene of existence and the modern, afflicting conditions of life.

My point here concerns a theoretical absence. Although Comaroff does make an advance in her approach to the syncretic nature of such nostalgic modes – the incorporation of the mnemonic in present modes of contestation and empowerment – the *prognostic* is largely absent from her analysis. More broadly, just as with nostalgia, the presence or absence of prognostic thought needs to be examined critically, and not taken for granted. This criticism registers two levels at once. First, the *absence* of prognosticism needs to be questioned at the level of anthropological theory – anthropology has not yet managed to develop a paradigm or a method of analysis for exploring prognosticism, scenario-writing and other future-

orientated constructs. Second, on a more substantive level, the presence or absence of futuristic orientations needs to be analysed, like nostalgia, in its power implications and its cultural ramifications within society.

An Emerging Counter-Movement: Born-Again Conversion, 'Sealing Off' and Instant Memory

From the early 1970s in Malawi's cities the Born-Agains, as an emergent Pentecostal movement, began forcefully advocating a special type of conversion. Born-Again conversion was marked by a rejection of any form of personal, communal or cultural nostalgia. The narrative construction of a new subjective identity was to bring out the individual's capacity to reject past personal experiences within a specific communal and cultural context. The movement's young leaders aimed at 'sealing off' (*kutsirika*) the individual believer from powers emanating from the believer's social environment. They positioned themselves in opposition to the older generation, and accused their elders of creating social power that *results* from the past. The individual was to be constituted as independent of any subjectivity connected to the family, and its immediate cosmological relations and power structure.

Given this beginning for the movement, my analysis foregrounds the sociopolitical dimensions of the creation of non-nostalgic conversion narratives and non-mnemonic individuality. The movement emerged when President Banda's postcolonial project, the creation of new national identities for Malawians on the basis of a perceived cultural past, was nearing completion. Arguably, the emergence of young, Pentecostal movements, as a broad tendency in other Southern African states as well, has much to tell us about the forming of transitional subjectivities within the postcolonial predicament.

Malawi's urban centres have seen the rise from 1970 onwards of a whole array of Pentecostal groups and organisations led by young itinerant preachers, varying in age from nine to thirty (van Dijk 1992a, 1992b, 1993a). Appealing to interested crowds, these young preachers promulgated a strict morality: they denounced, in fire-and-brimstone sermons, the sin and evils of everyday urban life. At present, these itinerant young preachers still call for a rejuvenated morality, reject the use of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and drugs, and fulminate against adultery, promiscuity, violence and theft. While arousing religious excitement and ecstatic emotion during mass revival meetings, they exhort the audience to sing and dance; sinners are commanded to kneel before the young people, who then insist that all evil objects such as knives, tobacco, stolen goods and, above all, esoteric magical tokens, be surrendered. All present are

urged to step forward in the 'altar call' to receive the 'infilling' of the *Mzimu Woyera* (the Holy Spirit), which is held up as the surest single way to become cleansed of worldly, defiling forces. Only after living through a mystical rebirth by experiencing this 'infilling' is a person considered to be born again (*kubadwa mwatsopano*).

To a large extent, this movement of preachers can be seen as the most recent stage in the development of independent Christianity and Pentecostalism in this society, underway since the first decade of this century (Schoffeleers 1985). The first preachers (*alaliki*, literally 'sayers') to take up their 'call' to preach belonged to an urban class of well-educated college and university students, able to hold the higher-ranking jobs in urban society. As 'part-timers', they were – and still are – involved in preaching only in their spare time. Later on, in the early and mid-1980s, came a second group of preachers; most had no more than a few years of primary schooling and in no way belonged to a young urban elite. Serving mostly on a full-time basis, they meant their preaching activities to provide their livelihood, in one way or another.

In the creation of conversion narratives within the Born-Again discourse, the relationship between speaking in tongues (*malilime*) and sealing off (*kutsirika*) is considered essential. In a typical Born-Again conversion narrative, the individual believer tells how he or she was involved with all that the 'world' had to offer: the good and the bad, the cultural and the communal. Prior to the moment of becoming born again through the 'infilling' with the Holy Spirit, conversion narratives usually recount past involvement in certain rituals (initiation, healing, funerals, ancestor worship) or in certain kinds of social behaviour (drinking, violence, etc.) which the born-again subject must and can now repudiate. A form of protection is then needed for the born-again individual to be 'sealed off' from the outside world – from its bonds, ritual obligations, and the like.

Although they are largely intertwined, there are distinguishable spiritual, spatial and temporal dimensions in the creation of such sealed-off subjectivity. Speaking in tongues (*malilime*), which is considered the central element of ritual, symbolic and worship practice within the Born-Again movement, in this idiom invariably leads to a 'sealing off' from the wider society. The ritual practice of *malilime* is usually exhibited with great energy and force: people lie grovelling on the ground, sweating profusely while shouting all kinds of incomprehensible sounds. This ecstatic experience, compulsory for being considered truly born again, is perceived to establish a line with benevolent, heavenly powers. Having thus succeeded in tapping into the superior power, the true believer is now in a position to confront 'society' protected from its evil forces, including witchcraft and various malign spirits.

