

RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS SERIES

Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im
Editor

ORBIS  BOOKS

Maryknoll, New York 105

EMORY UNIV



2000000090

DEC 20 1999

The Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll) recruits and trains people for overseas missionary service. Through Orbis Books, Maryknoll aims to foster the international dialogue that is essential to mission. The books published, however, reflect the opinions of their authors and are not meant to represent the official position of the Society. To obtain more information about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknoll.org.

Copyright © 1999 by the Law and Religion Program at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, U.S.A.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. For permissions, write to Orbis Books, P. O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308, U.S.A.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

Manuscript editing and typesetting by Joan Weber Laflamme.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Proselytization and communal self-determination in Africa / Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, editor.

p. cm. — (Religion & human rights series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57075-261-3 (pa.)

1. Proselytizing—Africa. 2. Self-determination, National—Africa. I. Na'im, 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad, 1946–. II. Series.

BL2400.P76 1999

291.7'2'096—dc21

99-37929

CIP

INTRODUCTION

Competing Claims to Religious Freedom and Communal Self-Determination in Africa

—◆—

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im

INTRODUCTION

This book on proselytization in Africa is part of a wider project addressing issues of conflict between competing claims to religious freedom, on the one hand, and "communal" self-determination,¹ on the other, in the context of three regions of the world: Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa.² This primarily geographical focus of the project as a whole is intended to highlight contextual factors, without underestimating the role of cross-regional dynamics. Those making competing claims to religious freedom and communal self-determination neither perceive their claims in exclusively regional terms, nor do they act or react in isolation of actors and factors in other parts of the world. While opting for specific regional scope in the interest of depth of analysis, the project seeks to bring a variety of perspectives to bear on the issues through the multidisciplinary composition of its project team and researchers, as reflected in the chapters of this volume.

Another distinguishing feature of this project is that it seeks to apply a human rights paradigm to the mediation of competing claims over proselytization and its implications. A discussion of how that paradigm might apply, and what difference it is likely to make, will follow an explanation of the nature, context, and dynamics of proselytization in general, and with reference to Africa in particular. It should be noted from the outset, however, that proselytization should not be equated with conversion, as the latter may or may not follow from the former. Conversion may also be an unintended consequence of commercial, social, or other forms of interaction that cannot be characterized as proselytization in the usual sense of the term.

On any given day, one can point to numerous religious conflicts and tensions within and between communities around the world as a primary or contributory cause of broader persistent strife that sometimes leads to massive violence and destruction. Regarding each situation, observers will probably disagree about such issues as the underlying causes of the conflict; the role of religion as such; and the identity, motivation, objectives and relative importance of various internal and external actors. Efforts to explain or understand these situations may recall histories of religious and ethnic rivalries or hostilities, highlight current economic difficulties and political frustrations, emphasize demographic and geopolitical factors, cite the role of charismatic leaders with their complex motivations, and so forth. Prescriptions for resolution of such conflicts will also vary with the analysis and orientation of the parties in relation to particularities of specific context, as well as pragmatic possibilities of implementation. Proselytization is often an explicit or implicit element of religious conflict in all parts of the world, usually overlapping and interacting with other factors. However, the two phenomena should not be taken as synonymous. This project is concerned with proselytization in particular, and not with religious conflict and tension in general.

Part of the impetus for this choice arose out of concerns about what Martin Marty, the leading American scholar of religion, has called a "new war for souls" among churches and religious groups competing among themselves over numerical membership and social and political influence, in addition to more conventionally understood forms of proselytization in the sense of seeking new converts. While those initial concerns were confirmed in subsequent studies within the framework of the project as a whole, it also became clear that the concept of proselytization and its manifestations should not be confined to such preconceived notions. In this project, this concept conveys a range of meanings and methods of communication of religious ideas. Similar issues are raised by the numerous possibilities of "conversion" within the same tradition or sub-tradition in response to internal and/or external stimuli. For example, Muslim proselytizers not only seek to convert non-Muslims to Islam, or from Sunni to Shi'i Islam, or from one Sufi group to another, but may also endeavor to motivate and mobilize members of their own sub-tradition of Islam into a more active mode in support of local political and economic objectives or in response to perceptions of "external" threat, whether identifiable as Islamic or otherwise. Evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic forms of Christianity, which have gained momentum in the last two decades in Africa, are also predicated on the spirit of revival within the same religion.

The basic rationale of the project's focus is the paradox of greater risks of proselytization in the modern context coupled with apparently improved possibilities of peaceful mediation of conflict. On the risks side, recent global and technological developments dramatically enhance the frequency and efficacy of proselytizing initiatives, thereby raising the threat of consequential confrontation and conflict. The ease of international travel and communication and the increased availability of material resources lead to more diverse and

potentially conflictual proselytizing initiatives than ever before, thereby raising the political and security stakes for all concerned. What may have been far-fetched scenarios of effective proselytization are now easily implemented (from North America and East Asia into Eastern Europe and Russia, from the Middle East and South Asia into central Asia or sub-Saharan Africa), and are therefore more threatening to their opponents. The hold of formally or informally established churches over their membership and territories is fast diminishing in some places, while resurgent religious groups seek to control or influence the state in order to enforce their own models of governance or policy. Massive financial resources, media campaigns, technical expertise, and political influence on powerful states can now easily be mounted in support of co-believers around the world, whether in support of their right and efforts to proselytize, or to "protect" them from proselytization by others. Like many aspects of domestic and international affairs after the Cold War, previously established patterns of religious (sometimes including ethnic) power relations no longer apply, with consequent possibilities of political fragmentation or reorganization of existing states in pursuit of old or new rivalries and alliances. In other words, the same conditions of democratization and economic liberalization often provide the conditions for increased religious pluralization and proselytization activities.

On the mediation side, the same dynamic of increased possibilities of confrontation and conflict may enhance the prospects of negotiations and peaceful settlement precisely because the stakes can become too high for all concerned to pursue hostile means. In other words, the plausibility of violent secession and separate statehood with transnational support and encouragement may force all sides to a conflict to reconsider their options for just and peaceful cooperation within an existing state (An-Na'im and Deng 1996). That is to say, deadlock or stalemate resulting from relatively matched power and resources of proselytizers and target groups may propel both sides to seek peaceful mediation for their competing claims.³

The key question to be addressed later in this chapter is whether the modern human rights paradigm, and the notion of communal self-determination in particular, may provide a theoretical framework for mediation between these competing claims. It is important to note here that such a framework should also be assessed as a possible source of policy directions, as well as practical guidelines for the mediation of these competing claims. As I will argue later in this Introduction, the possibility of a human rights paradigm should be explored and developed in this context because it is already part of the foundation of freedom of religion, which includes the right to proselytize, on the one hand, and self-determination, which can be the basis of resistance to proselytization efforts, on the other.

Prevailing conceptions of democracy stipulate that the state should foster religious pluralism without undue preference for a particular religion over others. These conceptions of democracy require religions to sustain themselves and thrive on the cogency and validity of their message to believers without

coercion or undue advantage over unbelievers and their beliefs or lifestyle.⁴ This religious "neutrality" of the state is supposed to be enshrined in the constitution and legal system of the state, which protect religious rights as well as related freedoms of association, assembly, and expression for all, in addition to safeguarding the autonomy of civil society organizations engaged in the provision of educational, health, or social and charitable services. These ideas are also associated with the modern human rights paradigm and the principle of self-determination, though with some conceptual difficulty as discussed later.

Unfortunately, it seems that the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the recent wave of democratization in Africa have failed to live up to these ideals. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, older "established" churches and communities seek to dominate or eliminate local religious and cultural rivals. Yet the same older churches feel threatened by, and even besieged by, foreign religious groups deploying vast material resources and human expertise in attempting to attract converts away from their present religious and community affiliations. Unable to match the educational, health, and other advantages of the foreign proselytizers, local religious groups appeal to the state for protection of their traditional status and membership. Yet, the recent veneer of constitutional protection of religious rights and other freedoms is often being subverted by overt state favoritism of some religious groups and oppression of others. Rival local and foreign religious groups in many parts of the world are now locked in a "new war for souls" of mutual defamation, manipulation of political power, and deployment of constitutional norms and legal mechanisms for purported religious advantage, with consequent religious fragmentation and fundamentalism. Before highlighting some aspects of the context and processes of this phenomenon in relation to Africa in particular, it might be helpful to briefly clarify the nature of proselytization in general.

