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## Modes of legitimation by female Pentecostal-Charismatic preachers in East Africa: a comparative study in Kenya and Tanzania

Nandera Ernest Mhando<sup>a</sup>, Loreen Maseno<sup>b,c</sup>, Kupakwashe Mtata<sup>d</sup> and Mathew Senga<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;

<sup>b</sup>Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy, Maseno University, Nairobi, Kenya; <sup>c</sup>Department of Biblical and Ancient studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa; <sup>d</sup>Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, Bayreuth, Germany

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rise of female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) church leaders and how they legitimize themselves in a male dominated religious field in Kenya and Tanzania. It explores, in a qualitative way, four women leaders' modes of attaining legitimacy in African PC milieus and contributes empirically based knowledge from four cases which include Eleonorah Wambui of Prosperity Gospel Ministries and Jesca Njuguna of Prophetic Word Ministry in Kenya, as well as Neema Mwambembela of Holy Ghost Power Assemblies and Irene John of Miracle Prayer Ministry in Tanzania.<sup>1</sup> We make reference to Boulding's delineation of sources of legitimacy ([1967] 'The Legitimacy of Economics.' *Economic Inquiry* 5 (4): 299–307). We found that the four East African female preachers that we examined share certain common practices, but that differences are manifest among them owing to differences in their personal preferences and to the contextual flavour of each ministry.

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Pentecostalism; female church leaders; sources of legitimacy; Kenya; Tanzania

This paper explores some of the impacts of Christianity in East African urban society through an examination of four cases of female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) leaders, two in Kenya and two in Tanzania. The way Christianity accords some women in Africa the possibility to take public leadership roles has already been highlighted by others (cf. Agadjanian 2015; Kalu 2008; Parsitau 2012; Sanders 1996). That Pentecostal Christianity has elevated some women has been acknowledged, but how it has done so has not been given much consideration. Some of the effects Christian religious innovation has had on African society is evident in the way a number of female Pentecostal Christians find space to express themselves in public arenas. Many women find alternative pathways to church leadership in Pentecostal spirituality, so that it could be regarded as a pedagogy of the oppressed with its emancipatory power most evident among women (Johns 1993; Kalu 2008; Parsitau 2012). Sanders (1996, 7) explains that the positive affirmation of womanhood in Pentecostal churches 'sets apart these churches from [...] Protestant and Catholic traditions whose exclusion of women from top leadership is grounded in the rejection of the full humanity of women.'

This paper focuses on how emancipation is achieved and maintained in the case of four African female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) leaders in Tanzania and Kenya, with each case studied by one of the authors of this paper. The two cases in Tanzania are those of Neema Mwambembela (NM) of Holy Ghost Power Assemblies (HGPA) and Irene John (IJ) of Miracle Prayer Ministry in Tanzania (MPM). The Kenyan cases include Jesca Njuguna (JN) of Prophetic Word Ministry in Kenya (PWM) as well as Eleonorah Wambui (EW) of Prosperity Gospel Ministries (PGM). We explore the strategies deployed by these women leaders of PC congregations and the processes of negotiation in which they engage in their attempts to maintain power.

The current rise of women leaders is occurring in the context of a number of old and new conditions in PC Christianity. The conditions in which it occurs which are particularly pertinent to PC Christianity include the prevalence of the discourse of warfare and conquest; the ambitious, imaginary and real enlargement of operations in magnitude, time and space; the storage and distribution of information and cognitive achievements, for example, in literature and audio-visual recordings, and through training at colleges and universities; capitalistic accumulation of wealth by church leaders; cognitive distribution through the pooling together and organising of specialised skills and knowledge; collective self-identification and coalescing of core powerful groups; convergence around key figures who articulate and inspire passion for conquest; and cognitive and corporeal distribution and organising by means of proliferating electrical and electronic gadgets and automobiles.<sup>2</sup> Of concern here is how these conditions are conducive for the rise and reproduction of women's leadership just as that of their male counterparts.