Malilime combats threats from a nocturnal world, addresses the predicament of those suffering from (mystical) afflictions, and 'paralyses' avenging evil forces and witches. The Born-Again who feels attacked by witches, trying to abduct people for nocturnal orgies where human flesh is eaten, may counteract and 'paralyse' them through *malilime*. Born-Again preachers are convinced that *malilime* is superior to demonic powers of witchcraft and evil spirits, and feel empowered to destroy related harmful objects. Likewise, the predicaments of modern urban society, where it is hard to obtain education, find paid employment and pay for health services, and where social tensions readily spring up due to overcrowding in the townships, are also understood in terms of the demonic. Confronting such problems requires sessions of 'counselling' provided by Born-Again preachers whereby both preacher and 'client' are expected to begin speaking in tongues together.

In spatial terms, the network, formed from the countless weekly Born-Again meetings and the small organisations set up by co-operating preachers, is a secure and safe 'environment', protected by *malilime*. Here *malilime* is seen as creating a defensive 'wall' against outside evil forces. Contrary to the spatial dimensions of Zionist and other puritan movements, no encirclement as such exists in a materialised form: a closed community, a compound, or anything else of that nature. Rather, *malilime* is a distinctive identity marker, turning every 'true' Born-Again into a guardian of the spiritual, defensive 'environment', however many their urban social relations might be. A real breach of the 'wall' occurs only when the channel of inspirational power from the heavenly forces is neglected, denied, or exchanged for a different and/or rival line of power.

In temporal terms, the creation of the 'sealed-off' Born-Again subjective identity is marked by two discursive elements. First, the emphasis placed on the 'instant', the immediate (*-tsopano*) in religious experience permeates the entire ritual sphere. The immediate serves as a jumping-off point for further development and 'growth', without invocation of a subject's past, previous kinship ties and their related ancestral cosmological notions. Second, as noted above, there is the notion of rejection of a subject's perceived past, together with anything that smacks of the construction of social positions and authority harking back to that past.

Immediacy and Anti-Nostalgia: Rejecting Elders' Empowerment and Mnemonics

Born-Again preachers stress the importance of the experience of immediacy both in conversion and in healing. The subject, instantly 'saved' by becoming a Born-Again, undergoes an on-the-spot total transformation

in life, social, religious and moral attitudes, and the like. Contrary to some Pentecostal discourses and practices elsewhere in Africa (see Meyer below), conversion and healing practices in the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* movement do not require a full realisation and re-enactment of an individual's immediate past through such techniques as completing long questionnaires. There is no diagnosis, no probing into a person's life history, no examination of a past social environment. Unlike other religious groups – such as the established mission churches and some of the independent churches – in Malawi, Born-Agains demand no period of catechumenate and no period of training and initiation. In declaring one's past social life to be immoral, thereby rejecting a past life in all its aspects, a person can instantly become fully a Born-Again.

This immediacy is also emphasised in healing and protection. Deliverance from evil powers (*ku pulumutsa*) does not require a full examination of one's earlier experiences which may have contributed to affliction and misfortune in the present. Once inside the religious network, Born-Agains deal with every affliction and misfortune by instant healing, and do not rely on an evocation of the past in a personal narrative form. The therapeutic dialogues between healer/medium and patient that form the centrepieces of the healing practices under the traditional *nanga* system, its divination sessions, and the majority of the spirit-healing churches (see Schoffeleers 1989) are largely absent. The Zionist Churches in Blantyre, for instance, deliver their members and clients from evil powers only after they have been 'screened' by members who act as 'X-rays' capable of penetrating an afflicted person's soul and history in order to 'see' the main causes of affliction. Within the *Abadwa Mwatsopano's* healing practices, by contrast, there is only the instant experience of the healing powers of the Holy Spirit through the laying-on of hands by one of the preachers, no questions asked.

Likewise, in extending the closing of the porosity of the individual body from outside evil influences, the immediate living environment can also be instantly protected by calling on the 'blood of Christ'. Touching the walls of a house by any Born-Again who has entered the phase of speaking in tongues will ensure that the porosity of the place, allowing outside evil influences to penetrate, is transformed into an impervious shell. The history of the place and the evil forces that may have haunted it are of no interest. This directly challenges the lengthy preparations others, such as the *asing'anga* (medicine men), are required to make in order to seal off a house in the traditional way by means of *mankhwala* (medicine). All that is no longer needed, and is even the object of ridicule.

These notions of immediacy in the narrative construction of the Born-Again subject are crucial to the sociopolitical and sociocultural dimen-

sions of the rejection of pasts in a wider sense in Malawian society. Such rejection attacks those positions of (gerontocratic) authority which are believed to be based on secretive pasts, and those cultural traditions which are perceived to be formed through the esoteric. *Malilime*, and its consequent rigid moral order, entails a rejection of the way elders are generally believed to become 'ripened' (*kukhwima*, empowered) (van Dijk 1995). Having managed to build up a position of considerable influence in most sectors of daily life – in business, in one of the bigger mission churches, in kinship affairs in the home village and in politics – and hence being *kukhwima*, a person is liable to the suspicion that he has sought support from malicious, dark forces. Among the Born-Again, *kukhwima* therefore has the primary connotation of mastering the forces that reside in witchcraft and its related objects, and being able strategically to apply them to one's own ends. The Born-Again preachers, by contrast, stress that success in the daily world, freedom, and protection from affliction and misfortune can be attained only through *malilime*. Being *kukhwima* implies, almost by definition, impurity and involvement in practices not fit for public scrutiny.