THE DYNAMICS OF PROSELYTIZATION

Perceptions of the nature and role of proselytization are often conditioned or influenced by such factors as personal experience or religious orientation, and disciplinary or professional perspectives. Such perceptions can also be affected by the desire to seek or promote pragmatic approaches to resolving acute political or security problems in specific situations. Existing scholarship on the subject in English reflects this diversity of perceptions and perspectives, but mainly in relation to Christianity (Macmullen 1984; Marty and Greenspan 1988), with little on Islam, which is the other proselytizing religion relevant to the African context (Goodman 1994). Moreover, as observed by Christopher Clark, the largest amount of literature on proselytization is "in house histories," followed in volume by material from a theological and church historical perspective, with works which take account of political context and social/cultural factors taking third place (Clark 1995, 5). Some studies deal with the

nature and process of "conversion" and related religious experiences from the perspectives of social science theory or psychology (Festinger 1957; Goodman 1994, 173; Rambo 1993; Hefner 1993).⁵ The following remarks are not intended to review or discuss this wide variety of literature. Rather, my purpose here is to offer some general reflections on proselytization with a view to addressing the issues in relation to the mediation of competing claims within a human rights framework in particular.

To its proponents, proselytization is about people's freedom to propagate their own religious commitments in an effort to reach out and share with others the merits and benefits that the religion is held to generate and sustain in the individual and communal life of believers. Proselytization is also represented as a religious imperative for believers to pursue for their own personal salvation and self-realization. The sacred history of Christianity or Islam, for example, is cited to illustrate the transforming power of religious commitment—how the very few powerless and oppressed early believers managed to transform their own lives and to infuse the values and institutions of their religion into many other communities. The underlying claim is that target groups would probably "see the light" if only they were allowed to hear the message or observe the living example of the believers. That is, proselytization is said to be for the "good" of intended target groups as much as it is for the benefit of those who seek to proselytize others.

Such perceptions of proselytization are premised on two claims: The first claim is that the members of the target group are free to accept or reject the message of the proselytizer once they have had a chance to hear it from the believers themselves. The second claim is that proselytizers are entitled "as of right" to reach the target group with their religious message, regardless of the declared or presumed response of that group. Both propositions are problematic because in the majority of cases the target group is unlikely to be truly free to accept or reject the message of the proselytizer, nor is the demand of access by the proselytizers independent from the material and political interests and concerns of both sides. *Proselytization is hardly ever simply and exclusively about the communication of a religious message, to be accepted or rejected on its own terms.* Interaction over a religious message is necessarily embedded in the cultural and ideological context of the proselytizers and their community of believers, on the one hand, and of the target individuals of proselytization and their community, on the other. Throughout human history, religious interaction has always been as much about material interests and power relations as it has been about spiritual insights and moral values. Proselytization is by definition the effort of believers in one religion to change the spiritual and material conditions of perceived unbelievers. Otherwise, the social, economic, and political transformation of convert communities may not occur as claimed in the sacred histories of proselytizing religions.

As a consequence of this, the opponents of proselytization perceive it as a challenge to the individual and collective self-identity of target groups—a threat to their political independence and material well-being. From this perspective,

proselytization is inherently dangerous and offensive to its actual or potential target group precisely because it seeks to radically change people's identities and lifestyle. As discussed in the chapters by Francis M. Deng, Makau Mutua, and Benjamin F. Soares below, this is especially the case when indigenous groups are targeted because their religious beliefs and practices are central to their cultural identity. That is to say, the objection is to the very nature and objectives of the process, and is only confirmed by the prospects of its success, regardless of the "fairness" of its methods. At this level, proselytization is rejected for the implicit, if not explicit, assumption of the proselytizer that the target group needs changing, and that the religion of the proselytizer offers a better alternative. This implication of religious and cultural superiority is therefore integral to the very notion of proselytization, regardless of the methods used or the power relations of the two sides.

Moreover, opponents of proselytization claim that experience everywhere shows that it has consistently been used throughout history to spearhead or legitimize local domination or imperialist expansion by foreign powers. They dispute the facts and implications of the sacred history of Christianity and Islam, and challenge claims about the cultural and ideological content of those religions, as well as the material objectives of their proselytizing agents. In so doing, these opponents emphasize that in the early history or recent experience of their communities the issue was never simply about spiritual insights or moral values that were to be freely accepted or rejected as such. The objection here is twofold: First, that the issue is never simply a matter of a "free market of religious ideas" competing on a "level playing field," where only the inherent validity of one set of religious beliefs is seeking to expose the invalidity of the other in order to simply "persuade" believers in the latter religion to freely accept the former. The second and related objection is that serious and systematic proselytization is unlikely to be attempted, or to be successful, except when the proselytizers are encouraged and supported by extra-religious material advantages over the target group.

This analysis of the all-important *dynamics* of proselytization can be further clarified by highlighting the two aspects of *agency* and *self-determination*. First, advocacy of and opposition to proselytization are usually done by individuals who claim to speak on behalf of their community of believers or the target group, respectively. While the moral and material support of the general public of each community is actively sought by those elites, the community at large is rarely involved in the actual discourse of competing religions, cultures, and ideologies. Second, and regardless of the apparent terms of the debate, these competing claims are necessarily about communal self-determination. On the one hand, the proponents of proselytization demand the possibility of converting others as matter of exercising their individual freedom of religion—in collaboration with other members of their own religious community, but the process also involves an attempt to transform the other community. On the other hand, opponents reject the intrusion in the name of protecting the existing expression of the self-determination of their community, in material

as well as ideological terms, often without substantiating their claim to speak for the community or justifying the assumptions they are making about the practical content of self-determination for that community.

In the polemics of proselytization the proponents tend to avoid acknowledging its wider implications and seek to challenge the right of their opponents to speak on behalf of the target group. That is, the proponents may insist that their objective is purely religious and claim that the target group would be freely willing to listen and perhaps accept the message if only their own elites allowed them to hear it. Paradoxically, that denial of wider political, economic, and cultural agendas is usually coupled with a sense of assertive self-confidence that proselytizers derive from their own material advantage over the target group. In so doing, proselytizers are appropriating the agency of their own religious communities by claiming to discharge its obligation of "a mission of salvation." Since those communities at large are unlikely to agree at least on the wider implications of proselytization, there may be problems of agency between the claims of the individual proselytizers (and their religious organizations) on the one hand, and the wider home communities which fund and support them through the use of (or the threat of the use of) economic and even military power, on the other. Whatever the private motives of proselytizers may be, they are unlikely to be identical to those of the national communities on whose strength and resources they draw in seeking to proselytize others. For example, while missionaries for specific religious communities in the United States draw on the material and diplomatic resources of their country in pursuit of proselytization, other American religious communities and the public at large may not be in agreement with that objective as such, though they may accept the wider material and political benefits of missionary work.

In contrast, opponents tend to emphasize the wider implications of proselytization by believers in another religion and may avoid acknowledging the real nature and internal contradictions of their claim to protect the existing expression of self-determination of the target community. While presenting the proselytizer as simply and purely the agent of an imperial or colonial power, opponents tend to claim that they are only protecting the beliefs or religious identity of their community without admitting the ramifications of that claim. Even to the extent that opponents of proselytization might acknowledge the latter, they are unlikely to recognize that the status quo they are defending may not be a true and valid expression of self-determination by the community at all. In other words, opposition to proselytization is premised on an alleged communal (even national) consensus on the religious beliefs and material conditions of the community (or country at large) that must be defended against external intrusion by the proselytizers and the imperial powers they serve. Internal disagreement about that, they would assert, must be suppressed in the interest of unity against the greater external alleged danger of proselytization and its purportedly detrimental consequences.

