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Book Debate

Derek R. Peterson

Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935–1972.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xx + 344 pp. 344. Maps, Bibliography.

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The View of Mark A. Noll

Derek Peterson's meticulously researched account of intra-African cultural struggle moves its focal point away from what the best historians of modern African Christianity have usually featured in their books. Exemplary works by the likes of Adrian Hastings, Elizabeth Isichei, Ogbu Kalu, Lamin Sanneh, and Andrew Walls have greatly assisted outsiders like myself who, without serious background in African studies, still desire resources for classroom purposes and in order to make comparisons with other parts of the world. Such works have proven especially useful by moving beyond once-conventional accounts that described modern African history as a simple tale of grasping imperialists and heroic anti-colonialists (or in some religious communities, as an equally simple tale of sacrificial missionaries bringing light to the dark continent). In response, these scholars have stressed the ways in which new Christian communities actively appropriated historical African cosmologies, social patterns, and cultural instincts. Such communities were not so much bursting old wineskins with new wine as they were grafting new religious stock onto a still-vigorous ancestral tree.

Peterson's carefully argued book does not so much overthrow this general narrative as argue again for significant ruptures in the course of modern African history. For him, it has been crucial that the multi-faceted East African Revival from its earliest manifestations in the 1930s created "dissenters on the field of etiquette, manners, and social convention" (p. 5). In his rendering, conversion for these dissenters entailed "a new form of political and cultural criticism" (p. 6) that did mean significant breaks with other Africans, first with the ethnic patriots who struggled to maintain or regain local cultural authority against outside forces, and then with the post-colonial cosmopolitans who tried to unite disparate tribes into modern African nations. Through painstaking

ing research into the archives of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as from 170 interviews with individuals who experienced first- or second-hand the disruptions of the century's middle decades, Peterson builds a story that features intra-African competition. Through his own use of Swahili and Gikuyu, as well as through translated evidence from many other languages, he has been able to push past stylized narratives of post-colonial resistance, revivalist hagiography, and ethnic nostalgia in order to depict a three-cornered struggle among ethnic patriots, nation builders, and revivalists. Conversion, which led to critique of the tribe but also resistance against mere conformity to the post-colonial nation, was "a subversive work" (293). The converts' deployment of "the novel infrastructure of communication – the post office, the newspaper, and the bicycle" (293) – made them effective cosmopolitans, but not necessarily nationalists. Peterson is particularly convincing in showing how the revivalists complicated African responses to the Second World War, to the creation of urban centers that removed young people and women from the control of tribal elders, and to negotiations between post-colonial centers and peripheries.

Of Peterson's many informative case studies, I was particularly taken with his narrative concerning the Rwenzuru kingdom that lies north of Lake Edward and northwest of Lake Victoria in far western Uganda (pp. 272–280). It experienced post-colonial political independence not as a blessing but as an occasion for guerilla warfare. The Rwenzuru felt particularly oppressed by the larger Toro kingdom under whose authority they were placed by the new Ugandan government of President Milton Obote. In 1962, leaders of Rwenzuru issued a declaration of independence; acts of violence against Toro kings and armed resistance to the Ugandan government followed. Then in early October 1970 appeared a charismatic prophet, Timosewo Bawalana, who made a dramatic public appeal for the violence to stop. This product of the revival inserted Scripture as an outside force to calm the local conflict. On October 3, he preached from Isaiah 1:10 ("Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!") On October 15 he wrote to the District Commissioner that the Rwenzuru soldiers had laid down their weapons unilaterally in a desire to follow teaching from the Book of Revelation, chapter 19 verses 11 to 16 with their apocalyptic depiction of "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Later that month, and after the prophet had crowned a new king in Rwenzuru, he turned to Isaiah 2:4–6 as his text to guide the now pacified kingdom ("They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.") As an indication of his revival heritage, the prophet made effective use of public confession as a means to establish this peace.

The end of this episode was, however, complicated. In early 1972, resurgent nationalists drove Timosewo Bawalana out of Rwenzuru, but negotiations with agents from Kampala eventually allowed the Rwenzuru kingdom to establish a peaceful, quasi-independent state under Ugandan government oversight. The revivalist's Bible that the prophet Bawalana had brought directly into political conflict faded from view. Although its striking immediate influence may actually have contributed to the region's eventual peace, it was functioning in a conflicted political landscape where ethnic nationalist Rwenzuru contested other ethnic nationalists as well as the Ugandan post-colonial nation builders.

