CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EXPANDING BOUNDARIES OF RECOGNITION AND MOBILITY? — OTHERWORLDLY RHETORIC AND THIS-WORLDLY ORGANISATION IN AN AFRICAN BASED CHARISMATIC CHURCH IN GERMANY

Susanne Kröhnert-Othman

In every generation there is adjustment when a particular church is established since a longer time, there has to be a change... in the next twenty years our method might not work... we train our children and they will reach their friends. I do not need to teach my child how to integrate into German society... integration is a gradual process. We want to reach the nation. There are many ways of getting into the society, into the people. You need to have a heart for the people... Today integration is all over the world. It is only the colour of the skin we can’t change (Rev. M.).

Introduction

The above statement encompasses the scope and mode of expansion that a Charismatic Christian leader of African origin at a church in Germany envisions for growth and at the same time hints at theoretical implications of “integration” via an immigrant religious community: the issue of future in terms of a generational take over and the meaning of “race” that I shall discuss in this chapter. I will analyse ethnic boundary work (Wimmer 2008; Lamont 2000; Zolberg and Long 1999) in the social environment of an African-based Charismatic Church that promotes the

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1 Research at the Charismatic church and at an “Arab” mosque in the same region of Western Germany was conducted from 2006 to 2009 and supported as a Post-Doc Research Fellowship by the German Research Foundation.
2 Integration is the popular term used in the German context and connotes an assimilationist view of incorporation in policy-approaches and a public perception of obligations of immigrants to fit into the society.
3 Race is understood as a cultural script that inhabits a territory of strategies of action, symbolic boundaries, cognitive classifications, scripts of personhood and collective identity and ideologies of racial inequality. It can be understood as a structuring property of a social environment (Lamont 1999: xi).
project of an “International”\textsuperscript{4} Church. My theoretical point of entry to new dynamics of religious expansion here is the question in what way specific contentious boundary strategies—promoted by leaders who claim symbolic integration into Global Christianity—together with organisational practices shape the room for manoeuvre for migrants of African background in the Christian field and in other fields of a modern secularised immigration society like Germany. From this point of entry I will show that any thinking of mission as directional—of reverse or of multidirectional flows—needs to take into consideration a new complexity of mission in present day postcolonial settings. Church communities not only want to bring together people of all walks of life, all nations, and all previous religious affiliations but also need to build common sense community structures, and at the same time transform the racialized traditional symbolic order of mission.

From a life-world approach it seems problematic to focus on “integration” via religion since religion is a broad abstract concept that crosses life-worlds and is symbolically and structurally embedded in different ways in the realms of a modern society as invisible religion (Luckmann 1967). Furthermore, individuals take different roles in different social life-worlds at the same time and the diversification of life-worlds in modern societies force not only immigrants to cross boundaries of a milieu be it religious or traditional—in their efforts to conduct a meaningful personal life and become socially mobile (Neckel and Soeffner 2008; Bommes 2004). Religious symbolic integrations of “honour” and “prestige” or “rightness” that are considered legitimate in the religious life-world and inform social positioning and religious organisation are not necessarily relevant in other spheres of society—and eventually conflict with diverging symbolic orders of credit and recognition in other spheres of society like the labour market, education and politics.

In my case study of a single African based Charismatic organisation I will analyse negotiations of identity and emic scripts of morality, belonging and positioning (Lamont 2000) as elements of ethnic boundary work, which simultaneously enhance and restrict mobility. By doing so I intend to contribute to a debate about immigrants’ becoming socially settled in a Western European immigration society. When talking about the inter-

\textsuperscript{4} The label international is not a supplement to express the global reach of a mother church but to mark the project of a multi-national charismatic community (see Asonzeh 2007).