In my view, a more plausible position between these two polarized claims is to acknowledge the positive aspects of proselytization while trying to guard

against its risks and/or excesses. Notwithstanding the absolutist claims of proponents and opponents, proselytization initiatives can have positive consequences for both sides of the relationship. The challenge proselytization represents can invigorate the religious, social, and political life of the target group as it attempts to better articulate its own beliefs and enhance the individual and communal life of its members in order to more effectively resist that external threat. The reality of open contestation forces the community to seek to demonstrate to its own members the validity of its claims about their religious and material well-being under the status quo. In the process, significant positive change can occur in practice, if only in an effort to match or do better than the benefits the proselytizers claim to bring to the religious and material life of the community in question. It is also reasonable to expect these processes to generally promote the political awareness and organization of the target community. Similar consequences can also be expected to occur within the religious community represented by the proselytizers, as it will be challenged to live up to its claims of religious enlightenment and social and personal well-being. The fact that the religious community of the proselytizer is presented as a model for other communities to follow will in itself attract scrutiny and criticism by others, thereby generating internal efforts to address social, political, and economic, as well as religious, problems. In other words, it is true that competition in a "free market" of religious ideas can be beneficial to both (all) sides, even though this market is hardly ever as free as its proponents claim.

In light of these remarks, I would conclude that despite its problematic nature and negative associations, proselytization is actually a vital part of the dynamism of spiritual and intellectual development of individual persons, as well as the social, political, material, and artistic life of communities and societies at large. Proselytization is too integral and important to people's lives for it to be suppressed altogether, yet it is too problematic to leave totally unregulated for the powerful to manipulate and exploit at will. Accordingly, the question is not only how can proselytization be practiced subject to appropriate limitations, but also how can such regulation be effectively implemented in an orderly and peaceful manner? In order to address this question properly, the issues should be placed in the present African context.

CONTEXT AND PROCESSES OF PROSELYTIZATION IN AFRICA

Like many other issues of public policy in Africa today, the mediation of competing claims to religious freedom and communal self-determination should be considered against the background of two related phenomena, namely, European colonialism and globalization. Though African societies were certainly not isolated from each other or insulated from external influence in the past, various types of European colonialism have had the most far-reaching and enduring impact by the sheer scale and magnitude of the changes they

introduced in the continent. For the purposes of this chapter in particular, I would emphasize that it was colonialism that primarily determined the nature of the postcolonial states which continue to rule African societies and control their interactions with the rest of the world in this age of growing globalization. What does this mean, and how is it relevant to the mediation of competing claims about proselytization?

Present states in Africa are direct successors of the colonies established by agreements among European powers (especially the Berlin Conference of 1884-85) regardless of the wishes of local groups. The borders of the colonies which African states came to inherit were established by European continental partition and occupation rather than by African political realities or geography. Colonial governments were organized according to European colonial theory and practice, as modified by expediency; their economies were managed with imperial and/or local colonial considerations primarily in mind; and their legal systems reflected the interests and values of European imperial powers. The vast majority of the African populations of those colonies had little or no constitutional standing in them (Jackson and Rosberg 1986, 5-6).

When independence came, it usually signified the transfer of control over authoritarian power structures and processes of government from colonial masters to local elites (Ayoade 1988, 104). With few exceptions, the postcolonial state in Africa, was

both overdeveloped and soft. It was overdeveloped because it was erected, artificially, on the foundations of the colonial state. It did not grow organically from within civil society. It was soft because, although in theory all-powerful, it scarcely had the administrative and political means of its dominance. Neither did it have an economic basis on which to rest political power (Chabal 1986, 13).⁶

Since independence, the preservation of juridical statehood and territorial integrity, rather than promotion of the ability and willingness of the state to live up to the practical requirements of sovereignty, became the primary concern of African states.

To make matters worse, the vast majority of first constitutions were either suspended or radically altered by military usurpers or single-party states within a few years of independence (Okoth-Ogendo 1991; Shivji 1991). For decades after independence, successive cycles of civilian and military governments, alike in the majority of African countries, maintained the same colonial legal and institutional mechanisms to suppress political dissent to their policies and to deny accountability for their own actions (Young 1994, 287).⁷ Lacking any sense of "ownership," expectation of protection and service, or a general belief in their ability to influence its functioning, African societies often regard the postcolonial state with profound mistrust. They tend to tolerate its existence as an unavoidable evil but prefer to have the least interaction with its institutions and processes (Young 1994, 5). Nevertheless, the postcolonial state

is supposed to be firmly in control of the formulation and implementation of public policy at home and the conduct of international relations abroad. In other words, it is the primary framework within which African societies seek to realize their right to self-determination in an increasingly globalized world.

As a working definition, I take *globalization* to refer to, *inter alia*, transformation of the relations between states, institutions, groups, and individuals; the universalization of certain practices, identities, and structures; and the global restructuring of economic relations within the modern capitalist framework (Falk 1995, 71). Mlinar defines the term as "extending the determinative frameworks of social change to the world as a whole" and suggests the following five dimensions of the process: (1) increasing global interdependence whereby the activities of people in specific areas have repercussions that go beyond local, regional, or national borders; (2) the expansion of domination and dependence; (3) homogenization that tends to emphasize uniformity rather than mutual exclusivity; (4) diversification within "territorial communities" as they open to the wealth of diversity of the world as a whole; and (5) overcoming temporal discontinuities by, for example, temporal inclusiveness resulting from the functioning of particular services to global spaces (Mlinar 1992, 20-22).

In my view, a crucial element of such definitions for our purposes here is the fact that globalization is simply a more effective and comprehensive vehicle or instrument of perpetuating existing power relations within the same country, as well as in its relationship to other countries at the regional and international level. As Tade Akin Aina rightly observed, commonly cited definitions of globalization fail to address "the importance of notions such as coercion, conflict, polarization, domination, inequality, exploitation and injustice. . . . There is little or nothing about monopolies, disruption and dislocation of the labor and other markets, the emergence of a global regulatory chaos and possible anomie and how these are being exploited for gain" (Aina 1997, 11). Accordingly, one would expect globalization to facilitate and intensify neocolonial relations between African and developed countries (Bach 1993; Othman 1993); the domination of civil society by the state within African countries themselves, as well as any hegemonic or conflictual relations that may exist within African societies themselves.

Against this background, I will now briefly review available literature on proselytization in Africa. As with the earlier review of literature about proselytization in general, my purpose here is only to highlight aspects that are pertinent to the subject of this chapter, namely, the mediation of competing claims to religious freedom and communal self-determination. For this reason, I am concerned with works that take into account historical and political context, sociocultural factors, and so forth, as opposed to material produced by religious groups for their own internal use or from a theological perspective.⁸ Even for this "social science" type of literature, it is not surprising to find nothing specifically on the subject of mediation of competing claims as such, because this formulation of the issue brings together different disciplinary approaches of

scholars who have not been open to possibilities of collaboration. In other words, while scholars of religion rarely consider human rights aspects of their work, lawyers and political scientists who are concerned with human rights issues tend to have a secular perspective.

Available works can be reviewed under the following headings: "conversion" and related religious experiences; Islamic proselytization; Christian proselytization; and works that consider relations between these two proselytizing religions.