African scholars must adjudicate questions about Peterson's use of sources, revision of standard historical interpretations, and other issues requiring learned expertise. My only questions as an outsider concern the book's title and the author's final assessment. While the "dissent" occasioned by revivalists is obvious, the book struck me more as an account of "competition" where revivalists operated as an untethered force between the divergent purposes of tribal groups like the Toro and the Rwenzuru versus post-colonial nation-builders. I would also have appreciated a straightforward evaluation of the long-term social and political effects of the revival. Peterson documents clearly the difficulties that the revivalists created for tribal elders and for government officials in Kampala, Nairobi, and Dar es Salaam. It appears as if he felt those difficulties were on the whole productive, but I was not always sure.

In the end, the book was unambiguously helpful for a reader with non-specialist interests. For making simplistic treatment of colonial and post-colonial East African Christianity impossible, the gain is entirely positive. Above all, the book delivers the revival from mythmakers and hagiographers while inserting it into the social, political, ethnic, linguistic, and religious history of the region, where it belongs.

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The View of Justin Willis

Few authors have the confidence to write histories which span all three East African countries, and fewer still combine that geographical breadth with a close sense of the local, and an awareness of the importance of quotidian debates over behaviour and morality. Derek Peterson has managed this, and in doing so produced a book which is exemplary both in its clarity and in the

consistency with which it discusses regional themes and commonalities. This is a remarkable achievement, and anyone with an interest in the nature of social and intellectual change in mid-twentieth-century East Africa will enjoy and learn from this book. In a study which spans a period from the 1920s to the early 1970s, Peterson identifies a profound and extended tension between the avowedly conservative (if often culturally inventive) moralizing projects of ethnic entrepreneurs – almost all of them men – and the physical and spiritual journeys of pilgrim women and men who sought to make new lives, and moralities, through the dramatic performances of the Christian ‘revival’. The urge to publicly confess sin, and to criticize the sin of others, led these pilgrims to repeatedly transgress the bounds of proper behaviour which were so valued by the ethnic entrepreneurs – the ‘patriots’, as Peterson calls them (incidentally, I wonder about the different cultural resonances of that term for North American and British speakers of English: think Thomas Jefferson versus Samuel Johnson). Arguing that it has been the patriots who were most vocal and numerous, and who have continued to dominate the region in the present, Peterson casts the pilgrims as dissenters, who provide a model for questioning orthodoxies. In developing and illustrating this argument, Peterson has drawn on a wide range of documentary material, as well as interviews; and it is worth noting in passing that, in the course of his research in Uganda, Peterson initiated work on a series of archives to preserve, catalogue and make them available for future research.

Peterson argues that the patriots’ multiple moral projects all shared a single driving force: men’s anxiety over the control of women’s sexuality. Colonial rule, and the economic changes associated with it, created new imperatives and opportunities for men and women. Labour migration, urban employment, the informal economy, and cash cropping all offered ways to challenge established orders, and reasons to try and uphold them. While ethnic patriots reworked established moralities of discretion and concealment to meet these new circumstances and maintain community, Peterson’s ‘pilgrims’ sought to make a new moral world through confessing sin, and renouncing their relationships with kin. This identification of the importance of these deeply domestic concerns is not in itself novel; two generations of anthropological and historical writing have explored this theme. But the strength of this work is the clarity with which Peterson elucidates the work of the patriots as a regional phenomenon with particular local reflexes, and gives vivid life to their concerns through contrast with the dramatic alternative vision of the pilgrims. He ties the history of Mau Mau detainees in Kenya in with multiple other stories: Haya men’s concern over female prostitution, Ganda debates over landed property and decorum, Luo migrants’ anxieties over what their rural wives might be

doing. In each case, while patriots worked to contain dangerous change within a conventional restraining code of decorous behaviour, pilgrims preferred a transparent public 'accounting' (here, as in previous work, Peterson is deft in his elaboration of metaphor).