Four cases of PC churches initiated and run by women were chosen based on their prominence in their countries. More specifically, selection was done based on the wide influence the churches radiate in their countries and beyond, their large or rapidly increasing following, their robust use of various forms of media, their location in the capitals of their countries, and their capacity to attract prominent figures in society. To each case was assigned a researcher to conduct ethnographic fieldwork for a period of 4–6 months, with a 2-month break halfway through. Researchers were present in the routine activities of the congregations as participant observers. Though in some cases it was not possible to gain direct access to the female PC leader, each researcher creatively gained access to the churches in a variety of ways including attending church services and workshops, watching online video broadcasts of church services, 'eavesdropping' on relevant social media platforms, browsing through material about and/or by the church, and interviewing the church leaders or their proxies and their congregants wherever this was possible.

In the Tanzanian cases, the researchers were able to gain some access to congregants. In Kenya, the researchers were unable to have one or one sessions with the female PC leaders despite making concerted efforts. In the case of Eleonorah Wambui of Prosperity Gospel Ministries, the researcher was allowed to interview her proxy - her son who is a senior pastor in the church. The researchers however met with other leaders in the congregations, and also interacted with congregants on different occasions. The data gathered demonstrates how each of the four women preachers legitimises herself as a leader. The data was analysed by considering what it tells us about the self-legitimation of the leader in question. From the data gathered, some common themes emerged regarding the self-legitimation of the women leaders and their ministries: The sources

of legitimacy suggested by Boulding (1967) fostered understanding of significant commonalities and differences amongst the four cases.

## Women and church leadership in Africa

The rise of female PC leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades has seen, for about a decade now, a rising academic focus on the phenomenon. A survey of literature indicates a proliferation of publications of studies on women PC church leaders in Africa: namely, in Ghana (Novieto 2013), Kenya (Parsitau 2014, 2012, 2011), Mozambique (Agadjanian 2015), Nigeria (Bateye 2007; Fatokun 2006), Zambia (Mungaila 2015), and Zimbabwe (Mapuranga 2013). A few women are asserting themselves on a terrain where men have dominated for a long time. To ascend to positions of leadership these women face many hurdles. There are cultural expectations about the roles women should play in society and about their demeanour in public. There are religious traditions and scripture readings which require women to take subordinate positions in society. There are, however, enabling factors as well; for instance, the influence of the discourse on gender justice, the ambiguous nature of the religious or social field, and various capitals and habitus possessed by particular female leaders.

The current wave of Pentecostalism in East Africa is said to have its roots, on the one hand, in the economic challenges brought about by the economic structural adjustment programmes sponsored by the Bretton Woods institutions, and on the other, in the upsurge of health problems as a result of the proliferation of HIV (Dilger 2007; Meyer 2010; Mwaura and Parsitau 2012; Robbins 2014). Rural to urban migration in many African countries is leading to increasing numbers of people being trapped in urban poverty (Hove, Emmaculate, and Cyprian 2013).

Spinks (2016) catalogues the various ways in which Pentecostal Christianity has had an impact on the lives of African women in two extremes. One is the pessimistic idea that Pentecostal Christianity gives only superficial and temporary empowerment to African women, and that substantial change will only occur if there are far-reaching structural changes in African societies. The other is the optimistic notion that Pentecostal Christianity is creating new autonomous spaces for African women to exercise their freedom from male monopolies of power. We acknowledge the paradoxically liberating but limiting impact of Pentecostal Christianity on women to which reference has often been made (Attanasi 2013; Brusco 2010; Mate 2002; Miller and Yamamori 2007, 208–210; Parsitau 2012).

Kalu identifies four prominent discourses regarding influential women in African Pentecostalism. These comprise 'founders, leaders of support ministries, pastor's wives and temptresses'. By this understanding we could place the prominent Kenyan female church leaders, EW and JN, among others, under the founders' category. However, he also observes that 'women access power in the church or religious space more easily through the exercise of their spirituality' and that this is most feasible 'among the groups that emphasize the pneumatic aspects' (2008, 163).

In Tanzania, Dilger (2009) notes that faith-based organisations such as the two 'neo-Pentecostal congregations' he studied in Dar-es-Salaam, reacted to the predicaments of the HIV/AIDS epidemic by establishing concrete activities in responding to related illnesses and deaths of community members. While we are interested in explaining strategies of

legitimation by female church leaders, Dilger uses these faith-based initiatives to show interconnections among religion, transnationally driven development, and the globalisation of health politics in urban Tanzania.