An example of the first type is the dialogue between Robin Horton and Humphrey Fisher regarding the nature and circumstances of conversion from "traditional" to "world" religions. Horton began (in a book review of John Peel's study of two Aladura or "prayer healing" churches in Nigeria) by asserting that both Islam and Christianity have achieved only conditional acceptance, suggesting that beliefs and practices of the so-called world religions are only accepted where they happen to coincide with the responses of traditional cosmology to other, non-missionary factors of the modern situation. He saw Islam and Christianity as catalysts which trigger reactions in which they do not always appear among the end products, and he asserted that the success of these two religions as institutions depends on the extent of their willingness to accept these roles (Horton 1971, 104-5). Fisher responded by suggesting that Horton has "overestimated the survival . . . of original African elements of religion; and more important, has under-estimated the willingness and ability of Africans to make even rigorous Islam and Christianity their own" (Fisher 1973, 27). Following other exchanges, Fisher subsequently defined their disagreement as between Horton's view that "the essential patterns of religious development in black Africa are determined by the enduring influence of a traditional cosmology which arises from the ashes of colonialism and conversion," on the one hand, and Fisher's view that "a genuine religious transference is possible," on the other (Fisher 1986, 153; Horton 1975; Hackett 1989).⁹

Recent scholarship, however, reflects concern about the analytical utility of the term *conversion*, even within the framework of a single religion like Christianity. Noting the European connotations of the term, John and Jean Comaroff wonder whether it oversimplifies the real process it purports to describe: "How does it grasp the highly variable, usually gradual, often implicit and demonstrably 'syncretic' manner in which social identities, cultural styles, and ritual practices of African peoples were transformed by the evangelical encounter?" (Comaroff 1991, 250). According to K. F. Morrison, "It is a confusion of categories to use the word *conversion* as though it were an instrument of critical analysis, equally appropriate to any culture or religion. . . . The word is more properly a subject, rather than a tool of analysis" (Morrison 1992, xiv). Talal Asad comments that "it would be better to say that in studying conversion, one was dealing with the narratives by which people apprehend and describe a radical change in the significance of their lives. Sometimes these narratives employ the notion of divine intervention; at other times the notion of a secular teleology" (Asad 1996, 266).

On Islamic proselytization, J. Spencer Trimingham provides a historical analysis in which he divides Africa into seven culture zones and treats each as a historical unity to provide data on the processes and consequences of "Islamization" in each region (Trimingham 1968, 5).¹⁰ He discusses factors that affected the spread of Islam and suggests that it has always followed the routes of traders (Trimingham 1968, 38-39). A deeper and more focused historical analysis of the spread of Islam in West Africa is presented by Mervyn Hiskett, who offers detailed critical examination of proselytization in the context of specific case studies. For example, he describes the roles of several ethnic groups who differed in their Islamic emphasis and discusses the role of Islamic education (Hiskett 1984, 44, 55-58, respectively). Reiterating that conversion takes place on a continuum between military conquest and peaceful persuasion, he suggests that although the military means have been labeled less effective, the change in political and social institutions by the conquerors often forces ideological change. Distinguishing between "trade" as an institution and "traders" as people using that structure, he insists that it was the institution which was the most influential factor in spreading Islam in the region (Hiskett 1984, 303-5). He also further asserts that literacy is often the impetus that propels a society through the stages of conversion and concludes by saying that the unbroken thread throughout the history of Islam in West Africa is "a triumph for the power of literate ideas" (Hiskett 1984, 305, 319; Banwo 1995).¹¹

Regarding Christian proselytization, Ruth Rouse represents an early precursor to what has since become an important point in discussions of proselytization; namely, the role of the motive of the missionaries in understanding their beliefs and actions, and their relationship to the proselytized (Rouse 1936). More recent and broader analyses include the work of Thomas O. Beidelman from a social anthropology and colonial history perspective in which he suggests six basic themes or principles for organizing field and theoretical data, namely, secular aspects of missionaries, religious beliefs and missionary activities, theories of conversion and associated beliefs, careers in mission work, compartmentalization of sacred and secular affairs, and parallels in colonial structure (Beidelman 1982, 9; 1981, 73; 1974, 235). Elizabeth Isichei's work on the growth of Christianity in Africa includes analysis of missionaries as "agents of change" and examines the wide variety of their economic and educational backgrounds and the differing roles of missionary women. She also discusses the relationship of the missions to commerce and imperial expansion (Isichei 1995, especially chap. 3). Lamin Sanneh makes the point that "by their root conviction that the gospel is transmissible in the mother tongue, missionaries opened the way for the local idiom to gain ascendancy over assertions of foreign superiority" (Sanneh 1993, 19). A few other works address issues of proselytization, either in specific case studies or general overview, while others include responses to questions of religious pluralism, including the documents of Vatican II (Yates 1994; Isichei 1970, 209-27; McCracken 1977).

The few works which discuss Christianity and Islam together in relation to Africa fail to address the issues most pertinent to this chapter. For example, Noel King traces the growth of both religions since the fifteenth century, but he does not address their methods of proselytization (King 1971). Johanes Haafkins asserts that "Christian authenticity" warrants a pan-African view which accepts Africa's rich linguistic, cultural and religious pluralism and suggests that Christians will have to accept the nondifferentiation of sacred and secular, including Muslim belief in *Shari'a* as divinely inspired law. But he does not address issues on which Islam and Christianity conflict (Haafkins 1995; Haafkins 1994).¹² Craig Bartholomew raised the question of how Muslims and Christians can live together in a pluralistic society in Africa, but he does not mention proselytization except to criticize Muslim "fundamentalists" for not allowing religious evangelism (Bartholomew 1994). More recently, however, serious scholarly attention is being given to issues of proselytization and Christian-Muslim relations in Africa (Sanneh 1997).

My purpose in presenting this brief review is to show that even social-science scholarship tends to study Islam and Christianity as universal proselytizing religious "actors" transforming their African "subjects" without being affected by them except in terms of adapting the proselytizer's methods of operation to local conditions. Proselytization is presented as an exclusively "one-way" flow of influence and change from the propagators of the two "world religions" to local communities, with implicit assumptions of freedom of choice, "fair play," and the occasional plea for mutual understanding in the interest of coexistence. In light of the available literature, it seems clear to me that the following conclusions are warranted regarding the context and process of proselytization in Africa:

1. The actual process of proselytization in Africa is an inherently hegemonic, unilateral process that seeks to transform local communities.
2. The assumptions of well-informed freedom of choice and fair play of matched protagonists on a "level playing field" are difficult to verify and apply in practice.
3. Even if verifiable and applicable, these assumptions are inappropriate for the nature and dynamics of the process of proselytization in the African context because they envisage autonomous *individual* action in a profoundly *communal* situation. Individual decisions to convert, even if one assumes them to be well-informed and freely made, tend to undermine and erode communal identity and institutions (without allowing the community opportunity of response.)

It is in this context that I see a vital role for the state not only as mediator of competing claims of proselytizers according to some basic "ground rules," but also as protector of the interests of the target groups. To the extent that the postcolonial state is unable and/or unwilling to perform this regulatory function, the so-called right to proselytize would be open to serious abuse without the prospects of redress. As globalization simply intensifies existing power

relations, it is likely to enhance any hegemonic or conflictual relations that may exist within the same African society, both among competing proselytizers, and between them and their "subjects." Nothing in the existing literature addresses the general question of mediation of competing claims, in particular from a human rights perspective.

THE MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS PARADIGM

Historically, and up to the present time, disputes about proselytization were often settled by the use or threat of force or other form of coercion, rather than through negotiations and agreement as a matter of principle. Proselytizers were sometimes able to compel access to the target group, while at other times they were successfully resisted by their opponents, with religious rationale being used by both sides to legitimate their actions or mobilization of people and resources in support of their cause. The question raised by this chapter is whether it is possible and useful to cast these issues in human rights terms, for both proselytizers and target groups: Why and how is a human rights paradigm relevant? What difference is it likely to make to the mediation of conflicts and tensions over proselytization? How can the potential of a human rights paradigm in this regard be realized?

The realm of what is presently known as human rights can be traced to ancient beginnings of normative attempts to define human relationships in ways that are conducive to peaceful resolution of conflict and tension under the rule of law (Steiner and Alston 1996, 117-65). The rule of law can also be traced to similar beginnings and long evolution. Those early normative definitions evolved in content and mechanisms of implementation with the development of each community. As European models of states gradually prevailed throughout the world, national governments became responsible for regulating human relationships through the normative systems and mechanisms of implementation of each country. This function continues today under constitutional schemes of rights as discussed in the present African context in J. D. van der Vyver's chapter in this book.