The clarity of the argument is also, of course, a potential problem. Identifying this pattern of tension risks reducing the 'pilgrims' to the status of slightly shadowy negative images – whatever the patriots are, the pilgrims are not. Several of the chapters follow a very similar menu, to the extent that they begin to feel a little formulaic: a discussion of local ideas of moral behaviour, lightly sprinkled with some suggestive vernacular terms; a side-dish of economic and political changes which challenge those ideas – then, the patriots are brought on, closely followed by the pilgrims. The chapter on Toro and Rwenzururu, in western Uganda complicates this narrative, however, revealing possibilities which perhaps call into question the apparent neatness of the other case studies. The religious movement which challenged the patriots here was not concerned with personal sin and confession, but with a millenarian quest for reconciliation. And the princess of Toro who was both patriot and pilgrim reminds us that while the story told here generally sets the two as distinct groups, some people were both of these things at different times (and sometimes, perhaps, at the same time). While Peterson seems to see this as a distinctive feature of western Uganda, one suspects that it may have been more common. People sprawl untidily across categories in other ways, too. Milton Obote appears here as a modern nation-builder – a role antithetical, in Peterson's eyes, to that of the ethnic patriots. And yes, of course, Obote did come in to very violent conflict with the cultural entrepreneurs of Buganda, and pursued a fiercely nation-building programme in the later 1960s. But like other nationalist politicians of the time (and now) Obote was not always hostile to the moral projects of the ethnic patriots. Setting the history of political culture up as a contest between patriots in one corner and pilgrims in the other, with the nation-builders off to one side, is vivid and effective – but of course, it overstates the rigidity of the categories.

And the pilgrims were evidently moralists, too. The implied contrast between uptight patriots and libertine pilgrims may be overdrawn, and I was left wanting to know more about the pilgrims – both what they did in these moments of revival and their subsequent journeys. As Peterson notes, the pilgrims were cosmopolitan in their outlook, but by no means liberal. There were scandalous rumours of the sexual misconduct of the revivalists, but it is not clear whether Peterson thinks that these were anything more than hostile gossip. He wisely eschews speculation as to the veracity of some of the 'testimony' of confessing revivalists, which was sometimes improbably lurid and some-

times comically trivial (some seem to have really had a lot of sex, others to have accumulated surprising numbers of sewing needles). But his account does suggest that, while the incontinent urge to confess which characterized revival may have embarrassed some patriots, and while it could be used to criticize the powerful and expose their faults, it could in itself be a kind of disciplinary tool. This was a way of asserting ideas about propriety rather than simply challenging these, and it offered its own route to the moral high ground. The different languages of morality – whether traditional, nation-building, or dramatically spiritual – were each in their own way disciplinary. All revolved around not dissimilar questions, however apparently opposed their forms of expression – and perhaps their answers – might seem.

Peterson avoids the temptation to identify genealogies of religious practice; he is not concerned to locate the roots of revivalism in pre-Christian practice, and he does not argue that modern Pentecostalism is a descendant of revival. His conclusion emphasises again that this is a study of society, not of particular ecstatic phenomena, and that revivalists were, above all, dissenters. But that leaves open a question: what does this story tell us about the fate, and the effectiveness, of those who dissent? What happened to the pilgrims when the revival faltered? Did they somehow refashion the ties to kin which they had severed in such dramatic fashion? One presumes that in many cases they did – but then what, if anything, came of the moral critique which their outrageous confessions and accusations had offered? The implication seems to be that, in the world made by the ethnic patriots, the very existence of a history of dissent is important – but that history seems a little incomplete, for it is not entirely clear where the pilgrims' journeys ended.

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The View of John Peel

In historical studies there is usually a trade-off between local detail and geographical range, such that the wider the range the less the detail, while local studies go light on the wider picture. Peterson refuses this trade-off, for in this remarkable book he gives us a study of two movements of wide regional significance, spread across three countries, though case studies of seven local societies. The first is the East African Revival, an evangelical holiness movement that originated in the Anglican mission in northern Rwanda in 1933, and

then spread eastwards into Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. The other is a series of locally specific movements sharing a number of key features, which Peterson relates to the widespread crisis in conjugal relations which by the 1940s had arisen from patterns of urbanisation and labour migration throughout the region. These ethnic “patriots” founded tribal associations, strongly patriarchal in character, which strove to stop prostitution by their womenfolk since they felt it advertised the inability of male migrants to control their households, and so put the “tribe” in a shameful light in urban arenas of inter-ethnic comparison. They were also active in projects to unify and codify tribal custom and in writing local histories with highly political agendas. In contrast to the local rootedness of the patriots, converts to the Revival saw themselves as “pilgrims” – Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* was a seminal text for them – mobile cosmopolitans who transcended all ethnic particularity in a community of the saved who believed they were living in the last days.