## Theoretical framework

Our analysis is based on the concept of modes of self-legitimation in a field of power.<sup>3</sup> This can be described as the acquisition and conversion of capital in a bid to occupy positions of power in a landscape of contestation, in which one's actions are circumscribed by one's desires, beliefs, and perceived opportunities (Bourdieu 1986, 1987, 1991; Hedström 2005). Bourdieu follows Weber in dividing religious legitimacy into, on the one hand, what is based on personal charisma, and, on the other, what ensues from institutional or office charisma (1987). However, Bourdieu interprets this Weberian typology using the set of concepts that make up his theory of practice, namely, the idea of a field of power and the interactions within it by agents occupying certain positions and wielding certain capitals. In the case of the religious field, these agents are the independent initiators, namely, the prophets and magicians whose legitimacy lies in their personal ability to appeal to the whims and desires of the laity by consolidating and embodying underlying matters of concern in the laity's milieu. There are also the official reproducers, namely, the priests, whose legitimacy is based on the authority of an official and bureaucratic church system. These religious agents are engaged in competition in the religious field. For Bourdieu, what is at stake in competition within the religious field is 'the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and worldview of laypeople, by imposing and inculcating in them a particular religious habitus' (Bourdieu 1987, 126).

The sources of legitimacy that make it possible for a religious leader to be able to effectively inculcate a certain religious habitus in a group of laypeople are most clearly given in Boulding (1967), although Boulding was writing about quite a different subject.<sup>4</sup> Having defined legitimacy as acceptance of an institution or organisation as proper, justified, and acceptable, Boulding notes that legitimacy may be internal or external to the collective in question. Internal legitimacy is the self-belief, moral or nerve of the members of the collective about the mission and practices of their organisation, whereas external legitimacy is acceptance of the collective's mission and practices by non-members. In our study the dichotomy between internal and external legitimacy is not emphasised because the difference between external and internal in our cases depends on perspective chosen. What is internal or what is external may depend on whether we are considering the legitimacy of the individual leaders or of their ministries.<sup>5</sup>

Boulding goes on to identify the sources of legitimacy as positive payoffs, negative payoffs, time, mystery, symbols of legitimacy, and alliances. Positive pay-offs comprise what the organisation offers to its members or to its environment. Negative payoffs refer to the sacrifice trap, namely that 'if we begin making sacrifices for something, the admission that the sacrifices were in vain would be a threat to our internal legitimacy' (Boulding 1967, 300). Thus, humans tend to value and believe what they invest their valued resources in. We tend to justify our sacrifices. More so, while 'sacrifice creates sacredness,' 'sacredness justifies sacrifice' (Boulding 1967). But unbearable levels of sacrifice may lead to snapping or giving up, as when a person decides 'To hell with it!' (301).

The legitimacy of time may ensue from novelty, or from antiquity. The legitimacy of the mysterious comes from the assumption that what we do not fully understand may still have some value. As Boulding puts it, 'We often regard as legitimate what we do not understand or what we only dimly understand' (1967). Symbols of legitimacy include impressive buildings, rituals, clothing, incense, dance, art, architecture, and the knowledge and memory of sacred scriptures. There is, however, a danger that extravagance, where it calls for extreme sacrifice or where it fails to acknowledge the worth of those who cannot afford, may lead to rebellion. Legitimacy that derives from associations and alliances comes from the fact that 'legitimacy [as well as de-legitimation] is something that rubs off' (302).

It can be argued that the sources of legitimacy as proposed by Boulding are neither exhaustive nor limited to the legitimation of women leaders. We do not, however, propose to identify sources of legitimacy limited to women leaders as though leadership by women is wholly different from that by men. The gender aspect of our discussion is based on deliberate mainstreaming of leadership by women, where we chose cases of women leaders of churches and deliberately avoided cases of their male equivalents. We agree with both Bourdieu and Boulding that the pursuit of legitimacy is often a sub-conscious pursuit. We do not claim or suggest therefore that the PC leaders discussed here are cynical and devious Machiavellian actors in the religious field. Some biographical sketches of the PC leaders will now be introduced before a more detailed discussion is presented on the discernible sources of their legitimacy.