As elders are accused of being *kukhwima*, the Born-Again project of empowerment through *malilime* thereby opposes gerontocratic authority head-on. It emphasises immediacy instead of personal history or 'ripening'. In stark contrast to their position in all other religious bodies, such as the established mission churches, no allowance is made for the widely respected source of the elders' powers. They are excluded from any position of authority within the Born-Again groups, since they represent involvement in other lines of power such as witchcraft and politics – two pursuits which are comparable in the degree of evil involved. Elders do not preach, organise meetings or enter into the speaking of tongues. In public meetings the 'ways of the *agogo* [elders]', the 'elder' as a subjective role model for the new generation, are often made the object of ridicule. Born-Again messages usually set a hostile tone towards any inclination to copy elders' behaviour, at least in religious practice.

In a cultural sense, the exclusion of elders extends to a range of symbolic repertoires, styles, rituals and other phenomena which directly function in a perception of 'the ritual past'. The Born-Again ideology embodies the notion that such symbolic repertoires, dominated by elders, continue to constitute a 'past' to be repudiated and then forgotten. Long, binding threads are seen to have been woven by the older generation through their dealings with evil powers, which still affect the activities of relatives in the present. There is no room for a conversation with a perceived past that would involve recollection of a subject's involvement in traditional rituals of any kind, or his or her engagement in activities

considered sinful. Mnemonics in the form of objects, incisions on the body (the so-called *mpimi*), and ritual experiences that relate to the past are seen as being controlled to a large extent by the older generation, who are suspected of being able to put all sorts of bonding magical powers in place. Esoteric objects, such as certain amulets which extend their powers from the past into the present (the so-called *zitumwa*, singular *chitumwa*), are seen to have been produced by elders in the past, and to be capable of haunting certain people long after their initial owners have died. The iconoclasm pursued by the preachers includes the confiscation and destruction of such objects,³ and provides a wide variety of possible points of conflict and tension between Born-Agains and their relatives.

Creating a rupture of this nature leads to an outright rejection of central elements in Malawian cultural traditions which, by implication, directly relates the personal narrative of denouncing one's past to the level of the sociopolitical. The Born-Again project of what I would call *cultural de-mnemonisation* entails a full rejection of any experiences, primarily in the context of initiation or dealings with the traditional leaders and healers (*asing'anga*), which may lead an individual into the realm of the older generation. Secrets that relate to the relatively 'hidden' process of initiation (*chinamwuhali*) are therefore readily and mockingly disclosed, while the *Nyau* secret society, to which initiated men in the Central and Southern Regions of Malawi belong, is branded as devilish (on Banda's political use of *Nyau*, and the anxiety it aroused in local communities, see Kaspin 1993; Englund 1996). Funeral ceremonies are regularly targeted by Born-Again preachers, who fulminate against ancestral veneration, the pouring of libations and the use of alcoholic drinks – thereby further contesting the power of the older generation.

The emphasis on immediacy, realised through severing the threads with cultural tradition, is enhanced by a strong future-oriented impetus in the religious ideology of the group. Here the Born-Again preachers venture into a new territory by rerouting the overriding temporal orientation of new converts by a variety of means. The ideology of discontinuity with the past, counterbalanced by a prognostic orientation, distinguishes the entire Born-Again movement from other urban religious movements. The end-state of society, as conceived by the preachers, is a situation where the real source of power and authority lies beyond society's own perimeters, and hence beyond the clutches of tradition and its gerontocracy.

Forgetting for the Future, Strangerhood and Boundary-Crossing

This rerouting of temporal orientation, accomplished at the subjective and at the social levels, anticipates in eschatological terms the imminent

return of Jesus Christ, leading to the final Day of Judgement. In a number of Born-Again discursive practices, anticipating the moral reordering of society, the passionate allegory with the figure of the apostle Paul prevails (there is no allegory with Jesus Christ's life and suffering, as Werbner rightly hypothesises [Werbner 1997]). The Pauline narrative of the immediacy of conversion is combined with the creation of strangerhood, of externality with regard to the convert's position in life, in the family, in the city. Assuming an 'outsider' identity by becoming a stranger to one's 'home village', to one's immediate relatives, friends and peers, is seen to enhance the 'outpouring' of the Holy Spirit, while the reverse is also held to be true. The power of the Holy Spirit is perceived to reside outside 'society', where it remains unaffected by the powers of the elders. Externality is the prerequisite for the creation of a religious utopia, purified of all sorts of contaminating influences, which can be reached by establishing a line of contact with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Like the Pauline experiences of travel, to which many Born-Again messages refer, the crossing of boundaries is considered blissful for the convert. The individual, by becoming a Born-Again, is perceived to be part of a newly imagined global community of people on the move – the crossing of geographical and social boundaries enhances one's purity and religious status.