Both movements proposed challenging moral agendas, particularly perhaps the Revival, whose converts were prone to confess their sins publicly in embarrassing and socially disruptive detail. The incontinence of convert speech stood in sharp contrast with the restraint and decorum that in most places were the traditional norms, and that the patriots wanted to uphold. Converts were widely regarded as troublemakers, insolent to elders and chiefs, no respecters of persons, socially irresponsible, and were often aligned with other categories of the disapproved, such as independent women, prostitutes or even witches. But while the pilgrim/patriot distinction was recurrent and pervasive, its precise social configuration varied from area to area. As the narrative takes the reader round a wide arc of societies – from Kigezi (sw Uganda) to the core region of Buganda and to tiny Bugufi (nw Tanzania), then to the Luo (w Kenya), Bukoba (nw Tanzania again), the Kikuyu in Central Kenya and then back to Toro (w Uganda) – some interesting specificities emerge. One such was the link between the Revival, entrepreneurialism and the emergence of a market in land in Bugufi, which Peterson convincingly relates to new practices of moral subjectivation (“taking stock”, “holding to account”) which the Revival encouraged. On the other hand, it remains puzzling as to how and why, except in terms of pure contingency, a movement portrayed as essentially subversive could in Toro be aligned with the local establishment against Konzo separatism.

The pilgrim/patriot contrast is the chain on which the case-studies are hung, and the latter are undoubtedly the jewels of the book. What enables them to be so is the diversity and richness of the documentary materials (backed up by very extensive interviews) which Peterson draws upon; and there is no doubt that he has done much to enlarge the potential of African micro-history. The book’s weakness is that it generates little sense of momentum, for it is a series

of variations on a theme, rather than a symphony. Chronology, the perennial stand-by of historiography, cannot supply one since, as the case-studies all cover the mid-late colonial period, there is no overall time-flow, since the clock, so to speak, has to be wound back for each chapter. This hardly matters for the patriot side of the story, since these movements, while sharing some similar features, were each specific to their own locality.

But the Revival *did* have an overall, unifying trajectory: it spread from a single starting point, its leading figures took it from one place to another, it held region-wide conventions etc. Peterson's narrative starts off with the Revival, which appears to varying degrees in all the later chapters, but always in relation to a local situation. The result is that the general or overall questions posed by the Revival's remarkable translocal appeal go largely unanswered. What was it that drove those extraordinary scenes of confession and repentance, so much at variance with local cultural dictates? What sustained the Revival's impetus over more than three decades? How has it been affected by the aging of its initially youthful activists? Why, despite much tension with the mainline churches (especially Anglican), did the Revival not generate African independent churches (AICs)? (The only significant AIC to appear, JoHera among the Luo, was apparently a patriot-type body which reacted against Revival influence within the Anglican Church.) As it spread, why did it apparently not adopt those this-worldly concerns – for healing, miracles etc. – as occurred with so many other African religious movements that also began with the call, made urgent by a sense of Christ's impending return, for holiness and moral renewal?

In posing these questions, I am of course implying a contrastive comparison with movements in Western Africa such as Harrism, Faith Tabernacle morphing into Aladura, Kimbanguism and others. Though Peterson makes little use of empirical comparison, this does seem related to the contrast he draws in his Introduction between his own approach, which underscores the dissident and ruptural quality of African conversion, and an emphasis on continuity which he portrays as the conventional wisdom, embracing figures as otherwise so different as Robin Horton and John Mbiti. However we may view the intellectual history of this, the terms of debate here are strikingly those of the current debate among students of Pentecostalism or in the anthropology of Christianity at large, about the balance to be struck between rupture and continuity in the assessment of religious change. Pentecostalism, so-called, comes twice into Peterson's narrative, but seems rather ambiguously positioned. The first time was at Bugufi in 1940, where Revival itself was viewed as a veritable "African Pentecost", showing all the archetypal ecstatic signs of the Spirit. The second comes in the Conclusion, which briefly touches on contemporary Pentecostalism, which Revivalists view with some reserve. For although Pentecostals call

themselves *Balokole* (“the Saved”), as the Revival converts did, and proclaim their own break from the past, they are seen as less concerned with repentance or “walking in the light” than with miracles. In other words, Pentecostalism in East Africa today does not seem much different from what occurs elsewhere across the continent. It is the Revival which stands out as special and, while it still awaits the full-scale treatment that it merits, we owe a great deal to Derek Peterson for doing so much to prepare the way for it.