## **Biographical sketch of the PC church leaders**

### ***Neema Mwambembela of Holy Ghost Power Assemblies***

Neema Mwambembela (NM) was born in 1950 and received her calling in the early 1990s. She started holding fellowship with a few people in a classroom. By 1995 she founded her church, Holy Ghost Power Assemblies (HGPA), a Pentecostal church linked to the Assemblies of God Tanzania, and moved to a building in Mikocheni B, a residential area in the Kinondoni district of the city of Dar es Salaam. In addition to the main church and head office in Mikocheni B, there are five more branches elsewhere in Dar es Salaam. Top on the church's hierarchy is NM, who is referred to as Reverend, Doctor, Mother, and Bishop. She is assisted by six pastors, five male and one female. Next down the hierarchy are nine evangelists followed by six senior elders, and then twenty-nine church elders. In its administration, the church has a male secretary, a female administrator, and two female secretaries, one for the church and the other, the personal assistant to the bishop.

The theologico-ideological thrust of NM's ministry is the gospel of prosperity with an emphasis on material wealth, community development, and spiritual and bodily healing. Membership has grown from an estimated 7000 to 10,000 members in 2009 (Dilger 2009, 98). By the beginning of 2017 the membership had further increased, with attendance increasing at Sunday services at all branches of the church, and the numbers of those who attended special workshops held at the church grounds having risen considerably. A quick scan of congregants present during church services shows that most church members are women. As noted by Dilger (2009), although the church is referred to as a 'church of the rich', most of its members come from poorer social

and economic conditions. This was confirmed more recently by one of us in 2017 (Mhando 2017).

NM worked before as a Port Personnel Officer for the Tanzania Port Authority. In 2006 she established an orphanage centre providing shelter and education to about 700 children with large support from her church and from the organisation Feed the Children (Dilger 2009, 99). In 2009, she founded a group of schools, which comprises schools from nursery to high school in different regions in Tanzania, as well as a teacher's college in Dar es Salaam. The initial construction of the schools was supported by the Christian Working Woman, a U.S. based organisation (Dilger 2009). Pastors and ministers from Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa are invited to preach or teach at Sunday services and special workshops held in different venues in Dar es Salaam. NM secured a women's special-seat in parliament for the period 2017–2020. She was first nominated by the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), for the same for the period 2007–2015.

### ***Irene John of Miracle Prayer Ministry in Tanzania***

Irene John (IJ) celebrates her birthday on July 7th by holding a party every year at her church. However, neither she nor her congregants would disclose her actual age for reasons that are unknown. In 2010, IJ started a prayer ministry outside her house in the Kigamboni area, a residential suburb in the Kigamboni district of the city of Dar es Salaam. She later relocated to Mbezi Beach Magogoni claiming that God had revealed to her that Kigamboni had too many adulterers. In 2012, she shifted to the Mbezi Beach Salasala area where her church remains located today.

The leadership structure at the Church of Jesus Christ Prayer Ministry is hierarchical. At the top is IJ herself, referred to as 'prophet', followed by the elders (presbyters) who form the governing body, followed by teachers and evangelists and, ultimately, the ordinary congregant (Senga 2017). With approximately 1000 followers, her church is known for its emphasis on prophecy and fasting. It is believed that she fasts for up to seven days without a break. Before the construction of the church building at Mbezi Beach Salasala, the Registrar of Associations in the Ministry of Home Affairs banned IJ's church activities at Mbezi Beach Magogoni after complaints by neighbours that her church ministry was making too much noise and disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the neighbourhood.

### ***Jesca Njuguna of Prophetic Word Ministry in Kenya***

Prophetic Word Ministry (PWM) is a ministry<sup>6</sup> started by Jesca Njuguna (JN). Born in 1957 in Waitthaka (Kinyanjui 2011, 95), JN received her calling and mission through a supernatural encounter on 21 July 1985, which is outlined comprehensively in her autobiography. In 1988, after a meeting by Reinhardt Bonnke, founder of Christ for All Nations in Oslo, Norway, JN teamed up with a few women and started a lady's fellowship in her house. The intention of this fellowship was outreach and prayer on a small scale. She resolved that her ministry would be based on prayer, grounded in faith, and evidenced by the gifts of the Spirit, with the demonstration of signs and wonders. This fellowship morphed from a ladies' fellowship to an interdenominational fellowship. When some men later joined the team and the group expanded, a more spacious venue became necessary (Kinyanjui 2011, 255).

By end of the 1980s she held mass meetings in different towns of Kenya, starting PWM International in 1989 and registering it the same year. The ministry was gathering once a month at that time. An estimate of 250,000 to 300,000 people attended her monthly crusades at Uhuru Park where she was described as a crowd puller, possessing an electrifying demeanour (Parsitau 2014, 146). Uhuru Park is a large recreational park adjacent to the central business district in Nairobi.