While it is supposed to have undergone drastic transformation since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, the modern concept of human rights remains bound to domestic frameworks for its practical specification and implementation, including questions of competing claims of religious freedom. On the one hand, under the United Nations system,¹³ as well as the regional systems it inspired,¹⁴ normative propositions about human relationships are now made on behalf of all human beings as such, rather than as citizens of particular states. On the other hand, the international law framework which gives binding force to all treaties, including the Charter of the United Nations itself and the human rights conventions adopted under its auspices (as well as those adopted under regional systems), presupposes the sovereignty and exclusive territorial jurisdiction of the state. Not only must a state

freely ratify a treaty in order to be bound by its terms, but the international legal obligations assumed by a state under such treaties are supposed to be implemented by the state itself through its own domestic jurisdiction.

Moreover, the purported transition of certain norms from domestic civil liberties into universal human rights of all human beings retains some of the features of that conceptual origin. For example, a key feature of the "universalization" of the domestic civil liberties paradigm is the notion that human rights can only be claimed against the state and its official agents, rather than against whoever might challenge or violate them. Two corollaries of this conception are particularly relevant to the analysis of this chapter: the persistence of the notion that human rights can only be held by individual persons, and the realities of a hierarchy of rights despite repeated claims of the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights. While the first feature tends to frustrate possibilities of articulating and implementing rights for groups or collective entities (herein called collective rights),¹⁵ the second gives priority to civil and political rights over economic, social, and cultural rights, such as the right to food, shelter, health care, and education.

It is true that a people's right to self-determination is recognized under the United Nations system, but this right is generally believed to mean the right of a people to political independence from foreign or colonial rule, rather than the collective right of groups and communities to cultural survival and integrity within an existing state (short of secession and separate statehood). I will return to the question of the meaning and scope of self-determination in the next section of this chapter. Other examples of what might be called collective rights under international law can be cited,¹⁶ but strong opposition to the concept itself persists among human rights scholars and activists.

Under what has become the established framework after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of 1948, proselytization is generally understood as a matter of freedom of religion of individual persons and their human rights of expression and association as individuals practicing their religion in community with others. While a right to proselytize was taken for granted, the primary concern was with the ability of an individual person to adopt a religion, or change it, according to his or her own free will, without compulsion or coercion. I believe that this conception of individual freedom of religion remains vitally important throughout the world and could certainly be used to achieve some degree of protection for both the proselytizer and individual members of the target group. But I also believe that this conception of individual freedom of religion cannot adequately address the concerns of communities about proselytization, and its consequences, as indicated earlier in this chapter. Individual religious choices, however freely made, do affect communal interests, especially in view of the dynamic of proselytization as highlighted above. For example, apostasy as a capital crime under traditional Islamic law (*Shari'a*) should be seen in light of the linkages between religious faith and "citizenship" in early Islamic states, and the consequences of individual choices for the community. For a Muslim to abandon belief in Islam, it has been argued by

some modern Islamic scholars, was tantamount to treason in the modern sense of the term (Al-Mubarak 1981, 24-28; An-Na'im 1990, 86-87, 109).

In view of such linkages between individual choices and communal concerns, I suggest that the present human rights paradigm should include a dynamic and creative understanding of *collective rights* in order to address those concerns, as well as individual rights to safeguard freedom of belief. But in suggesting adoption of collective rights, I see them as *complementing*, not replacing, individual rights. In fact, individual rights will always remain necessary for the definition and implementation of any collective right. For example, the protection of individual freedoms of expression and association is extremely important for the integrity of the process of regulating questions of membership, political representation, equality, and justice within the group. Without valid resolution of such questions, a group cannot be entitled to claim collective human rights. This thesis will be further explained and substantiated in the next section of this chapter as it applies to issues of proselytization. What I propose to do here by way of introduction is to develop a general argument in support of the *possibility* of the inclusion of collective rights within the human rights framework. I say "possibility" because I am calling for the careful examination of the *candidacy* of each claim for a collective right and not a blanket inclusion of every assertion of such a right.

My first point is to question the present conceptual opposition to the idea of collective rights as human rights simply because it does not fit the individual human rights paradigm. In my view, this objection not only mocks the universality of human rights but also contributes to the growing isolation and irrelevance of the international human rights movement. Since a collective framework for the realization of rights is essential for the majority of human societies and communities around the world, rejection of any possibility of collective rights undermines the assumption that universal human rights are accepted and applicable everywhere. Moreover, the categorical exclusion of this perspective from the human rights paradigm is making this paradigm increasingly less relevant to the daily lives of many societies. As emphasized by one author, the Western liberal perspective

acknowledges the rights of the individual on the one hand, and the sovereignty of the total social collective on the other, but it is not alive to the rich variety of intermediate or alternative associational groupings actually found in human cultures, nor is it prepared to ascribe to such groups any rights not reducible either to the liberties of the citizen or to the prerogative of the state (Anaya 1995, 326).

In my view, the exclusion of any possibility of collective rights is untenable for two reasons: (1) the actual interdependence of individual and collective rights; and (2) the inadequacy of an individual-rights paradigm in certain situations. Regarding the first reason, I suggest that neither can individual rights be fully realized without collective rights, nor can the latter be ensured without the

protection of the former (Shepherd 1981, 215). This is particularly true, I believe, because of the need for structural change and long-term solutions, as opposed to the piecemeal, case-by-case approach of individual rights, as explained below. This combination of an acceptance of interdependence of rights and appreciation of the need for long-term structural approaches is clearly reflected in Article 5 of the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979),¹⁷ which provides that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women." The presumed objective of this Convention is to protect the human rights of individual women, yet it is clear that a more structural approach is needed to eliminate root causes of the violation of these rights. In imposing this obligation under Article 5, the Convention is clearly envisaging men and women as groups, rather than as individual persons.

As to the inadequacy of an individual-rights approach in some situations, we should recall the assumptions and nature of the process by which these rights are supposed to be protected in everyday life. It is commonly asserted that the main advantage of individual human rights from a practical application perspective is their "justiciability," which signifies the ability of a court of law to identify an individual victim, a violator, and to prescribe a remedy for the violation. The way this is supposed to work is that when a person or group of persons believe that one of their individual human rights has been violated by a state policy or administrative action, or the behavior of a state official, the aggrieved party or parties can sue for redress (or prosecute if criminal charges are warranted, as in a torture case) before a court of law. If the issue is not settled out of court, a trial may follow whereby the court will determine whether a violation has occurred and direct the implementation of appropriate remedy.

It is therefore clear that this conception of legal protection of individual human rights presupposes that the violation of rights is the exception rather than the rule, because no system for the legal enforcement of rights can have the resources and political will to cope with massive violations. This conception also assumes that potential victims have access to and can afford to pay for legal services, that the judiciary is independent and effective, that government officials will comply with court orders, and so forth. As such, this model is not only limited, exclusive, expensive, and inaccessible to most Africans whose human rights are routinely violated by officials as well as nonofficial actors, but it is also incapable of redressing the type and scope of violations most frequently suffered by Africans. Recent experiences with genocide and ethnic cleansing, massive forced population movements, increasingly unequal economic and political power relations, unpayable national debt, and coercive structural adjustment programs in Africa make an exclusive focus on individual human rights unrealistic, if not counterproductive.

Finally, I believe it is important to recognize the possibility of collective rights as human rights (Van Dyke 1985), rather than as part of domestic or constitutional structures, or under international law in general (Thornberry 1991; Kymlicka 1995; Anaya 1996). The special value of the modern human rights paradigm is that it provides an external normative frame of reference to which victims can appeal for redress against their own governments in accordance with universal standards applicable to all human beings without distinction on grounds such as race, gender, belief, or national origin.