In geographical terms, Born-Agains are supposed to be itinerant, to be actively engaged in spreading their message from the urban into the rural areas, and even to insert themselves into global arenas (a number of the young Born-Again preachers I studied managed to proclaim their message in places like Lagos and the central railway station of Amsterdam). In so-called 'crusades' the Born-Again message is promoted from the urban into the most remote areas of Malawi. Widely spreading the message is often seen by the Born-Agains as a daring but highly gratifying operation (see van Dijk 1995).

Similarly, the young preachers' role models and authority styles, like their end-goal of a wholly purified Malawian society, are all based on the things they envisage as coming to Malawi in the presence of increasingly globalised contacts. Key role models for the young preachers are the world-famous Pentecostal or revival preachers, such as Billy Graham, Jimmy Swaggart and Reinhard Bonnke. Their influence comes mainly from their modes of operation, their dress and style, their effective ways of getting their groups organised, the identity they assume, and the success and prosperity they seem to represent. The influx of this type of Anglo-American Pentecostalism (Reinhard Bonnke visited Malawi in 1986, bringing with him truckloads of equipment for his gigantic revival meetings) provided the preachers with an extraneous source for new religious ideas,

modes of organisation, dress, style and general identity (on the spread of Pentecostalism in the Southern African region, see Gifford 1987, 1991, 1993). These were – and still are – the heralds of a society where gerontocratic control, manifest in all manner of ‘daily’ and ‘nocturnal’ manipulations, is no longer associated with the level of success, prestige and socioeconomic standing one can attain by relying on inspirational power.

In social terms, the crossing of boundaries relates to what Born-Agains regard as a blissful aggressiveness, which, in most cases, even leads to an insulting parody of other forms of inspiration and power. For Born-Agains, there is a strong impetus to mock and scorn key elements of the established symbolic repertoire and, with it, the guarantors of ritual practice and power: the elders, the local traditional healers (*asing'anga*) and the local traditional authorities. On many occasions, this process of demnemonisation has provoked hilarity, when preachers showed themselves virtuosos at mimicking such local authorities and their ritual behaviour. Transgressing the boundaries of social respect usually carries with it an element of corporal aggressiveness in speech and bodily posture (one of the Born-Again groups in Blantyre was tellingly called the Aggressive Christianity Mission Training Corps). This ‘project’ of estrangement from and moral reordering of society is assertive on the personal and social level, in the sense that every Born-Again is expected to share vicariously in the task of preaching in increasingly wider social circles. The process of demnemonisation can hence be understood in part as a flagrant protest against gerontocratic authority. The Born-Again form of protest in an urban setting has not been fuelled by a mnemonic scheme, and can certainly not be studied from within a mode of nostalgic cultural analysis (for the contrast under apartheid, see Comaroff 1985 on the re-enactment of ritual and emotional schemes in new Zionist urban religious movements).

All this forms the ground layer upon which the subtle rerouting of temporal orientation takes place. Crucially important here is the notion of *ku-ombeza*. *Ku-ombeza* is the exploration of the root causes of personal and social evil and misfortune, and it is redirected into a profound interest in imported things. These are seen as coming to the imagined global community of Born-Agains, of which the Malawians have become part. Instead of pursuing a diagnostic line of thinking which evokes the past, reinstates those root causes of evil and would make individuals very much aware of their past experiences, the Born-Agains, rather, question people on their awareness of their immediate future, their prospects for an improved moral standing and location in a morally reordered society. Particularly at so-called ‘nights of prayer’, the meetings were geared in religious ecstasy towards the almost literal expectation of the new dawn

(*kwacha*), and seen as safe havens in which a new puritan order is already in effect. Unaffected by the powers of the night, such sessions promoted the sense of an imminent, ideal end-state of society by creating a very specific sense of time and temporality. By presenting an almost inverted reality of the social – living and praying at night, and speaking in tongues instead of ordinary speech – the imposed power of the past and of ‘society’ at such occasions was converted into an imagined reality of a future ideal community. Prognosticism was combined with anti-nostalgia, and its surreptitious message for the postcolonial project of Banda could hardly be misread by those involved. In the next section I follow the meaning of the ‘non-nostalgic’ religious discourse and practice of Born-Againism, and show its location in postcolonial Malawi. On that basis, I advance the cultural analysis of the nostalgic and the utopian by theoretically conceptualising the ‘non-nostalgic’.

Postcolonial Power, State Cultural Nostalgia and the Nkhoswe

In view of the rupture that Born-Againism presents in the subjective sense of cultural continuity, the question is: how did this affect the individual lives of believers in the context of postcolonial Malawian society under Banda?⁴ The project of cultural discontinuity so unambiguously preached by the Born-Again leaders led to specific constructions of subjective identity, but it clashed with Banda’s political project of reinstating chosen cultural practices as a framework for national identity formation (further empirical evidence is given in van Dijk and Pels 1996). Within the limits of this chapter, I briefly discuss the significance of this clash between the fundamentalists’ deliberate cultural amnesia on the one hand and the political machinery’s project of recalling and selectively constituting cultural practices in the national, public sphere on the other. I focus on one particular case which demonstrates how antithetical the Born-Agains’ project of rupture was to the national project of cultural nostalgia.