After fourteen years of holding second Sunday of the month meetings at Uhuru Park, she started a family church in Karen, a residential suburb of the city of Nairobi (Maseno 2017). The Karen PWM church building, which cost to the tune of over one billion Kenya shillings, was dedicated on 14 August 2016. The building was officially opened by Reinhardt Bonnke and the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta. This was highly publicised and aired on Kenyan national TV channels such as K24, Citizen TV and NTV (Maseno and Odhiambo 2017).

PWM has an international presence. In the USA, it goes by the name Jesca Njuguna Prophetic Ministry (JNPM) based in Texas. In the United Kingdom, PWM has a branch in London. Besides its evangelistic work, PWM has a philanthropic organisation, Operation Give & Grow (OGG), founded in 2007 with the aim of reaching the marginalised in society with feeding programmes, child sponsorships and health camps.

### *Eleonorah Wambui of Prosperity Gospel Ministries*

In her doctoral thesis Parsitau presented a profile of EW, a part of which she obtained from EW's own presentation of herself to the Kenyan public as part of her campaign efforts in 2006 and 2007 for the post of Member of Parliament of Starehe Constituency, an eastern residential section of the city of Nairobi. EW's self-portrait is in the form of a typical evangelical conversion story of having been wallowing in the darkness of sin and then finding salvation through prayer, accepting the lordship of Jesus Christ after having being convinced by the gospel. EW claims that before her conversion she had participated in witchcraft and Satanism. Born in 1961 into a polygamous family, her father was an alcoholic, leaving her mother with the task of raising her and her siblings. They found themselves in abject poverty, living in the Kangemi slums of Nairobi and this forced her mother to make and sell illicit brews in order to feed and educate her children.

EW claims that, starting at age 16, she had two pregnancies with a man she hardly knew. This claim was later called into question when a man successfully thwarted EW's attempt to get married (again). The man, her erstwhile husband, took the case to court, claiming that he was still customarily married to EW and that they had two children together. EW's self-portrait is also that of having risen from rags to riches in line with her gospel of wealth, health and prosperity. In her teaching, conversion and obedience to God is said to be followed by prosperity and good health. Immediately after her conversion in 1990, EW ventured into open-air preaching in a small park in the CBD of Nairobi. Two years later she launched her church: Prosperity Gospel Ministries (PGM). In 1997, she was ordained a pastor by the founder and head of the Redeemed Gospel Church, Arthur Kitonga, in his capacity as a bishop. In 2002, ten years after the start of PGM, EW was consecrated as a bishop, again by Kitonga. PGM has ventured beyond the Kenyan borders with branches in Uganda, South Africa, United States, Australia and the United Kingdom (Maseno 2016b).



EW's desire to enter the political fray may have arisen after participating in a successful campaign to reject Kenya's 2005 draft constitution. In 2007 she won the post of Member of Parliament of a constituency in Nairobi as a candidate of the Orange Democratic Movement party (ODM). During the 2013 elections, EW's attempt to run for a county gubernatorial post was frustrated when ODM endorsed someone else as their candidate. As compensation, ODM gave EW the possibility to run for a senatorial post, which she lost. In 2017 EW was attempting to run again for the gubernatorial post, but this time under the ruling Jubilee party.

### Comparing PC leaders' sources of legitimacy

As we noticed during our field studies and on various media platforms, the four women PC leaders in Kenya and Tanzania draw from most of the sources of legitimacy suggested by Boulding (1967). However, there are differences regarding which sources of legitimacy are most salient as well as variations in the specific elements that constitute each type of legitimacy in each case. Fundamental to all the four leaders' constellations of sources of legitimacy is the fact that they are all Pentecostal preachers, in some cases with a background in non-Pentecostal missionary churches. This means that the preachers must be convincing in a Pentecostal way, namely, by emphasising and performing spiritual warfare, the affective or experientialism, Biblical fundamentalism, ascetic spiritual exercises, speaking in tongues and miracles of healing and economic prosperity. It is with this common base of Pentecostal practices and habitus that each leader seeks legitimacy in her own way.