While drawing on previous and existing experiences, the proposed approach to the development of collective rights can be distinguished as follows. Treaty-based regimes for the protection of religious and ethnic minorities can be seen as one of the antecedents of the present human rights paradigm in that they imposed obligations under international law. But those minority-rights regimes offered only specific protections for discrete minorities, rather than as a matter of general principles of international human rights law applicable to all groups throughout the world. In any case, the whole system ended with the collapse of the League of Nations and was deliberately rejected at the time of the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Steiner and Alston 1996, 86-89). Domestic constitutional regimes not only vary with the peculiar historical, economic, and political context of each country but are also supposed to operate only within the domestic constitutional framework of the country in question (McDonald 1991). In other words, domestic regimes as such do not permit the possibility of challenging their own scope and/or implementation in terms of internationally established norms and institutions. My point here is that, while constitutional regimes of rights should certainly be maintained and improved, they should not be seen as an adequate substitute for the development of an internationally recognized regime of collective human rights which brings the benefits of the above-mentioned external, international frame of reference.

It is true that the notion of collectivities as bearers of rights is problematic because of ambiguities of the nature and dynamics of membership, as well as agency and representation, as will be briefly discussed in the next section of this paper (Johnston 1995). But it should be noted that the notion of individual human rights as entitlement of all human beings by virtue of their humanity and without distinction on such grounds as race, gender, belief, or national origin also had its problems. That is, the present concept of individual human rights is the product of a long historical process of contestation and negotiation. The practical implementation of individual human rights continues to be hampered by entrenched notions of sovereignty and exclusive territorial jurisdiction, weak acceptance of economic, social, and cultural rights, and so forth. In addition to facing similar difficulties of implementation, the notion of collective rights remains conceptually problematic precisely because it has not yet received serious consideration by human rights scholars and activists. What is important is that when collective rights are considered, they

should not be expected to fit the same conceptual framework and implementation strategies of individual rights (Abi Sab 1980, 163).

In conclusion of this section, I suggest that the same dynamics that have transformed the rights of citizens into universal rights of all human beings will probably continue to propel further evolution of the concept, as well as its content and implementation mechanisms. The initial transformation of the concept of domestic constitutional rights into the paradigm adopted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was produced by a sequence of local and global developments culminating in the catastrophic events leading to and including the Second World War, which exposed the drastic inadequacy of exclusive national jurisdictions for the protection of civil liberties. The political will to combat a state's oppression of its own citizens generated the conceptual and institutional instruments of the modern movement for the promotion and protection of universal human rights. While much needs to be done to realize that vision, significant progress in the protection of individual civil and political rights has already been achieved around the world. The same drive must continue today, I suggest, to expand the conceptual and institutional limits of the present framework in response to new threats to the protection of human rights arising from local and global developments. This possibility is particularly important for the application of a human rights paradigm to issues of proselytization.

THE MEDIATION OF COMPETING CLAIMS OF PROSELYTIZATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

In the section on the dynamics of proselytization above I have attempted to highlight the basic dilemma presented by such activities, especially in the present African context. For one thing, the issue is hardly ever simply and exclusively a matter of communicating a religious message to be accepted or rejected on its own terms. As a deliberate effort to change the spiritual and material conditions of target groups, proselytization is by definition offensive and hegemonic—it is premised on the assumption of proselytizers that the belief systems and institutions of target groups need to change, and that those of the proselytizer offer a better alternative. Moreover, the claims of proselytizers that they have a “right” to propagate their beliefs, while their target groups have the “freedom” to accept or reject the message, overlook the role of power relations. Without a power differential in their favor, proselytizers would not have the self-confidence and resources needed in seeking to convert others. Yet, without redressing that differential, the freedom of the target community to accept or reject the message cannot be realized. Nevertheless, I have concluded, proselytization is too integral to people's lives to be suppressed altogether, yet it is too problematic to leave totally unregulated.

In response, I suggested that a human rights paradigm should be applied to mediate competing claims about proselytization and its consequences. However,

given the communal nature and implications of the interaction, especially in the African context, the proposed human rights paradigm should include collective or group rights as well as the rights of individual persons. The primary reason for the need for collective rights is that communal concerns are necessarily those of the community at large, rather than of some of their specific individual members. Otherwise, certain self-appointed elites will claim to speak on behalf of the whole community without credible accountability to that community. That is precisely what the human rights paradigm is supposed to prevent. In other words, for the human rights paradigm to play its mediatory role, it has to include collective rights as well as individual rights. Without the former, communal concerns cannot be properly formulated; and without the latter, there is the risk of elite appropriation of the voice of the community.

Assuming that the case made earlier for collective rights is accepted, how will these rights operate in practice without violating the rights of individual persons in the community? In particular, how will questions of membership, agency, and representation be resolved and by whom? For example, who is to decide on the existence and termination of the membership of a person in a specific community? To address these questions in proper context, it might be helpful to briefly specify some of the problems raised by the competing claims of proselytization and self-determination.

If the conclusions made earlier about the context and process of proselytization in Africa are to be formulated as problems to be overcome, they may read as follows:

1. How does one reduce, and eventually eliminate, the hegemonic, unilateral nature of proselytization in Africa? What is that rationale as agreed among all parties? Moreover, since that presupposes that all sides must understand and appreciate the concerns of one another, how can this prerequisite be realized?
2. If the validity of the assumptions of well-informed freedom of choice and fair play of matched protagonists on a "level playing field" is part of the answer to the above question, how can that be achieved and verified in practice? Would a voluntary "code of conduct" be sufficient without independent verification of compliance? If such verification is entrusted to a judicial or quasi-judicial institution of the state, what will safeguard against other forms of state interference for ulterior motives?
3. If another part of the answer is for proselytizers to respect the apprehensions of communities about the profound communal conditions of presumably autonomous individual action, how can that be achieved? Can proselytizers accept the proposition that individual decisions to convert, even if they were well-informed and freely made, undermine and erode communal identity and institutions, and yet still maintain the vigor of their "mission"? Doesn't such vigor require disrespect, if not contempt,

for the communal identity and institutions of the communities they seek to convert, which are probably based on the religion the proselytizers wish to replace with their own?

The approach I propose for addressing these questions in the African context is the process of mediation of competing claims rather than an attempt to prescribe specific solutions in advance. It is in this context that I see a vital role for the state not only as mediator of competing claims of proselytizers according to some basic "ground rules," but also as protector of the interests of the target groups. As noted earlier, given the inability and/or unwillingness of the state in Africa to perform this regulatory function, the so-called right to proselytize would be open to serious abuse without the prospects of redress. It was also noted above that since globalization simply intensifies existing power relations, it is likely to exacerbate any hegemonic or conflictual relations that may exist within the same African society, both among competing proselytizers, and between them and their "subjects."

But despite the importance of its role, the state is only one party to the process of mediation I am proposing. Other parties include existing religious institutions within the communities, other civil society organizations (whatever form or manner of operation they may actually take in the community), as well as representatives of proselytizing organizations or groups. Moreover, the external constituencies of those non-state actors also have their role. One of the consequences of globalization is that the increasing ease of communication and expanding reach of the media enable groups and communities throughout the world to cooperate in pursuit of shared objectives. As recently shown by the cases of Ogoni of Nigeria and Sabbistas of Mexico, apparently isolated local communities can now attract much attention and support for their cause among human rights organizations, environmental groups, and other constituencies from around the world.

Much of the success of the proposed process of mediation will depend, in my view, on the effectiveness of educating all parties about the concerns of the others. A related but slightly different requirement is the need to inspire or persuade all sides to positively respond to the concerns of the others. But first of all, there has to be an appreciation of the need for the mediation of competing claims. It is hoped that this book will contribute to the generation of such appreciation and the education of all the parties about each others' concerns, as well as inspire or persuade them to respond positively. If the proselytizers are true to their claims of moral commitment, they should understand and appreciate the concerns of the communities about the survival of their identity and institutions. Should that happen, then the communities would have no justification for refusing to allow proselytizing activities. But if either or both parties fail to live up to these mutual expectations, then the state should act as arbiter. The state in turn should be held accountable to civil society institutions for its performance of its role as arbiter. In this way, the mediation process acts as its own guardian.

REVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This volume moves from broader theoretical analysis to specific case studies that attempt to develop their own frameworks out of the concrete experiences of particular African countries or communities within a certain time frame. The two approaches clearly overlap. While theoretical analysis should draw on practical experience, case studies should lead to theoretical conclusions. Besides this introductory chapter, general theoretical analyses are also offered in the chapters by Farid Esack, J. Paul Martin and Harry Winter, and Lamin Sanneh. Political, theological, and legal aspects of proselytization in Africa are discussed in the chapters by Makau Mutua and J. D. van der Vyver. Specific case studies are presented by Tshikala K. Biaya, Chabha Bouslimani, Francis M. Deng, Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Hannah W. Kinoti, and Benjamin F. Soares.

The issue of definition is taken up by Martin and Winter in their analysis of the processes and dynamics of proselytization. Van der Vyver discerns a range of components of proselytization in terms of constitutional regulation in Africa. Deng compares modes of religious intervention in Sudan, identifying the varying elements of coercion and persuasion therein. Biaya examines new forms of popular proselytization whereby rival religious groups address each other through oral dialogue in the public sphere. Hackett argues that the increase in the use of modern media technologies has reshaped proselytizing techniques. Coupled with the growth in revivalist activity, this has aggravated Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria especially.

Several of the authors address the question of proselytization within wider contexts, whether that of relations between religion and the state, constitutional law, religious freedom, or religious growth and pluralization. The latter is particularly salient in the African context. Countries such as Kenya (Kinoti), Nigeria and Ghana (Hackett), and Congo-Zaire (Biaya) have experienced remarkable religious development and diversification in the postcolonial phase. Even predominantly Muslim countries such as Mali (Soares) and Algeria (Bouslimani) are characterized by a variety of Muslim groups with considerable diversity in religious discourses and practices. This type of development receives its impetus from both local and international agents.

In several of the chapters, the historical dimension of proselytization is emphasized. Soares compares the efforts of Malian Muslims in the nineteenth century to persuade others to abandon traditional practices such as spirit possession with the proselytization campaigns of a contemporary Muslim religious leader. Sanneh discusses how debates in precolonial Muslim Africa sowed the seeds for the separation of the religious and political spheres, despite subsequent fundamentalist attempts to join the two. He also compares the separation debate in Islam to the long history of discussions on church-state relations in the Christian West. Martin and Winter note the evolution of attitudes in Christian theological and missionary circles with regard to religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Bouslimani traces the interweaving of intra-Islamic

strands of Algeria's historical experience with the significant emergence of Islamist tendencies at present. Biaya describes the changing interreligious configurations and political manipulations of religious constituencies against the backdrop of the history of Zairian nationalism and the secularization of the postcolonial state.

Issues of identity and cultural self-determination recur in several papers. Mutua links the problems of the modern African state to persistent efforts by colonial, missionary, and present-day political leaders to propagate ideas that were antithetical to African values and identity. Deng demonstrates, through his exposition of Dinka religious thought, the importance of preserving cultural identity and continuity, and of resisting self-denying assimilation without excluding the possibility of integrating traits and ideas from other cultures. Bouslimani analyzes the complex interplay of religious, cultural, political, and ethnic forces which constitute the continually negotiated matrix of Algerian identity.

A number of authors analyze the conditions which give rise to or hinder proselytizing activities. These may be external and/or internal forces, viz. colonialism (Sanneh); the development of the modern African state (van der Vyver, Mutua, Sanneh); changing economic patterns (Kinoti); political manipulation (Biaya, Mutua); introduction of new actors, such as humanitarian agencies (Martin and Winter); new religious organizations, or influences, such as Christian and Islamic revivalist movements (Hackett, Soares, Bouslimani, Biaya, Kinoti); or Eastern mystical movements (Kinoti).

The chapters display the range of agents involved in proselytization—whether individuals (rulers, missionaries), groups (youth and women's groups, religious organizations, professional associations), institutions (mission agencies), nation-states, or world bodies (transnational religious associations). The state emerges as the primary actor in many cases (Mutua, van der Vyver, Deng, Sanneh, Bouslimani, Biaya). Yet, importantly, the covert and creative strategies employed by non-state actors (Soares, Biaya) in their efforts to proselytize and enjoy freedom of religious expression and association—even when constrained by political ideologies and institutions—are brought out.

Suggestions for resolving tensions created by excessive or coercive proselytizing are discussed by Hackett, Sanneh, Deng, and Kinoti. Several of the authors show, through their specific or more general examples, how the rights of (usually minority) religious groups to operate in the public sphere are shaped not just by official public or religious policy, but also by popular perceptions which circulate through the print and broadcast media, as well as more informally. A number of the chapters describe the effects of more sustained and militant forms of proselytization (Bouslimani, Soares, Hackett, Kinoti), which are often highlighted by news organizations and campaigners for religious liberty.

It is hoped that this book will provide a more nuanced and enhanced understanding of the complexity of proselytization in the present African context. The various contributions in this volume underscore both the pressing need

for, as well as the potential of, the type of mediation model proposed above. They also explicitly or implicitly indicate the complex relationship between proselytization and self-determination, and hence individual and group rights. All of these issues call for careful and well-informed reflection from different perspectives. In any case, it is hoped that the following chapters will show that proselytization is a much more compelling, challenging, and multifaceted subject for analysis than has been appreciated to the present time.

NOTES

¹ The term *communal* here indicates, as elaborated below, that the right to self-determination should not be confined to achieving political independence and separate statehood.

² This project builds directly on two preceding projects of the Law and Religion Program of Emory University. The first project was "Christianity and Democracy" (1989-92), and the second "Religious Human Rights" (1992-95). The themes of the extensive program of discussion and publication generated by those two projects clearly indicated that issues of proselytization and its implications are intimately connected to conceptions, institutions, and processes of democratization, as well as to the definition and protection of religious human rights in all parts of the world.

³ While proselytization efforts usually target individuals, rather than the whole group as such all at once, I am here using the notion "target group" as the operational term to indicate the strategic use of individuals in transforming the status of the community as a whole. Reference to groups is also appropriate for the purposes of this chapter in particular because conflicts generally occur between communities (whether religiously, culturally, or politically conceived), rather than isolated and autonomous individuals.

⁴ The term *beliefs* is used instead of *faith* throughout this Introduction because the latter term is normally used to refer to so-called world religions to the exclusion of indigenous traditions, which are particularly important in the African context.

⁵ For example, as a cognitive psychologist, Leon Festinger sought to develop a theory of why and how proselytization occurred. Goodman draws on variations of this theory in arguing that the early Christians could not agree on certain important theological questions, so they focused on proselytizing new members to calm the movement's internal disagreement. For social-science analysis, see Rambo 1993 and Hefner 1993.

⁶ On the crisis of the postcolonial state and the search for explanation, see Young 1994, 2-12.

⁷ Young calls the postcolonial state in Africa the "integral state," which he defines as "a design of perfected hegemony, whereby the state seeks to achieve unrestricted domination over civil society."

⁸ I am referring here to the classification made by Clark 1995, 5.

⁹ On page 170 of this article, Fisher characterized his disagreement with Horton as a matter of focal point in the consideration of religious development. See also Hackett's discussion of different types of "conversion."

¹⁰ This book is useful as a historical overview, though somewhat dated. For example, he does not address Islamic political movements, and his use of the term "Islamization" is not nuanced in the modern sense of the term.

¹¹ Hiskett supports Humphrey Fisher's three stages of conversion to Islam—quarantine, mixing, and reform—but stresses that they cannot be applied rigidly. For another example of specific case studies on the spread of Islam, see Banwo 1995.