In March 1989, a car drove up to the small house of Dennis Tembo, a twenty-year-old Born-Again leader living in the Machinjiri District of Blantyre and an active preacher from the Living Waters Church. The car belonged to the security staff of the President’s State House in Zomba, to which the driver summoned Dennis. Overwhelmed by surprise and fear, and embarrassed by his rather shabby appearance, Dennis went along, to be received by the head of security. To his amazement, instead of being treated harshly, he was offered a dinner, more lavish than he had ever seen, and was then ushered into a bedroom with a bed softer than any he had ever slept in. His bewilderment grew further when he later overheard men in three-piece suits discussing whether this boy was the

one who was to marry a certain girl. The same men, whom Dennis had never met before, could also be heard discussing who would serve as the *nekhoswe* (marriage surety) for this arranged marriage, and whether *Nekhoswe* Number One would agree to it.

It gradually dawned on Dennis that he had been picked by a member of the State House security staff to marry his daughter. Although she had attended one of the big revival meetings of the Living Waters Church in Blantyre, Dennis hardly knew the girl and, what was worse, his opinion about the marriage to be arranged seemed not to matter, nor was he asked to consult his *ankhoswe* [the male guardians of the matrikin]. Dennis was sent home again, and in the weeks that followed he received many luxurious gifts from the Zomba State House.

Still shaken by the experience, he went to the leader of his Born-Again church, the preacher Stanley Ndovi, to discuss the issue and to ask him '*mundichutere nekhoswe*', or 'to do me *nekhoswe*'. In other words, he asked the preacher-leader to act as a marriage surety for him. But the leader audaciously told Dennis to refuse the arrangement, and that no marriage should take place. Dennis then returned nearly all the gifts he had received and temporarily moved away from the area where he lived, and which he used to target in his preaching activities.

Insignificant as this episode may appear at first, it reveals much about how the Born-Agains dealt with the postcolonial cultural politics of the Banda regime at that point in time. The regime's politics had specific and far-reaching relevance for the whole younger generation in Malawi, and as such they also form the context in which the activities of the young preachers must be analysed. As others have shown at great length and with force of detail, Banda's politics can be analysed to a great extent along the lines of the invention-of-tradition approach (Vail and White 1989; Kaspin 1993). Huge ceremonies and festivities, such as those of Kamuzu and Independence Day, were turned by Banda into displays of a supposed cultural past and heritage. Secret dances of the Chewa *Nyanu* secret societies were performed openly at such occasions for the masses who had joined such celebrations at the Kamuzu Stadium or the Sanjika Palace (on *Nyanu* societies, see Schoffeleers 1976; Kaspin 1993). Banda drew elements from the cultural heritage of the Chewa in particular – Malawi's largest ethnic group to which he himself claimed to belong, as Vail and White have noted (1989; for local views on Banda's project, see Englund 1996: 108–15) – in order to create rituals of nationhood for the ethnically diverse postcolonial Malawi. From independence in 1964 onwards, Banda made continuous references to Chewa cultural values and traditions, and took the Chewa models of authority as the ideal for the new political culture (Vail and White 1989: 182).

The point here is that this cultural policy came to be specifically important for the position of the younger generation in the postcolonial

society (see also Chirwa 1994). Not only was Chichewa, the language of the Chewa, made the national tongue alongside English, to be taught in every primary and secondary school in the country, but young people were assigned a position in society that reflected the structurally submissive place of youth in the perceived precolonial Chewa political culture.

In the precolonial and colonial situation, the rigidity with which a system called *chikamwini* was applied varied according to the fortunes and intentions of the Chewa gerontocracy. In the societies of the 'matri-linal belt' (Chewa, Mang'anja and Yao, covering three-quarters of Malawi) the submissive position of the young was – and in some parts still is – a dominant feature. The rule of older men and women is hegemonic, in the sense of an undisputed, taken-for-granted reality, and legitimated by their control of magical forces 'of the night' or 'of the earth' (*za kunthaka*) and their relationship with the ancestors, the 'living dead'. In the system of *chikamwini*, every young man is obliged to provide labour service upon and after marriage by cultivating a garden belonging to his wife's matrikin, the group of married women living together known as *mbumba*. The young man's position in the wife's village remained weak, and was subject to continuous exploitation from three potential sources: the male guardians of the matrikin, the *ankhose* (sing. *nekhoswe*); the mother's brother (*malume*); and the mother-in-law (Phiri 1983: 260; Mandala 1990: 30). The inferior position assumed by all the young, incoming men in village society gave them the image of being no more than a 'workhorse' (Phiri 1983: 260) or a 'D-7 tractor' (Mandala 1990: 31). Youths were equated with certain elite goods and objects of exchange between villages, and were viewed as alienated workers and mere assets in agricultural production. If a young man displeased the *nekhoswe*, the *malume* or the mother-in-law, he could be returned to his natal village with nothing but a blanket, regardless of the amount of work he had done (Mandala 1990: 31–2).⁵

As the young increasingly found their way into mission schools, urban wage employment and labour migration to Southern Africa's industrial and mining areas in the years prior to World War II, a real struggle for control over the youth occurred. The village societies, the local chiefs and the *ankhoswe* once again reacted by sharpening the ritual obligations a man had to meet before entering marriage, and the other obligations pertaining to life-crisis rituals surrounding such events as birth, death, healing and initiation.