All leaders offer positive payoffs in the form of prayers, promises and prophetic declarations of prosperity and healing for congregants, and revelations of God's plans. There are two issues relating to promises: promises are made and what was promised is then delivered. Promises are made in the context of preaching, praying and the giving of testimonies by those who claim to have already received what was promised or by the preacher claiming past successful exploits.

Take for instance the promises made in the context of teaching or preaching. In three church services of January 2017, EW taught her congregation in downtown Nairobi about setting goals. During the final teaching, on 29 January 2017, she checked if congregants had started writing down their goals for the year 2017. When only half of the congregation raised their hands, EW admonished those who had not, and urged them to write down their goals. She found support for her claim from the book of the prophet Habakkuk 2:2–4 in the Hebrew Bible and claimed,

When we present our goals to God in writing, God is the best reader you have ever met. He will read them *one by one by one by one* (with emphasis). He will fulfil them *one by one by one* ... It might not happen overnight, but it will happen ... And it will most likely happen within the timeframe we set for the goals. God reads!

Further, in the sermon EW teaches that prayer creates wealth and declares that the following Sunday church service will have less preaching and more praying to create wealth, jobs, promotions, and whatever else is needed.

What is promised is then delivered through alter calls, anointing rites, affective performances of fasting, loud speeches and prayers of affirmation, and soulful music. The

fulfilment of the written goals that EW had preached on the previous Sunday was further secured by what was dubbed 'an anointing service' the following Sunday in which congregants brought a copy of their written goals to the front of the church and deposited it there together with a special offering for the goals, after which they were each anointed with holy oil on their foreheads.

Deliverables such as these, as well as getting anointed or being prayed for by the laying on of hands by the bishop or prophet herself, are greatly valued and sought after – as is evident in the long queues of congregants for prayers and anointing towards the end of some church services. NM normally uses much less time than her subordinate pastors when she is preaching. She uses part of that little time to pray or prophesy for followers to receive prosperity and health. She delivers the goodies to her congregants by such declarations as 'All of you are rich, receive overseas travel, receive dollars and pounds, receive promotion at work, receive a car, receive property ...!' or 'Receive your healing ... receive your deliverance, in the name of Jesus!' IJ uses much more time to pray and prophesy in her services and gatherings. These meetings and services offered are known as Prayers for Workers, Morning Glory (early morning prayers), Prayers for individuals, Sunday school, Praises time, Testimonies, Word of God and Prayers for all (Senga 2017). Mostly she leads these services and in a few instances her subordinates take charge.

Other positive payoffs in all the four ministries include employment opportunities given to some church members, teachings and advice on how to operate in day-to-day living, complimentary mention of certain members of the congregation during sermons, and entertainment through music and the narrative and allegorical manner of preaching.

Each ministry has some sacrifice traps and other negative payoffs for its members. Members across the churches are commonly expected to devote much of their free time to the church. Members are enjoined to demonstrate commitment by attending several activities of the ministry over and above the Sunday church service. These include regularly held daily, weekly, monthly, and annual church gatherings as well as occasional additional events such as evangelistic outreaches. In some cases, members are exhorted to attend a weekly event of prayer that takes place the whole night.

Another sacrifice required of members is financial contributions to the work of the ministry. The privilege of becoming 'a partner' in some of the ministries is a financial commitment – a way of being tied to giving consistently to the work of the ministry. In EW's words:

Partners must contribute financially. I am not going to entertain that one partner is bringing money to the table but another is contributing nothing. If you do not have money, contribute skills. Even a big mouth is an asset to campaign for the vision. (Second sermon on 'Setting goals', 22 January 2017)

There are various categories of monetary gifts that are expected of members, some of which are just explicit requirements and others of which are tied to positive payoffs as well as to threats.

Reference to time is a source of self-legitimation in all the ministries. In 2013 JN's PWM celebrated its 25th anniversary with much pomp; during PGM's 2016 New Year church service, a poster was hung on the preacher's podium announcing EW's 13 years as bishop; in 2017 NM's church celebrated the 40th anniversary of her salvation. EW and JN have repeatedly narrated their biographies in interviews. In addition, JN has repeatedly written about how her ministry started, while EW has done the same in her preaching. On

her blog, IJ describes the history of her ministry, explaining the journey she travelled from the very beginning. However, she does not explicitly mention certain events that happened during her ministry.