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Response from Derek R. Peterson

I am tremendously pleased to have my book carefully read and cogently criticized by three scholars whose work I greatly respect.

The three readers have all asked the same question of me. Does my book do justice to the Revival as a movement, with a trajectory and a momentum of its own? The absence of an overarching narrative concerning the Revival’s maturation and development is, as Prof. Peel points out, occasioned by the book’s organization. This is a book about a mid-twentieth century crisis of manners and conduct, a crisis that, in turn, spurred innovation in the political architecture of East Africans’ lives. It was a crisis that helped to produce what I (borrowing from John Lonsdale) call “ethnic patriotism,” that is, a theory of political community that defined a bounded, culturally unified space as the grounding for a people’s culture. That is why the book says relatively little about the temporal arc of the Revival, why it is organized on the scale of micro-history, why the clock is wound back for every chapter. I wanted to take readers into the homelands-of-the-mind that patriots conjured up as they attenuated people’s movements and convened new communities.

But – having been pressed by my distinguished reviewers – I must also admit that I am not convinced that the Revival ever was a movement. Its English-speaking architects were sure that it was: Joe Church, William Nagenda and their colleagues were avid writers of circular letters, compulsive authors of newsletters, committed correspondents, and careful archivists. It was their organizational energy that constituted the Revival as a phenomenon in ecclesiastical life and, latterly, as a subject of scholarly attention. But the view from outside the archive is less coherent. Without Joe Church at one’s elbow it is difficult to draw the line between the Revival and other innovations in Christianity.

In the book I begin my discussion of the Revival in western Kenya in September 1938, when Ugandan evangelists first preached in the region (p. 141). That was Joe Church's timetable: after the convention he wrote a circular letter hymning the victories won over the course of the week. In fact I might have begun that chapter in October 1933, when an ex-carpenter named Lawi Obonyo told Anglican missionaries that he could raise the dead, heal the sick, and cause the dumb to speak. When missionary Walter Owen visited Lawi's headquarters, he found dozens of people – most of them women and girls – gathered around two prostrate boys. Lawi told Owen that the boys were dead, and that he would raise them to life. Owen took the boys' pulse, counting the beats aloud for the benefit of the gathering, then dashed their faces with water. Later that week he gave church teachers a lecture about hysteria, hypnotism and St. Vitus' Dance.¹ Missionaries were determined to show Lawi to be a charlatan. But by December Lawi had made a convert of an Anglican priest, Alufayo Odongo, and was preaching from Odongo's pulpit in Musanda. His followers commandeered other people's cattle for their own nourishment and would share nothing with their neighbors. In January 1934 local landowners, offended by Lawi's preaching and worried over the large number of outsiders gathering around him, attacked his church. Rev. Odongo was speared and incinerated in the sanctuary, Lawi was killed in his home.² Their deaths did not bring the story to an end. In 1938 British officials reported that there were dozens of Pentecostal churches that followed Lawi's lead. Husbands complained that their wives remained at church for months at a time. Members refused to eat with or speak to their relatives.³

It was at this time that the Revival began in this part of Kenya. Like Lawi's followers, they organized their life stories around a stage-managed passage from death to new life. Like Lawi's followers, they offended against the commonplace rules of sociable conduct; like Lawi's followers, they regarded kin relationships as the location where Christian devotion could be tested and proven (pp. 141–151). These were the ways in which revivalists charted their path away from the comfortable confinements of home toward the heavenly city. Their religious technologies were not received, whole, from their Ugandan brethren,

1 National Museum of Kenya, Leonard Beecher papers, file 2: W. Owen to Pitt Pitts, 25 October 1933.

2 Kenya National Archives DC/North Nyanza/10/1/1: D.C. Kakamega to P.C. Nyanza, 9 Feb. 1934.

3 Kenya National Archives DC/North Nyanza/10/1/1: D.C. North Kavirondo, "Rev. Alufayo Sect," 5 Nov. 1938. The onward course of the church founded by Lawi Obonyo is described in Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

and neither were they born from Joe Church's preaching. They were borrowed, unacknowledged, from religious innovators who preceded them.