Prior to and after the war, this deliberate re-enactment of the full traditional ritual repertoire led to a much-debated 'crackdown' by the mission churches, whereby missionaries and preachers took it upon themselves to disrupt 'heathen' rituals and 'rescue' the young from what was regarded as 'immoral behaviour' (Fields 1985: 43). The *Nyanu* secret

societies, a 'brotherhood' of men married into the villages and a force that formed the backbone of chiefly authority in matrilineal societies, came under heavy attack from antagonistic mission policies. In the meantime, the migration of young couples to urban and peri-urban settlements, particularly after the war, brought it home to the entire older generation that their struggle to retain hegemonic control of the youth was fast petering out (see also Mandala 1990). The newly developed sectors in the economy to which mission education was providing access effectively shattered the hegemony of the *chikamwini* system. The churches also managed to 'seclude' the young effectively within a range of mission-organised youth organisations which rivalled those forms of youth organisation that village society allowed for (see Schoffeleers 1973).

State-Backed Gerontocracy, Surveillance and Defiant Youth

From the inception of his rule, Banda called himself the '*Nkhoswe* Number One', and embarked on a social programme to bring the youth back under proper gerontocratic control (see Williams 1978; Lwanda 1993: 69). In his view, the younger generation had to be made into 'the nation's workhorse', 'the spearhead of progress' – a position that would not be much different structurally from what it had been in the Chewa *chikamwini* model. Two youth organisations on a nationwide scale were set up: the paramilitary Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) and the political wing of the sole governing party, the League of Malawi Youth (*Ayufi* in the vernacular). The MYP, clothed in khaki uniforms, were explicitly given the task of renewing agricultural practice in programmes emanating from MYP training bases. The *Ayufi*, in red shirts and green trousers or skirts, were given the task of assisting in the organisation of the public functions of the party and its local party chairmen.

Soon after 1964, Banda brought both youth organisations under his direct command, turning them into instruments of control and coercion with unprecedented liberties to act. In 1965 he announced the Malawi Young Pioneers Amendment Act, which placed this youth organisation, with a secret service wing, above the police, and gave it immunity from arrest. In all twenty-four districts of Malawi, MYP training camps were established from where innovations were to be introduced in adjacent rural areas. Their purpose was to see to it that, as in the age-old *chikamwini* system, the young would once again be supporting agricultural production. Every year thousands of secondary-school students and volunteers were recruited to the camps to be taught innovative agricultural skills as well as the basics of paramilitary training. Recruits to the standing MYP elite troops from the brief introductory training programmes received extensive

benefits, and after some time were returned to society as 'civilians' in jobs left vacant on a compulsory basis in trade, industry and government services.

Within a short span of time, Banda gained a hardened and, above all, loyal body of youth who had pledged an oath of allegiance to the 'father and founder' of the Malawi nation, *Nkhoswe* Number One. Just as Banda placed himself at the top of the traditional hierarchy of authority (ascending from local village headmen through group village headmen to traditional authority [chief]), so also did local party leaders place themselves above local village headmen and group village headmen. These local party chairmen had one instrument at their disposal which the local traditional authorities simply lacked in the further execution of their powers: the local branches of the MYP and the League of Malawi Youth. At the level of local society, both youth bodies succeeded in developing into deeply feared instruments of control and coercion. Party membership was compulsory, and the Youth Leaguers (*Ayufi*) in particular were frequently used to check on possession of party cards and on the compulsory attendance at party meetings. Entry into such public places as markets, hospitals and bus stations was permitted only after the showing of a party card to the *Ayufi* member blocking the entrance. Members of these organisations would mingle in civilian clothes with local sports groups, visitors to bars and restaurants, and gatherings at funerals to record any form of dissent or protest against the regime's heightening supervision and intolerance. The youth groups and their related secret bodies had become so effective that by the late 1980s Malawi had been transformed into one of the most highly supervised countries on the African continent, with state power represented in virtually every corner of society through an astoundingly intricate network of informants, training camps, teachers, roadblocks, checkpoints and party membership, which in its effectiveness, for a country still belonging to the ten poorest in the world, was beyond imagination.⁶

Other bodies, such as the mission churches, were no longer allowed to organise young people in independent youth organisations, and their opportunities to gain direct access to the younger generation in Malawi steadily diminished after independence and the 1965 Amendment Act. The mission youth organisations, such as the Scouts and the Brigades, were disbanded (Lamba 1985). The mission schools were put under the direct control of the government, which decided on the intake of pupils and the appointment of teachers. All other matters concerning youth and youth organisations were referred to the Ministry of Youth, and to the commanders in charge of the two official youth organisations: MYP and the Youth League. Christian student and workers' organisations were heavily monitored for the political content of their activities.