¹² This second source includes a statistical table of Muslims and Christians in Africa.

¹³ When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, it was envisaged that binding treaties would follow. In due course, the two main human rights treaties—International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—were adopted in 1966. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination already had been adopted in 1965. Others followed, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984; and Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. On the UN human rights system, see Steiner and Alston 1996, 347-455.

¹⁴ Namely, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950; The American Convention on Human Rights of 1969; and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981. There is no regional system for Asia yet. On these regional systems, see Steiner and Alston 1996, 563-705.

¹⁵ On the concept of "collective rights" and its relation to ideas of individual rights see, for example, Van Dyke 1982, 21-40; Garet 1983, 1001-75; MacDonald 1989, 117-36; Sanders 1991, 217-419.

¹⁶ See, for example, the International Labour Organization's Convention concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries (ILO, No. 107) of 1957 and the Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO, No. 169) of 1989. The European regional system is also beginning to tentatively explore the possibility of collective rights, as can be seen in the 1994 document "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities." However, the most far-reaching formulations of collective rights so far are to be found under the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981.

¹⁷ This Convention was adopted 18 December 1979 and entered into force 3 September 1981. At the time of writing, the Convention has been ratified by more than 150 states, reflecting a truly remarkable consensus across regional, cultural, political, and economic boundaries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abi Sab, Georges. 1980. "The Legal Formulation of a Right to Development," *Le droit au développement au plan international: colloque*, La Haye, 16-18 Octobre 1979 (The Right to Development at the International Level: Workshop. The Hague, October 16-18, 1979). Hague Academy of International Law. 159-75.
- Aina, Tade Akin. 1997. *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa: Issues and Research Directions*. Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA Working Paper Series 6/96.
- Al-Mubarak. 1981. *Nizam al-Islam fi al-Hukm wa al-Dawla* (The Islamic Order for Governance and the State). Beirut: Da al-Fikr.
- Anaya, S. James. 1995. "The Capacity of International Law to Advance Ethnic or Nationality Rights Claims," in Kymlicka 1995.

- . 1996. *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- An-Na'im, Abdullahi A. 1990. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.
- An-Na'im, Abdullahi A., and Francis M. Deng. 1996. "Self-Determination and Unity: The Case of Sudan," *Law & Policy* 18, 199-233.
- Asad, Talal. 1996. "Comments on Conversion," in *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, edited by Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge.
- Ayoade, John A. A. 1988. "States without Citizens: An Emerging African Phenomenon," in *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, edited by Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, 100-18. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Bach, Daniel C. 1993. "Reappraising Postcolonial Geopolitics: Europe, Africa and the End of the Cold War," in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. Kirk-Greene*, edited by Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, 247-57. London: Macmillan.
- Banwo, Adeyinka. 1995. "The Nineteenth Century Ilorin Wars and the Growth of Islam in Yorubaland: A Re-Assessment," *Hamdard Islamicus* 18, 85-97.
- Bartholomew, Craig. 1994. "The Challenge of Islam in Africa," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 6, 129-46.
- Beidelman, Thomas O. 1974. "Social Theory and the Study of Christian Missions in Africa," *Africa* 44, 235-49.
- . 1981. "Contradictions between the Sacred and the Secular Life: The Church Missionary Society in Ukaguru, Tanzania, East Africa, 1876-1914," *Comparative Studies in Sociology and History* 23, 73-95.
- . 1982. *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Chabal, Patrick. 1986. "Introduction: Thinking about Politics in Africa," in *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, edited by Patrick Chabal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, Christopher. 1995. *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia 1728-1941*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution*. 2 volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Falk, Richard. 1995. "Regionalism and World Order after the Cold War," *St. Louis-Warsaw Transatlantic Law Journal*, 71-88.
- Festinger, Leon. 1957. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Fisher, Humphrey. 1973. "Conversion Reconsidered," *Africa* 43, 27-40.
- . 1986. "The Juggernaut's Apology: Conversion to Islam in Black Africa," *Africa* 55, 153-73.
- Garet, Ronald. 1983. "Communitarity and Existence: The Rights of Groups," *Southern California Law Review* 56, 1001-75.
- Goodman, Martin. 1994. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytization in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Haafkins, Johaanes. 1994. *Claiming the Promise: African Churches Speak*. New York: Friendship Press.
- . 1995. "The Christian Muslim Encounter in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Church and Society* (March/April), 66-78.

- Hackett, Rosalind I. J. 1989. *Religion in Calabar*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hefner, Robert, ed. 1993. *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hiskett, Mervyn. 1984. *The Development of Islam in Western Africa*. New York: Longman.
- Horton, Robin. 1971. "African Conversion," *Africa* 41, 85-108.
- . 1975. "On the Rationality of Conversion," *Africa* 45, 219-35, and 373-99.
- Isichei, Elizabeth. 1970. "Seven Varieties of Ambiguity: Some Patterns of Igbo Response to Christian Missions," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 3, 209-27.
- . 1995. *A History of Christianity in Africa*. London: The Society for Publishing Christian Knowledge.
- Jackson, Robert H., and Carl G. Rosberg. 1986. "Sovereignty and Underdevelopment: Juridical Statehood in the African Crisis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, 5-6.
- Johnston, D. "Native Rights as Collective Rights: A Question of Group Self-Preservation," in Kymlicka 1995, 179-201.
- King, Noel. 1971. *Christians and Muslims in Africa*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kymlicka, Will, ed. 1995. *The Rights of Minority Cultures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McCracken, John. 1977. *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacDonald, Ian. 1989. "Group Rights," *Philosophical Papers* 28, 117-36.
- McDonald, M., ed. 1991. *Collective Rights*, special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 4, 217-419.
- Macmullen, Ramsay. 1984. *Christianizing the Roman Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Marty, Martin, and Frederick E. Greenspan, eds. 1988. *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World*. New York: Crossroad.
- Mlinar, Zdravko. 1992. "Individuation and Globalization: The Transformation of Territorial Social Organization," in *Globalization and Territorial Identities*, edited by Zdravko Mlinar, 15-34. Brookfield, Vt.: Avebury.
- Morrison, K. F. 1992. *Understanding Conversion*. Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press.
- Okoth-Ogendo, H. W. 1991. "Constitutions without Constitutionalism: Reflections on an African Political Paradox," in *State and Constitutionalism: An African Debate on Democracy*, edited by Issa G. Shivji, 3-25. Harare, Zimbabwe: Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust.
- Othman, Shehu. 1993. "Postscript: Legitimacy, Civil Society and the Return of Europe," in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. Kirk-Greene*, edited by Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, 258-62. London: Macmillan.
- Rambo, Lewis. 1993. *Understanding Religious Conversion*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Rouse, Ruth. 1936. "The Missionary Motive," *International Review of Missions* 25, 250-58.
- Sanders, Douglas. 1991. "Collective Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 13, 217-419.

- Sanneh, Lamin. 1993. *Encountering the West—Christianity and the Global Cultural Process: The African Dimension*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- . 1997. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Shepherd Jr., George W. 1981. "Transnational Development of Human Rights: The Third World Crucible," in *Global Human Rights: Public Policies, Comparative Measures and NGO Strategies*, edited by V. P. Nanda, J. R. Scarritt, and G. W. Shepherd Jr. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Shivji, Issa G. 1991. "State and Constitutionalism: A New Democratic Perspective," in *State and Constitutionalism: An African Debate on Democracy*, edited by Issa G. Shivji, 27-54. Harare, Zimbabwe: Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust.
- Steiner, Henry, and Philip Alston. 1996. *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Thornberry, Patrick. 1991. *International Law and the Rights of Minorities*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Trimingham, Spencer. 1968. *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishing.
- Van Dyke, Vernon. 1982. "Collective Rights and Moral Rights: Problems in Liberal Democratic Thought," *Journal of Politics* 44, 21-40.
- . 1985. *Human Rights, Ethnicity and Discrimination*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Yates, Timothy. 1994. *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Young, Crawford. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.