Joe Church said nothing about Lawi Obonyo. He thought the Revival was ex nihilo, a radical break from what came before. To see the Revival as he did – an integrated, encompassing movement – one must work within the temporal embankments that revivalists made as they dated their conversions and channeled their life stories. One must adopt the vantage point of the organizer. It is insecure footing. The Revival never had a bureaucracy, a leadership, an accountant, or a doctrinal statement. Its architects struggled to give it definition, to demarcate outsiders from insiders, to define heresies. In the mid-1960s revivalists in Uganda were involved in a divisive argument over the definition of sin. A prominent convert named Yona Mondo began to preach that people who had once been converted now needed to be “re-awakened” in order to gain salvation. Mondo and his followers – they were called the abazukufu (awakened people) in Luganda – thought it sinful to purchase life insurance, as it thwarted God's provision; they thought illness and disease to be acts of providence; they thought it wrong to borrow money, since converts should be beholden only to God.⁴ Joe Church, who attended abazukufu meetings, listened for hours as converts repented of their hairstyles and other fashionable encumbrances.⁵ They made a point of highlighting other people's sin: when Yona Mondo met with a delegation of leading revivalists in 1971, he reminded one woman of a child she had born out of wedlock.⁶ “This is the hardest time we have ever had in Uganda,” Joe Church commented. He put 28,000 miles on his car in two years as he sought to reconcile the two factions.⁷ In 1971 Simeon Nsibambi wrote a circular letter accusing Mondo and his followers of planting the “seed of hatred untold and a spirit of dissention, followed with such legalism which cannot be found in the teaching of our Lord.”⁸ Nsibambi felt obliged to buttress his authority by describing, in several paragraphs, his central role in the Revival's early formation. Mondo ignored him: directly after receiving Nsibambi's remonstrance he

4 Jocelyn Murray papers, London Mennonite Centre: Apolo Nsibambi, “The Early Life of Mr. Semion Nsibambi,” n.d.

5 Henry Martyn Centre, Joe Church papers, box 5, file 6: Joe Church to Bill Butler, 3 May 1966.

6 Anglican Church of Kenya archives, “Brethren, 1971–74” file: Simeon Nsibambi to Mondo, 12 Feb. 1971.

7 Henry Martyn Centre, Joe Church papers, box 5, file 6: Joe Church to Harold Adeney, 24 October 1966.

8 Church of Uganda archives 02 Bp 24/1: Nsibambi to “All the Bishops of the Church of Uganda,” n.d. (but 1971).

opened up a new evangelistic center.⁹

Converts were prisoners of literary form: they needed to find sins to confess in order to plot their forward path toward redemption. That is why they never created a bureaucracy to define their common life. That is why Simeon Nsibambi felt insecure in his denunciation of other converts. That is why Joe Church put so many miles on his car. That is why Yona Mondo could ignore them both. No one could show themselves to be above reproach, credible, worthy of other people's obedience. There was no moral footing on which leaders could stand. The disciplines of revivalism were subversive to all in authority.

If, as Prof. Peel suggests, a proper history of the Revival is yet to be written, it cannot be composed as a narrative. It must look with skepticism at the image of coherence and simultaneity that Joe Church's archive projects. It must have as its backbone the changing architecture of communications technology in eastern Africa. The beginning of the Revival owes much to the advent of the Empire Air Mail Service in 1937 (p. 44). Conversely, a history of the Revival's foreclosure will have as its central theme the attenuation of communicative media. In Rwanda, the Hutu Revolution resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of people, among them the Anglican evangelists who had been the Revival's first converts. By 1965 missionaries at Gahini, the Revival's birthplace, could report that their entire community consisted of women and children.¹⁰ In Uganda, Idi Amin's disastrous "economic war" resulted in serious shortages of paper. The telephone service collapsed after the Kenyan employees of the telephone company fled the country.¹¹ Revivalists' networks shrank as travel became difficult. In 1972 the police interned several busloads of Ugandan revivalists who were on their way to a convention in central Tanzania.¹² When Amin was overthrown in 1979 converts composed a wave of circular letters, seeking to re-energize dormant ties of sentiment and fellowship. "It has been so long a time without proper and free communication between us," wrote revivalist Andereya Sabune in May 1979. In an earlier time Sabune had been one among the many converts whose testimony of conversion was piped into