A common and central source of legitimacy for the four women is the suggestion that they have a deeper access to the spiritual realm than their followers do, so that they have spiritual knowledge and revelations to share, and are therefore conduits of miraculous power to heal and to give prosperity needed by followers. During the church service referred to above, EW said to the congregation, 'You know, sometimes I just feel like cutting your heart open, remov[ing] something from my heart and deposit[ing] it in you.' By implicitly suggesting that there was something in her that others probably lacked, EW insinuated that she was more privileged in her knowledge about, and contact with, the spiritual realm. The mysterious quality of the leaders is also enhanced by their prophetic utterances. JN's way of making prophecy involves her claim to have been given some words by God to 'share with the people'. The divine words may be addressed to nations outside Kenya, to the nation of Kenya, including its political leadership, or to the church in Kenya. Her prophecies include warnings of impending disaster, what should be done to avert the disaster, and promises of good things to come. In one instance JN made a clear demand for legitimacy on this basis, 'Watch me if I be not a prophet, the judgment that is going to rain in 6 months' (In Maseno 2016a). EW and NM's prophecies are largely declarations made to the congregation regarding what good God is doing or intending to do for them. IJ's miraculous efficacy is mostly demonstrated through prayers of healing that she does on behalf of her congregants.

The women leaders also assert their pre-eminence through performances of pomp that include the use of titles such as Bishop, Prophet, Doctor or Reverend, investment in impressive buildings, make-up and adornments, large scale projects and operations, charity work and, in some cases, leadership positions sought in the secular world. Grandiosity is also displayed by associating with national political figures. In Kenya, both EW and JN have courted and enjoyed patronage of the nation's presidium, while in Tanzania NM has enjoyed special relationships both with the former president Jakaya Kikwete and now with President Pombe Magufuli of the CCM party. NM was nominated as a special-seat Member of Parliament for the period 2007–2015 and again for 2017–2020. However, this is not the case with IJ, who chooses not to associate herself with national political figures.

Charity work is one way in which the ministries and their leaders demonstrate how they are resourceful and beneficial to society. In the words of Amon Wambui, senior pastor at PGM, who is also son to the bishop and operations manager of the church: 'We have feeding programmes for the street families. We have a children centre. We deal with the people who are castaways in society' (Interview, 9 February 2017). In Tanzania, IJ owns two orange farms in the Coastal region, the proceeds of which are used to take care of orphans at her church. In 2006, NM established an orphanage centre to give shelter and education to orphans. In her words:

My centre provides food, shelter, and medication to seven hundred and forty orphans. I feel sorry for them, and I assist to make them feel they are human beings; however, most people don't understand and instead assume that I am doing it for personal gains. (Dilger 2009, 99)

All leaders have links that go beyond their own country and these allow them to raise funds in Western countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. PWM and PGM both have congregations in the US and in the UK. PGM also has a congregation in Australia. When NM founded an 'International Academy', she received support from the Africa Outreach programme of the Christian Working Woman association based in the United States. However, she and IJ have no congregations outside Tanzania.

At the base of a Pentecostal practice of legitimation is the idea of the 'mysterium'. The leader thrives by promising and delivering 'goodies' from the spiritual world or with spiritual power. Although all four leaders basically draw from mystery as a source of legitimacy they do so in varying ways. JN emphasises prophecy, EW and NM are inclined towards prosperity, and IJ puts her emphasis on healing. However, there are other distinctions between them as well.

One of the major underlying discourses of EW's preaching is that of warfare and conquest. Not only does EW speak in terms of enemies to be resisted or fought against but some of the most spirited confirmations from the congregation are made when she is making use of the warfare and conquest discourse. The discourse of warfare and conquest tends to strengthen internal legitimacy by lumping together all who may be critical of the organisation as belonging to the enemy camp. This is however partly because EW's spiritual warfare is also targeted towards her success in the political arena.

A distinctive feature of NM's ministry is her entrepreneurial initiatives, some of which she shares with members of her church. NM is the founder and managing director of a group of schools. The group comprises primary and secondary schools in five regions of the country as well as a teacher's training college for early and primary education. Followers participate in a Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA) giving them access to capital to run private businesses. Surrounding her church vicinity are small businesses whose main market is the crowd attending her church. These small businesses are owned by both members and non-members.