This pervasive state surveillance was, in brief, the situation in the early 1970s, when the young preachers began to appear on the streets proclaiming Born-Again fundamentalism and organising their adherents into small fellowships and ministries. In his capacity as *Nkhoswe* Number One, Banda reflected a model of gerontocratic authority which, even at a local level in the cities, was strongly endorsed by party officials and the political machinery. However, it would be a mistake to ignore attempts of postcolonial innovation, of which Born-Again Pentecostalism is a part, and to allow Banda's manipulation of 'tradition' to explain the apparent submission of Malawians to the *nkhoswe* model of authority (for a critical discussion of postcolonial innovation in the rural areas, see Englund 1996). Within the urban Born-Again groups, the gerontocratic *nkhoswe* model of authority was the subject of bitter scorn.

As the case of Dennis shows, when a marriage was to be imposed, he did not turn to the *ankhoswe* in his family, whom he should have contacted. Instead he had this position of authority filled by his religious leader, who promptly reacted in a way that reflects *kutsirika*: the 'sealing off' of the individual from further involvement with an 'abhorrent' cultural practice. Both a cultural and a political rupture was created here at one and the same time by this Born-Again leader. He flouted the authority of Dennis's local family *ankhoswe*, and in his refusal to accept the imposed marriage he showed contempt for the political practice of translating the *nkhoswe* model into the national power structure. Even though the marriage was to have been subject to the approval of *Nkhoswe* Number One, Stanley Ndovi defiantly turned it down.

Interpretation and Conclusion

The colonial and postcolonial projects of state power and mainline Christianity in Malawi fostered the idea of continuity in their pursuit of heritage and legitimacy (Kaunda 1995; for similar observations on the Zaïrean postcolony, see also Devisch 1996). Against that nostalgic underpinning during the Banda era, however, the urban movement of Born-Againism advanced a subtle anti-nostalgic critique. The mainstream projects were and still are inversely mirrored in the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* as a counter-movement: from social continuity to idiosyncratic discontinuity; from an emphasis on regulation and time control to free flow of charismatic inspiration couched in timeless revelation and ecstasy; from the gradual acquisition of skills, training and authority to instant, spontaneous 'infilling' with the almighty Spirit from whence the authority to speak originates; from religion of the Book to immediate inspiration from the Word; from teaching and advice from one's elders (*myambo*, sing. *mwambo*,

the advice and instruction given at marriage and initiation to come to *khalidwe* – that is fulfilment of one's responsible social role and personhood) to intrinsic moral control by the youth. As Devisch (1996) concludes for comparable religious movements in Kinshasa, postcolonial society is confronted by its mirror-image, resulting in the Malawian case in a profound sense of cultural and personal discontinuity. Contrary to the Zaïrean case, however, the Malawian postcolonial state which is mirrored by the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* was very different in terms of its control and power during the regime of President Banda. Although in both cases these urban religious groups are comparable as counter-movements, the difference nevertheless is that each mirrors an alternative condition: in Zaïre the collapse of the state – hence the nostalgia for a lost village moral order; in Malawi a totalising state on the march – hence the obviation of memory and the embracement of a non-contextual utopia.

The theoretical interest in this Malawian case springs from the fact that social memory and nostalgic modes have been contested, mainly by the offer of a future-oriented time-frame, on the sociopolitical as well as the personal level. On the sociopolitical level, compared with other religious groups found in Malawi's cities, the Born-Again preachers proved quite exceptional in the rupture they created with cultural practice and its political translation. The mission churches in particular often suffered rebukes for their 'permissive' or 'lukewarm' attitudes towards local cultural practice. These churches showed respect for the local forms of authority as bestowed on the local *ankhoswe*. However, the fact that 'religion', as the preachers would pejoratively call it, lent itself as an element of the national project of identity formation under Banda certainly played a part in the Born-Again critique. While religious leaders were pledging their allegiance to Banda from time to time, turning up at national festivities to open the ceremonies with prayer, or participating in party meetings of the sole governing Malawi Congress Party, Born-Again leaders never did such things.⁷ While religious leaders were helping to create a national identity by highlighting Malawian 'national' culture and its heritage, the young Born-Again leaders had another 'agenda' entirely. If someone from within Born-Again groups was appointed, even involuntarily, to one of the many political organisations (for men, women, youth, or whatever), that person was perceived forthwith as an outcast: someone who, for access to political power, defiled the treasure of being born again.

The interpretation offered here is thus that in challenging both the postcolonial projects of state power and established mainline Christianity in Malawi, the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* did not develop a mode of syncretic nostalgia. Nostalgia, the re-creation of communities by evoking elements

of a perceived past, and the empowerment which may result from it, played no part in the development of the *Abadwa Mwatsopano*. Instead, the empowerment which the Born-Again movement provided for challenging the postcolonial and mainline Christian projects was derived from a model of anticipated moral reordering of society. True Born-Again believers are subjectively constructed as strangers to both their own society and their immediate social environment. In contradistinction to being 'born free' under the postcolonial predicament, the *Abadwa Mwatsopano* propound a discourse of being 'born again' under the aegis of a morally reordered society. The literal meaning of *abadwa mwatsopano* – being 'born in the now', 'being born in the immediate present' – already embodies a sense of estrangement from any participation in national projects of social memory.