9 Anglican Church of Kenya archives, "Brethren, 1971–74" file: Nsibambi to Yona Mondo, 12 February 1971.

10 Henry Martyn Centre, Joe Church papers, box 8, file 2: Beryl and Ted, circular letter from Gahini, 18 Jan. 1965.

11 United States National Archives RG 59 SNF box 2644, file POL 15–1: Melady to State Department, 8 Feb. 1973.

12 Henry Martyn Centre, Joe Church papers, box 15, file 2: Peggy and Andrew Ked to Joe Church, 30 July 1972.

print and distributed through the circuitry of the Revival.¹³ In the 1970s Sabune and his colleagues were preoccupied with more basic things. “Our leaders have been uneducated people, what they know better was killing and taking away Ugandans’ peace,” wrote Sabune. “During that time we were like Daniel in the flaming fire.”¹⁴

There have been a great many Daniels in the history of the Revival, for revivalism feeds on stories of Christian endurance in the face of privation, pain, and loss (pp. 289–291). But Idi Amin’s Uganda has generated a slight hagiography.¹⁵ It has been difficult for revivalists – or any other of Uganda’s people – to put the 1970s behind them. There are no memorials to the dead; there are no museums where the victims of Idi Amin can be remembered.¹⁶ The Amin dictatorship is not yet settled. It cannot be the forcing-house for the formation of Christian testimonies.

In the absence of discursive momentum the Revival had lost much of its power in the 1980s. It was for a new generation to plot a path forward. Yoweri Museveni, from southern Uganda, was the son of a revivalist, and as a schoolboy he himself converted. He was deeply impressed with converts’ probity and discipline.¹⁷ During the early 1980s Museveni was leading a guerilla insurrection against Milton Obote’s corrupt regime. In a circular distributed in Uganda and in England, he argued that the “moral fabric of our society is all but destroyed.” He planned to constitute a “Directorate of National Guidance” and charge it with “promoting a general revival of moral values in society.”¹⁸ When Museveni’s National Resistance Army came to power in 1986 cadres were convinced that a new epoch had begun. They thought themselves “completely disencumbered of a shameful past,” and free therefore to “think and act” (p. 29). The political theory of Museveni’s revolution was formed in the image of Christian

13 Phyllis Hindley, “The Conversion of M ..., a Young Mututsi,” *Front Line News* 2 (Nov. 1944), in Mid-Africa Ministry archives E 1/7.

14 Henry Martyn Centre, Joe Church papers, box 15, file 2: Andereya Sabune, circular letter, 25 May 1979.

15 Patricia Haward, ed., *Looking Back: Personal Memories of Uganda’s Troubled Past, 1970–2000* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2009); Margaret Ford, *Even Unto Death: The Story of Uganda Martyr Janani Luwum* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing, 1978); Dan Wooding and Ray Barnett, *Uganda Holocaust* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1980).

16 Derek R. Peterson and Edgar Taylor, “Rethinking the State in Idi Amin’s Uganda: The Politics of Exhortation,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7 (1) (2013), 58–82.

17 Yoweri Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (London: MacMillan, 1997), 14–15.

18 School of Oriental and African Studies archive, “Liberation” box 15: National Resistance Movement, “Toward a Free and Democratic Uganda” (Kampala, n.d. [1982]).

conversion. Where converts had once thought it impossible to exercise authority over others, Museveni found in the apparatus of government a means of authoring other people's salvation.

Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival is not an elegy for the Revival. It says nothing of endings or closures. I think the Revival to be unfinished. Their patriotic history teaches East Africans to value elders' authority and to organize themselves as kin and ethnic compatriots. But East Africans also have available to them a discursive and organizational architecture, handed down from the Revival, that enables non-conformity, that distances converts from their native land, that opens new horizons. There is always new life.

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