As for IJ, her major Pentecostal practice is that of healing. IJ presents herself as having a gift of healing that is said to have begun with her raising a dead and already decomposing woman back to life. One of the presbyters of her ministry explained confidently:

... it is as if our Prophet was tempted. That woman from Malawi was brought dead at our church and she was smelling very bad ... Some of the worshipers ran away in fear. The prophet started to pray in tongues. She tried several attempts including stamping her feet on the umbilical cord of the dead woman. Prophet IJ cried calling God's name and we all saw the dead woman starting to squeeze herself tightly and sneezing, and immediately she came back to life and we all rejoiced. Until today she is alive and worshipers increasingly join our Ministry ...

IJ's ministry services are thronged by people seeking her prayers of healing.

## Conclusion

This paper has presented an explanation of various strategies deployed to suggest and maintain legitimacy by four female PC church leaders in Tanzania and Kenya. We describe the differences and similarities in strategies used by each and demonstrate how these women have been innovative and competitive within the realm of religious leadership

and competition, mobilising significant resources and followers as well as redeploying resources for themselves and for some members of their societies.

Even though Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) Christianity may promote women's subser-vience in some of its theological discourses, its orientation towards charisma as the basis of leadership makes possible the independent establishment of new churches by anyone who is 'gifted', thereby making possible in practice what is discouraged in doctrine (Maseno and Kyama 2017). Despite its teachings, PC Christianity may be considered a force of positive change regarding gender disparity in African societies.

It could be argued that the desires of PC church followers include, by and large, mundane desires for healing, economic prosperity, belonging and self-affirmation. However, the followers considered in this study largely expect a spiritual kind of interven-tion by supernatural beings in their daily lives. By offering leadership in the uncertain world of the spiritual world, these female church leaders offer religious goods that are per-ceived to have desired effects in the social, economic and bodily health realms ( Jones and Woodbridge 2011).

A question may be raised whether the leadership of these women is adding any posi-tive value to their societies and whether the solutions they are giving to the economic and social challenges faced by their congregants is not merely a pain-killing remedy that leaves one's actual problems unsolved. It cannot be conclusively argued that these leaders bring lasting solutions to their respective societies. However, they do give some solutions that include bringing food aid to orphans, paying fines for poor prisoners, employing some members of society, giving practical guidance for day-to-day living, giving a sense of hope in dire situations, and giving congregants, most of whom are women, the courage and confidence to try to find possible solutions to difficult problems.

## Notes

1. Since some of the female church leaders referred to in this article could not be accessed, it was resolved that all reference to them and their ministries be changed to pseudonyms.
2. The conditions were first suggested by one of us as conditions of colonial conquest (Mtata 2017).
3. The idea of 'modes of self-legitimation' employed here is derived by us from Max Weber's 'types of legitimate authority' (1962, 75–80), Kenneth Boulding's 'sources of legitimacy' (1967) and Pierre Bourdieu's 'modes of domination' (1990, 122–134).
4. The Legitimacy of Economics (Boulding 1967).
5. Given that the space available for this paper is limited, we will not highlight this difference.
6. The term 'ministry' is used in Pentecostal circles to refer to a Pentecostal church, some aspect of the church or some service given by a Pentecostal believer. In this case it refers to JN's church.

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## Notes on contributors

**Nandera Ernest Mhando** lectures Sociology and Cultural Anthropology at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She has explored development and cultural transformation relating to gender, health, religion, marriage, women violence, and livelihood. Her most recent ethnographic works are on: Pentecostal-charismatic women church leaders and their impact in contemporary Tanzania; female and traditional male circumcision; and intricate marital partnerships. She can be contacted at: nanderam2013@gmail.com

**Loreen Maseno** is a Senior Lecturer at Maseno University, Kenya and recently a Humboldt Fellow, University of Bayreuth. She is also a Research Fellow at the Department of Biblical and Ancient studies, University of South Africa. She can be contacted at: loreenmas@gmail.com

**Kupakwashe Mtata** is a Postdoctoral researcher at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, Bayreuth, Germany. He has done research on religion and nature conservation in Western Zimbabwe. His academic interests lie in theory of religion, religion and nature, religion and human well-being in contemporary Africa and on-going encounters between ontological designs of Western and African autochthonous worlds in African contexts. He can be contacted at: kmdlodlo@yahoo.com

**Mathew Senga** is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. His research interests include natural resource governance, religion, health and rural livelihoods. He can be contacted at: magripinus@hotmail.com

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