On the personal level, this estrangement transforms the subject, from being locked within the bonds with one's family, its ancestral past and the forces that still run through such natal ties, to become a person free of such constraints (see Meyer, below). However, in critique of those studies that locate wholeness of identity, fully embedded in social relations, in premodern society and individuality and disembeddedness in the project of modernity (see critiques by Lambek 1995; Werbner 1996; Lambek and Anzte 1996), one could say that Pentecostalism is not caught in this duality. The analysis of Pentecostalism shows that it creates a texture of temporalities in which there is room for alternate modalities of personhood counterposing the project of a nation-state which attempted to construct identity as single, centred, bounded and located in a regular, directed, temporal trajectory. In the case of Dennis (reported above), the position of the Pentecostal leader as his *nekhoswe* certainly severed Dennis's ties with his family, promoted individuality and ran counter to the boundedness of identity which the *nekhoswe* model of state authority implied. When Dennis rejected such relations with his family and the state as belonging to a denounced past, and turned to the Pentecostal Church, however, a new form of embeddedness emerged. His leader became the new *nekhoswe*, uncontrolled by state and family, hence constituting new bonds and ties which were thus shaping his immediate future relations. In other words, while the cry 'make a complete break with your past', often heard in African Pentecostalism nowadays, may lead a person into individuality, the urge to establish a future-oriented moral reordering provokes a search for new bonds which signal a presence of new social relations and commitments that shape identity.

I have argued here that both the presence and the absence of nostalgia and utopia, of mnemonics and prognostics, need to be critically examined, bearing in mind Appadurai's (1981) adage that 'pasts' or 'histories'

cannot be created in boundless variety. Neither can prognostic ideologies be 'invented' in infinite diversity. The problems represent a challenge for critical theory. Anthropologists in particular have yet to develop the necessary conceptual tools to analyse how social memories relate to 'social futures' (on the anthropology of the future, see Wallman 1992). My present analysis contributes to this newly emerging field of inquiry through the examination of contested representations of time in urban religious movements in Malawi and elsewhere in Southern Africa.

Notes

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1. Bauman suggests that in projects of modernity such as missionisation, colonisation and postcolonial state formation, 'before' came to mean 'lower' and 'inferior', while the future was represented as 'superior'. A battleground thus emerged between the superior future and the inferior past whereby, in this arena, superiority was tested and proved in victory; inferiority in defeat (Bauman 1993: 226).

2. In this context Daneel argues: 'It would be a valid conclusion that the urban Zionist and Apostle Churches are in the first place extensions of the rural congregations and act as a spiritual harbour for those members who occasionally live in town.... Sermons deal with rural problems or with urban problems from a rural point of view' (Daneel 1974: 23, 24).

3. One of the best-known preachers of the group of thirty that I studied (van Dijk 1993b, 1995) in Blantyre was a young woman of twenty-four named Linley Mbeta, who claimed that she could see a hand coming down from heaven to point out to her the sinners among her audience. She became a national figure, known for her effective anti-witchcraft campaigns, following a rebirth she experienced in April 1985. Owing to her cleansing powers and her adamant calls for confession and conversion, her preaching sessions are much in demand nationwide. In many places her conduct has provoked resentment among older people, because – as is common in the entire movement – she openly holds this generation responsible for the existence and salience of witchcraft in society. At one of her sessions she rebuked them:

Where do you think you will go to, you fools, with those charms [*zitungwa*] that were left you by your grandparents? You, *you* are learners today. It takes you hours to bewitch somebody, but you still cling to your witchcraft [*ufiti*], just because your forefathers handed the charms down to you.... You fools, if these charms were things that could lead someone into the Heavenly Kingdom, I doubt if your grandparents could have left them to you, but because they lead somebody to hell, that's why they handed them over before they died. Only to increase the number of people accompanying them on their way to hell!

4. In 1994 democratic elections took place which meant the end of the Banda era. The oppositional United Democratic Front obtained a majority in the

restructured parliament and its leader, Bakili Muluzi, was elected as the new president.

5. The position of the young in political culture – particularly that of young men – in the Northern patrilineal societies such as the Tumbuka was slightly different. Although young men were certainly controlled by gerontocratic power relations through which their labour power was exploited, the fact that they were part of the same fraternal interest society meant that their prospects of eventually achieving an autonomous position were better.

6. Here I do not mean to equate supervision with violence. Other regimes in Africa have been notoriously violent, but they lacked the level of supervision over the entire society that was so evident in Malawi. Médard has written, mockingly: 'Kamuzu Banda a réussi à imposer à son pays le plus haut degré de discipline en Afrique: les voitures s'arrêtent même au feu rouge. Cette discipline, qui fait l'admiration des experts en tout genre, rend l'atmosphère singulièrement triste, étouffante et oppressante. [Kamuzu Banda has succeeded in imposing on his country the most rigid discipline in Africa; cars even stop for a red light. This discipline, which excites the admiration of all the experts, makes the atmosphere remarkably melancholy, stifling and oppressive.] (Médard 1991: 99)

7. An important exception here is the young preacher Linley Mbeta, who acted for some time as President Banda's personal healer (see Van Dijk 1993b).

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